

Reviews of Books

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS OF THE MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL OF NEW YORK, 1852-1952. By Joseph Hirsh and Beka Doherty. *New York: Random House.* 1952. xvi, 364 pp. \$5.00

One of the greatest private, non-sectarian hospitals in the world, the Mount Sinai Hospital of New York, deserves a historical review which pays adequate tribute to its achievements. Equally entitled to an exposition of the factors which produced this eminence are the members of the medical profession and the public at large, both of whom have been benefited by the hospital's existence. With these goals in mind Joseph Hirsh and Beka Doherty have presented an analysis of the first hundred years of the Mount Sinai Hospital.

It is unfortunate that the authors started with the negative attitude, as outlined in their apologia, of defining a hospital in terms of what it is not. Then, although stating that "a hospital's history, like all history, is like a stream in motion," they say: "Mount Sinai, as the twentieth century opened, was a straw in the many currents and cross-currents of a new era." This is wrong, because Mount Sinai actually produced many of the currents of the new era. In their negative approach the authors were forced to give background history, much of it completely irrelevant, such as the corruption in the New York City government, the opposition to the draft during the Civil War, and the role of immigrants in the Union Army. They then had to content themselves with biographies and statistical data about the hospital.

Yet, a careful reading of this volume reveals the factors which made the Mount Sinai Hospital great. For one thing, the hospital was built and maintained with ample funds. In 1852, with beef selling at eighteen cents a pound, the founders raised \$7,325 at an expensive dinner, and another \$1,034 at a charity ball, in addition to about \$30,000 in donations. With this money "The Jews' Hospital in New York" provided forty-five beds, and in its first year had 216 admissions at an expense of \$5,500. In 1911 the hospital had no difficulty in selling \$400,000 in bonds for its expansion program.

The Board of Trustees was not only astute financially, but also liberal, progressive, and heterodox. In 1855, when religious tradition forbade autopsies, the Board, by a majority of only one, voted to permit and encourage post-mortem examinations. Mount Sinai Hospital thus stepped immediately to the forefront of scientific institutions, and by a margin of one vote laid the foundations of its research reputation that endured for a century.

A third factor in the hospital's greatness appears in a single line among the biographies. From the outset, the staff welcomed refugees from Europe as a humanitarian gesture. Many of these doctors had magnificent training but came to the United States to avoid persecution or discrimination. To the Mount Sinai Hospital they brought varied medical philosophies and disciplines which could supplement one another and fuse for mutual stimulation and productivity. Rather naturally, the fledgeling hospital attracted many of the best American doctors by its cosmopolitan medical atmosphere, its forward-looking policies, and its adequate funds and facilities for research.

However, it is not the presence of a number of great men on the rolls of its staff that makes a hospital great. It is the juxtaposition of great men in time and conjoined effort in a favorable atmosphere. It is small wonder that Mount Sinai very early became famous when good fortune put Emil Noeggerath, Paul F. Mundé, and Abraham Jacobi, for example, in the same institution under an encouraging and able superintendance, and a trusteeship which considered the aims of the hospital to be "Research, Education, and Social Responsibility."

The tradition was carried on by the younger doctors, later themselves to become great, who sought appointment on a staff whose president declared: "A hospital is a school for doctors who learn and profit in the interest of mankind from collected and collective experience."

The hospital became non-sectarian in 1864, not, as the authors pretend, because non-Jews happened to be treated during the draft riots, but more likely in order to be able to make "claims on the charitable fund of the city and state," as the 1867 Board of Directors Report intimates. In 1866 the name of the hospital was changed from "The Jews' Hospital in New York" to "The Mount Sinai Hospital," and a few years later its physical expansion began with a \$365,000 plant. In 1904 the present hospital was constructed at a cost of over \$2,000,000, and Dr. S. S. Goldwater began his remarkable career as a hospital administrator. With the added presence of George Blumenthal, the guiding spirit of the Board of Trustees, to carry on the original co-operative and progressive tradition, the medical staff could not help but achieve fame.

