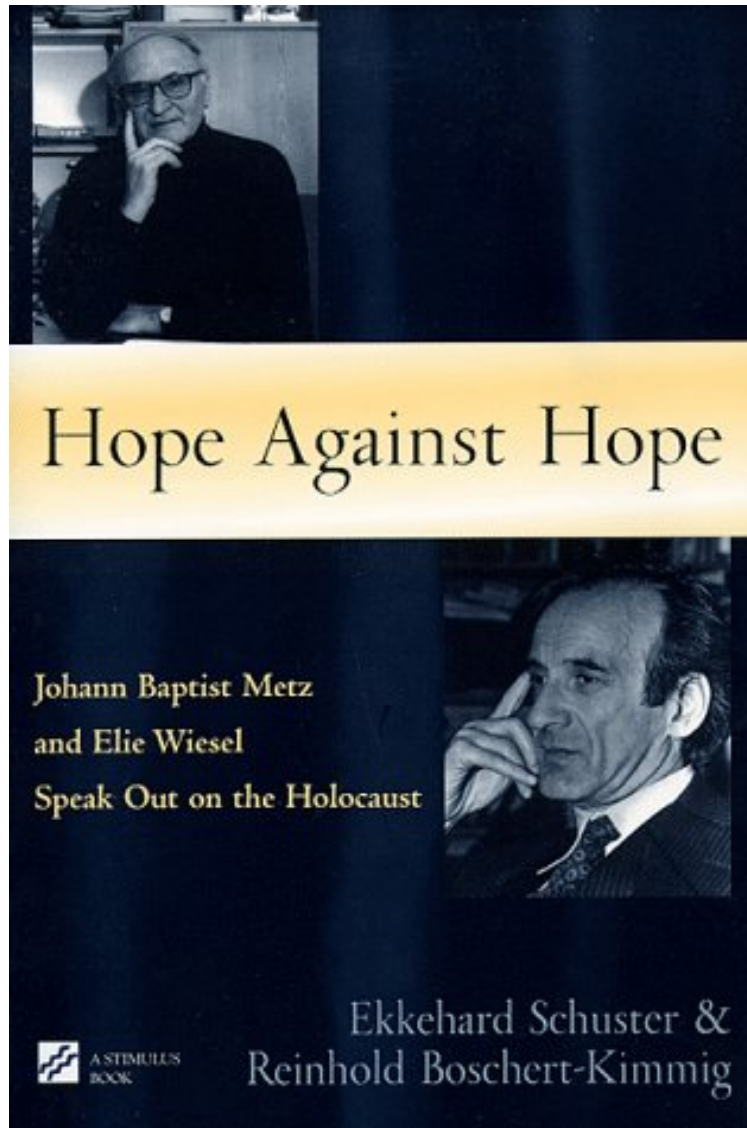


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Ekkehard Schuster, Reinhold Bochert-Kimmig : Hope against Hope: Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust (Stimulus Books) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hope against Hope: Johann Baptist Metz and Elie Wiesel Speak Out on the Holocaust (Stimulus Books):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Where was God? Where were Humans? Where is Hope Now?: A Psychotherapist's Review By David C. Young I'm not a theologian, but a psychotherapist. I read this book of two separate interviews with two deeply thoughtful men, both traumatized by WWII and the Holocaust, not to make a psychological interpretation. I read it as a guide in my work as a trauma therapist. (My field has little to say, e.g., about "hope", doing almost no research and tending to reduce it toward "placebo". It has even less to offer about "suffering".) Johann-Baptist Metz is a Catholic Jesuit theologian. As a 16-year-old, he was drafted into a German military unit of other middle-teenagers at the end of the war: "One night the company commander sent me to battalion headquarters. When I returned the next morning, passing through burning villages and forests, I found nothing but the dead. All I could see were dead faces. To this very day, all I can remember is a soundless cry. I suspect that all my childhood dreams, as well as what people call 'childlike trust,' disintegrated in that soundless cry." Elie Weisel, of course, is the Nobel prize-winning author of *Night* -- a short, powerful book of being transported, as a 16-year-old Hungarian Hassidic Jew, to Auschwitz. There his mother and sister were immediately gassed and incinerated. And where he survived for many months until liberated, though his father dying shortly before liberation. During his first day at Auschwitz, Weisel was marched by a pit of burning babies. "...since Auschwitz, it is hard for me to use certain words. At first I could not even use the word 'night.' And whenever I see a chimney, I am filled with horror." If you have not read Weisel's "*Night*", do so. It's necessary reading for a citizen of the world, to learn -- using Metz's Weisel's concerns here -- what God is capable of allowing, what humans are capable of doing, what hoping must bear to be real and true. I work with the traumatized, esp. the severely traumatized. I read for insights into how people can come to grips with, "integrate" (if not understand), and go on living in the face of severe trauma. In addition to hoping, having faith or spirituality is often important with trauma and often, itself, becomes traumatized by trauma. Here, I found much help. Their help includes a needed aspect in the book's title: *Hope*. The English title, "*Hope Against Hope*", doesn't capture the German title, "*Trotzdem Hoffen*", which I suspect is taken from Weisel's interview. A better translation would be "Defiant Hope" or "Hope In Spite Of" -- more assertive, more active. And that kind of hoping is needed when facing trauma. Weisel noted, "With horror we find out that there is not only something limitless when it comes to good, but also regarding evil." Again Weisel: "When I look around the world I see nothing but hopelessness. And yet I must, we all must, try to find a source for hope. We must believe in human beings, in spite of human beings." And: "One of the most serious questions I have confronted over the years is whether one can still believe in God after Auschwitz. It was not easy to keep faith. Nevertheless, I can say that, despite all the difficulties and obstacles, I have never