The centennial history lists and explains the many remarkable achievements of individuals on the medical staff, of the administration, of the school of nursing, and of the many ancillary units of the hospital. The authors have compromised between a completely chronological history and an analysis of the development of each department and division. They have presented what amounts to a history of hospital administration and of modern medicine, although it is not always clear how much of it pertains to the Mount Sinai Hospital. A good deal of it could well have been omitted, together with such imperti-

nent political observations as that the Spanish-American War was a testing ground for two different kinds of totalitarianism. A debating hall for political or social doctrines is one of "the things a hospital is not." Certainly, the Mount Sinai Hospital has achieved its position of pre-eminence by avoiding this type of diversion in favor of devoting its resources and fine organization and talented staff to its well-established ideals of the science of health.

Cincinnati

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AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK. Vol. 53, 1952; Vol. 54, 1953.
New York: The American Jewish Committee; and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America. 1952. xii, 608 pp. \$4.00; 1953. x, 627 pp. \$5.00

In this age of specialization, reference books and guidebooks have attained incalculable significance in the fashioning of public opinion. Busy publicists, ministers, and leaders in political and social life lean heavily upon summaries and surveys and on compilations of facts and figures which are neatly tabulated and indexed for ready reference. It is, therefore, in the interest of every segment and grouping in American life to make available to the public at large the essential data which characterize its physiognomy, its specialized aims and purposes, and its unique ideological and institutional coloration. For the Jews, a comprehensive, well-balanced and rigidly impartial year book which inspires confidence is especially imperative, not only because of the high visibility of the group, but even more so to enable Jews themselves to identify and appraise the numerous and diverse currents and eddies which contribute to and obscure the mainstream of Jewish life.

The standard reference book for American Jews is the *American Jewish Year Book*, published annually since the turn of the century. The current volumes, following, in the main, the pattern evolved in the past, devote the bulk of their space to a review of developments affecting world Jewry during the preceding year. This is supplemented by occasional "Special Articles": in the 1952 *Year Book*, a seventy-four-page study of "The Jewish Labor Movement in the United States" and a brief tribute to the late Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. The 1953 *Year Book* contains no "Special Article" as such, but an appreciation by S. Niger of Y. L. Peretz, the one-hundredth anniversary of whose birth was celebrated in the preceding year, is tucked away as a supplement to the section on "Necrology." About sixty pages of each volume are devoted to "Directories, Lists, Necrology," which include lists of national Jewish organizations, Jewish federations, welfare funds and community councils, and Jewish periodi-

icals. The same section contains a selected "Necrology" of presumably eminent Jews and an "American Jewish Bibliography," consisting of "books of Jewish interest" published in *English only* during the preceding year. Both in the necrology and in the bibliography, the basis of selection is unexplained, and, while the preceding lists include Canada as well as the United States, the births of books and the deaths of notables are confined to the borders of the United States.

The heart of the year book, the "Review of the Year," merits a second glance. The "Foreign Scene" presents summary reports, arranged by regions and outlined by countries, written where possible by residents of the areas described. These range from mere notices to meaty and balanced reviews, like that of Canada.

Developments in the United States naturally receive most attention, but here one is struck by the apportionment of space, which obviously denotes emphasis. "Civil and Political" questions, such as civil liberties, discrimination, religion and public education, housing, immigration and naturalization, anti-Jewish agitation, and intergroup activities, command fully half of the space allotted to the United States in the 1952 volume; and in that of 1953, these subjects together with certain demographic data likewise consume half the space. The point I am making is this: "Communal Affairs," the core of Jewish life in America, which embraces religion, education, social and recreational services, Zionist and pro-Israel activities, and the financing of communal programs, receive no more than 77 out of 608 pages in the 1952 volume, and 96 pages out of 627 in that of 1953. "Jewish Education" is allotted 13 and 14 pages respectively in the two volumes, and "Religion" requires only 12 pages in each.

In fact, the editors appear to have difficulty in defining religion. The few pages devoted to "religion" include material on the projected medical school of the Yeshiva University, on teacher training, and on adult education. One searches in vain for a mature analysis of currents in religious thought and practice.

Jewish cultural developments have likewise perplexed the editors, not, however, for want of definition. They inform us in the preface to the 1952 *Year Book* that such cultural areas as "the treatment of Jewish subjects in general literature, literary production in the Hebrew and Yiddish languages, Jewish music and Jewish art" are omitted because "the reporting of trends in literature and the arts can best be done in articles which are more discursive and cover longer time-spans than the annual summaries." We are assured that "it is planned" to publish such articles in future volumes, but the plans were evidently still in process when the 1953 *Year Book* went to press. The editors do list in both volumes "books of Jewish interest" published during the year in English. The 1952 volume contains on one page a list of eleven Hebrew and

Yiddish studies in Jewish history and rabbinic literature (one published in Buenos Aires), but even this is omitted in the subsequent year book. One would assume that if trends in literature are best indicated in articles rather than mere lists, literary production in English would be affected no less than in Hebrew and Yiddish. Why, then, should the latter be omitted and the former included?

A year book is not an encyclopedia, and working libraries will usually retain for reference only the latest volume or two. Each issue, therefore, should be complete in itself. Persons consulting the volumes under review will, therefore, conclude that Jewish living in America is primarily concerned with discrimination. This may reflect the true state of affairs, but a Jewish year book should not accentuate barrenness by omitting cultural developments.

Population statistics, another essential feature of a year book, are likewise inadequate in the 1952 and 1953 year books. The editors explain that estimates for the United States are omitted because of the absence of revised information. This will be cold comfort for a busy publicist who will find that there are 1,350 Jews in Helsinki, but will seek in vain for estimates of the Jewish population in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles.

The MacIver Report is one of the very important recent studies relating to Jewish communal life. Although it was submitted in May, 1951, and distributed fairly widely soon thereafter, no summary could be included in the 1952 *Year Book* because the Report was apparently not available for general publication. (The explanation of the editors in a footnote on page 223 is rather less than satisfactory.) The 1953 volume devotes some 15 pages to the subject, but a summary of the findings and recommendations in three pages appears inadequate. Moreover, one must take strong exception to a patronizing and un-called-for remark which is grossly unjust to the distinguished and courageous scholar. Of the selection of Professor MacIver to conduct the study, we are told on page 164 that "there were some who felt that MacIver's lack of knowledge of, or experience in, the Jewish communal field would be a serious handicap in such an undertaking," but that he was selected nevertheless because of his eminence as a sociologist and his interest in intergroup relations. This is the kind of hindsight wisdom which has disgraced recent political discussion. Professor MacIver is deserving of respect even when his findings prove unpalatable and his recommendations unacceptable.

In summary, it should be noted that the year book as a whole is a valuable publication. It contains a great deal of necessary information, much that is not easily found elsewhere. The summaries in both volumes of developments in civic defense, fund raising, Jewish education, and the social services are especially useful. Some of the foreign reports

are very well done, and those on Eastern Europe are invaluable. Dr. Will Herberg's study of the Jewish labor movement (1952 *Year Book*) would grace any publication. And the review of developments in connection with Jewish claims against Germany (1953 *Year Book*) is fine reference material.

The weaknesses relate to balance and comprehensiveness, especially with respect to religious and cultural developments. Sponsorship, too, must be regarded as an inadequacy.