abandoned God. I had tremendous problems with God, and still do. Therefore I protest against God. Sometimes I bring God before the bench. Nevertheless, everything I do is done from within faith and not outside. If one believes in God one can say anything to God." Weisel and Metz make good reading together, not only because of their shared concerns, but also because of their different faiths and ways of having faiths. As a trauma therapist, I find insights and encouragements from both, but never easy insights or simple encouragements. Both struggled with trauma and its destroying old ways of having faiths, trusts and hopes. Metz: "In the face of that horror no one knows how to think or feel about...the reality of Auschwitz [which] blows open the horizons of our experience." "For me, memories are not just the objects of a testing discourse, but rather the ground of discourse, without which they would collapse into a vacuum. They can not only launch discourse or illustrate it, but also interrupt and halt it. I know of really only one absolutely universal category: it is the *memoria passionis* [remembering suffering]. And I know of only one authority which cannot be revoked by any Enlightenment or emancipation: the authority of those who suffer." In regards to "feeling God's absence": "...what we need in Christian theology is an element of what I have called... a Holy Saturday Christology. [Christology is the study, the "logos" or reason, truth and meaning of Christ.] ...in Christology we have lost the way between Good Friday [suffering Christ] and Easter Sunday [resurrection]. We have too much pure Easter Sunday Christology." Weisel: "A great Hassidic master once said: 'Where is God? Wherever one lets him in.' God is wherever we bring God. We can take God by the hand and show him his friends in the world. We can guide God and show him what is inhuman in men and women. The magnificent idea in our Jewish tradition is that we human beings are responsible for one another. We are also responsible for God. Perhaps that sounds presumptuous but it isn't. It is God's will that we are responsible for God's creation, for God's creatures, and for the creator himself." "For me, the man that I am, it is possible to be for God with God. It is even possible for me to remain true to myself and be against God, but never without God." "Never let anyone goad you into hating another human being. That is the false path. Hatred is never an answer, never. Hatred destroys the one who is hated, but it also destroys the one who hates." "...my message is a very simple one: never fight against memory. Even if it is painful, it will help you; it will enrich you.... One cannot exist without remembrance." You get the idea. Both Metz Weisel are passionate about turning this memory and learning from suffering toward responsibility, toward helping those in the world -- not only individuals, but especially peoples -- who suffer now. This book has a good annotated bibliography of further works by Metz Weisel. It's somewhat out-of-date because it was prepared in 1999. Read this book. These are words from those who have suffered, from those who have thought and acted deeply out of their suffering. It's often hard reading, and needs re-reading and thinking. But it rewards re-reading and thinking, not only because it moves us internally, but also because it guides us toward actions -- what we do how.

Interviews with these two important figures who speak about how to conceive of who God is in of the light of the Holocaust. Emphasize in copy that these are two independent interviews. Also, mention Metz's *A Passion for God*. An academic catalog selection.