The reader is informed that the year book is "prepared" by the American Jewish Committee and published jointly by the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society. Beyond that, nothing is said about responsibility for determining policy. There is a clear indication (Preface, 1952 *Year Book*) that the decision to omit summaries of Jewish cultural developments was made by the editors. If that is general practice, it is most unwise, for no two individuals, no matter who they are, should be burdened with such responsibility. It is hard to believe that such questions are not referred to a high-level committee on the year book. This reviewer has assumed that so important a publication had the guidance, in addition to a committee of the "preparing" agency, of an advisory committee of scholars and public figures acceptable to the American Jewish Committee. If that is not the case, it is indeed surprising, for numerous publications of far less representative character make use of such advisory bodies.

But the question of sponsorship is even more basic. The year book is neither a commercial publication nor an organizational house organ. In a fundamental sense it represents American Jewry. Yet, the year book is a product of the American Jewish Committee. It is "prepared" by that organization. Close to one-third of the signed articles were written by members or former members of its staff. The editors must be regarded as Committee personnel. The annual report of the American Jewish Committee is printed in the year book, a privilege accorded to no other organization save the Jewish Publication Society. Thus the *American Jewish Year Book* publicizes in full outline the efforts and accomplishments of the American Jewish Committee, but not those of rabbinical or congregational associations, nor of central educational and welfare agencies, nor of parallel or rival bodies like the American Jewish Congress or the B'nai B'rith.

It must be assumed that the year book aims to provide an objective and balanced composite portrait of American Jewish life. In that sense, it represents American Jewry. If, as has been argued, it is improper for any organization to presume to represent the Jewish community, should not policy respecting the year book be determined by a representative body?

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THE PIONEER JEWS OF UTAH. By Leon L. Watters, Ph.D. [*Studies in American Jewish History*. Number 2] *New York: The American Jewish Historical Society*. 1952. viii, 199 pp. \$2.50 (paper bound)

Leon L. Watters, himself born in Utah and son of a pioneer, has been collecting material concerning the early Jewish settlers in Utah during a period of some fifty years. There are very few secondary sources regarding the beginnings of Jewish life in the region; Mr. Watters had to do almost all his work from primary data, using directories, old newspapers, and the sparse records found in the minute book of the Salt Lake City congregation. Interviews with old-timers and their descendants, and his own memory and experiences aided him. The monograph succeeds in presenting the important facets of life in the early days.

The first Jewish arrivals were true pioneers. Many were young immigrants from Europe who, after a few years in the East, turned their faces westward. Some traveled across the plains by wagon train or individual ox-team. Those who came a few years after the original Mormon builders of the State had to expect "Indian trouble," for by that time the Indians were aroused and aware of the danger from the invading whites. Some of the Jewish immigrants headed for California, which they reached by way of the trip across the Isthmus of Panama and up along the Pacific shore. This trip was dangerous. The crossing at Panama was difficult, and there was always the threat of disease on board ship. Many of those who came to Utah, as well as to Montana and Idaho, tried their luck first in California. But whether they reached the Rocky Mountain region from the East directly, or by way of California, all had to endure the discomforts and hardships that were the commonplaces of life in the pioneer settlements.

The feeling of sympathy between Jews and Latter Day Saints is due to the fact that the Mormons believe that they are somehow connected with the ancient tribe of Judah. In early days the Mormons sent missionaries to work among the Jews and to help in the work of restoring them to Palestine. One of these Mormon envoys, Orson Hyde, was himself reputed to have Jewish ancestry. The Mormons regarded their land as "Zion," and named the river connecting the Great Salt Lake with Utah Lake, after the river of Bible fame, the Jordan. They did not fail to notice that the Great Salt Lake itself resembles the Dead Sea. Mr. Watters points out that among early Jewish settlers in Utah there were a few who embraced the Mormon religion. Regarding one of these, A. Neibaur, the author tells us that he had eleven children who grew up and whom he married off; and that he started the first match factory in Utah. Apparently, Neibaur

was "a matchmaker in two senses." His descendants in Utah in 1924 numbered 427.

However, there were not many converts, and the great Mormon leader Brigham Young did not believe in the sincerity of Jews who adopted his faith. Nevertheless, he counted Jews among his friends. He was exceptionally kind to the romantic Solomon Carvalho, who came to Utah in 1854 with Frémont's famous exploration party. Carvalho and the other survivors staggered into Parowan, Utah; and, later, the South Carolina-born Jewish painter was entertained in Salt Lake City with true éclat. Although he remained for only ten weeks, Carvalho was remembered.

The Jews were members of the business community that grew up in Utah as a result of the Mormons' scorn of trading and exclusive devotion to agriculture. At first, the businessmen were almost all "Gentiles" (non-Mormons). Brigham Young decided to take steps to remove what he considered deleterious influence on the part of a portion of the non-Mormon community. He founded the ZCMI (Zion Cooperative Mercantile Institution), which put his church into business, cut off the trade of many outsiders, and made a huge profit. There were days of violence and strife between Mormons and "Gentiles." Some of the latter, including a number of Jewish merchants, moved to Corinne, Utah, a new town erected on the advancing railroad. Corinne did a rushing business for a while as transfer point between the railroad and the mining camps of Idaho and Montana, but later became a ghost town. The ZCMI, however, still flourishes.

Mr. Watters gives some interesting details of the history of the B'nai Israel congregation of Salt Lake City; he describes its financial ups and downs, rabbinical changes, and theological controversies. He devotes a chapter to the cemetery.

Despite difficulties due to the fact that they were "Gentile" merchants in a Mormon community, Jews flourished in Utah and founded some of the leading mercantile establishments in the State. In the collection of biographies of early settlers, which Mr. Watters appends to his historical study, there is mention of the occupations of these pioneers. There were freighters, wholesale grocers, owners of clothing and jewelry stores, and one who had the leading butcher shop in Salt Lake City.

And there remained a bond between Mormons and Jews. When Simon Bamberger was running for governor (he was elected in 1916), Mr. Watters informs us that apparently Mormons preferred to listen to Bamberger, the Jew, rather than to have to hear a "Gentile" who was non-Jewish and had no connection with the ancient Hebrews. The election of Bamberger was, of course, a proof of the position of the Jews in Utah. There were comparatively few Jews in the State; it was

the non-Jews who chose a Jew as governor. Bamberger was a notable governor and promoted helpful legislation, such as the regulation of public service corporations, a new budget system, and the establishment of a department of public health. He was interested also in Jewish matters. Among other activities, he participated in the effort to establish a Jewish agricultural colony at Clarion, Utah, which, however, was unsuccessful.

The monograph gives details about the participation of Jews in the Masonic Order and in the Odd Fellows, and tells about the growth of the B'nai B'rith Lodge and the Hebrew Benevolent Society. It is interesting that the latter organization at first was a men's group, but that the burden of charity was taken over by the women, who did an excellent job with the aid of charity balls that became a part of the social life of Salt Lake City.

A list of persons buried in B'nai Israel cemetery concludes the work.

Mr. Watters' monograph is a welcome contribution to our meager store of primary material in the field of American Jewish history. Since we have so little information about Jews in the early West, this work is all the more needed. The format and the illustrations add to the attractiveness of the monograph.

Hyannis, Mass.

BENJAMIN KELSON

PORTRAITS ETCHED IN STONE. EARLY JEWISH SETTLERS, 1682-1831. By David de Sola Pool. *New York: Columbia University Press.* 1952. xvi, 543 pp. \$10.00

Propaganda today is alert to make the nation conscious that there are three hundred years of continuous history of the Jews in the United States. Around the burying ground of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, Rabbi David de Sola Pool presents the history of the early Jewish settlers (1682-1831), who were not only members of this distinguished Sephardic synagogue, but whose careers and fortunes in a way were epitomes of the activities and lives of scattered Jewish pioneers, who first participated with the founding fathers in building our country.

We must recognize that synagogue records make dry reading, that such a locale restricts the range of vision, and that even to an archaeologist a graveyard offers limitations in the re-creation of long-forgotten personalities and in the reconstruction of the past events of distant times. At the same time, if the author does not confine himself strictly to repeating the inscriptions of tombstones, there is a supply of material affording a stimulating incentive to creative historiography.

However, as one of the earliest contributions to the tercentenary celebration of the first coming of the little band of twenty-three Jews in 1654 to the little village of New Amsterdam, this volume sets a standard which is worthy of so distinguished an occasion. It is a handsome and worthy volume from a press of high and recognized standards.

Just as Edgar Masters, in his famous *Spoon River Anthology*, reciting epitaphs from tombstones in the village cemetery, vividly created for us the bygone story of the little village of Spoon River and its dead, so this volume, gathering the inscriptions from the tombstones in an ancient burial ground now overshadowed by drear tenements in back streets of an almost forgotten corner of New York City, tells not only something of the personalities there interred, but expands into a history of what was—until 1825—the only synagogue in New York with the historical backgrounds of its Jewish community.

Necessarily, much of the history is already well-known through the writing of historians working during the last sixty years in the field of American Jewish history. Still, Rabbi Pool, having access to all that has thus already been produced, as well as to all records of Shearith Israel, of which he is rabbi, has made wise use of his material to present a readable and accurate portrayal of a single aspect of American Jewish history with many an interesting and sometimes amusing sidelight.

The task, I suppose, was to cull and choose what the author deemed most worth-while and illuminating in the panorama which he was presenting, rather than to give a complete, rounded, historical presentation of all aspects of the life of the New York Jewish community. Naturally, his presentation centered around the synagogue and the religious life of its members, and that, obviously, no matter how important, is only one aspect of the Jewish community life. There is very little to give us the range of the economic and commercial business activities of individuals, many of whose commercial operations in shipping, fur trading, sugar and Indian trading were as important to the community as their membership was important to the congregation. Was there no material available to give us an intimate picture of the domestic and social life lived by these Jewish men and women and their children and their formal or friendly relationship with their Christian neighbors?

Jacob Franks was an important figure in the economic life of New York, a government contractor, and a leading merchant with important foreign connections. He and his family lived and entertained generously. They were on intimate terms with the governing officials. Yet, what is emphasized here is hardly more than that he was one of those who founded the burying ground, a generous financial supporter of Shearith Israel who served as its parnas.

One wishes that more could have been written of that great master



CHATHAM STREET CEMETERY, NEW YORK CITY

craftsman, Myer Myers, who was president of the Gold and Silver-smiths' Society of New York, and whose masterpieces are today the prizes of Colonial silver.

Major Mordecai Manuel Noah, almost the last to be buried in the burying ground—iconoclast and perhaps the best-known Jew of his time—has, for obvious reasons, to be bypassed with but casual references. Yet the author must have sighed over a lost opportunity.

Then there is Rodrigo Pacheco, of a distinguished and widely-scattered Sephardic family, an outstanding New York merchant, who in 1733 was chosen by the merchants of New York one of the committee to present a protest to Parliament against proposed taxes to be imposed upon molasses and sugar imported from non-British colonies. His name appears in the book but once (p. 17), as one of the petitioners who, in 1728, asked the Common Council for an extension of the "burying place."

Perhaps such omissions were necessary to keep the book within bounds because, without counting its copious pages of beautiful illustrations, it is a thick and massive volume of 543 pages. Naturally, there is inherent in such a work a conflict between making a book which will be acceptable and readable for laymen and a history for scholars and historians. In the compromise, Rabbi Pool has sacrificed much of historical value to give it a popular appeal. The lack of foot-notes, upon which scholars feed, is a defect of the volume, and the biographies are often too sketchy. He has, however, good material to present and a good story to tell.

One interesting fact made clear is that, contrary to the general impression, from the very beginnings neither Shearith Israel nor the New York Jewish community was homogeneously of Spanish and Portuguese stock. Indeed, among these early Jewish settlers were immigrants from Germany, Poland, and many another European country. The Ashkenazim were ever a recognizable element of Shearith Israel.

The immediate future will see, from many directions, the presenting of the history of local Jewish communities which will be commemorating a century or two of their existence. Already, in celebrating the two centuries since its founding, Charleston's Jewish Congregation Beth Elohim had Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engelman, in 1950, through the Jewish Publication Society, give us a history of the Jews of Charleston. Rather than a mere congregational history, it was a community history. Charleston had a rich and interesting story to unfold of a Jewish community which, in Colonial days, challenged Philadelphia and New York in importance and culture. While the Charleston volume is not to be compared with that of Shearith Israel in format or in ambitious outlines, it furnishes for the understanding of local Jewish community-living a broader basis of valuable material

which well might be a guide for those who are to undertake the presentation of our future congregational histories.

Then again, compared with Hyman B. Grinstein's *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York 1654-1860*, Dr. Pool's *Portraits Etched in Stone* seems too parochial and too egocentric. It omits the cross-currents of non-congregational events and city-changing conditions, and the influence and actions in an expanding community of Jews not within the bounds of Shearith Israel. There never was a time when visitors and temporary residents and newcomers were not important elements in the New York Jewish community, so why neglect that aspect of community life? The wider horizons of Grinstein's book centered around no one institution, although it was still largely written around the synagogue as the dominating focus of New York Jewish life. Covering much the same period of the growth of this community, it gives us a broader understanding of the lives of Jewish individuals and their integration into American society. After all, what we want from our American Jewish historians is neither mere sectarian or ghettoized history demonstrating that Jews were here in America in early days, nor sectarian footnotes to the main currents of vital American life and events. It is our desire that in the unfolding of local American Jewish history sight should never be lost of the fact that Jews—not as outsiders but as Americans, pioneers and later immigrants—have been and are participants in the events of American history in its many directions and in all its varied spheres.

Thus, whether it be parochial, local, biographical, or general, American Jewish history is, and must be, American history—part of the study of the free play of heterogeneous influences and the confluence of people of differing origins and traditions uniting here into a new American democratic people.

There is so much of value to American Jewish history brought together and ably presented in this volume that we welcome it as a very real contribution to American Judaica. That it has whetted our appetite is to its credit, and our criticism that we have not found here all that we want is not mere faultfinding but rather a cry for more.

Boston

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REFORM JEWISH PRACTICE AND ITS RABBINIC BACKGROUND. Vol. 2. By Solomon B. Freehof, D.D. *Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press. 1952. x, 139 pp. \$2.00*

Reform Judaism began as an effort to add dignity and beauty to Jewish worship. When its innovations were denounced as heretical and un-Jewish, a number of reformers responded by an appeal to traditional

authority. In many cases they could argue that the reforms they proposed were really a return to an older custom, or at least had some warrant in earlier practice.

As the Reform movement progressed, this approach was discarded. First, because some of the changes were clearly at variance with Jewish law and could not be justified on the basis of tradition. Second, because Reform had become in essence a challenge to the concept of fixed and unchallengeable authority. It asserted the primacy of ethical and spiritual values, and held that ritual and observance were important only for the educational and inspirational effects they produced. Such a religion could not properly refer to precedent in order to legitimize its ritual practices.

All this is taken for granted today. Our right to discard, modify, and introduce religious practices in accordance with the needs of our people is no longer debated. We assert as firmly as ever that righteousness is more important than rite. Nevertheless, the trend today is to emphasize the psychological and educational value of forms and ceremonies, and to encourage their adoption and extension. There has likewise been an increasingly vocal demand for a clarification of Reform Jewish practice. The establishment of a greater measure of uniformity need not mean either a "return to orthodoxy" or the creation of a new authority.

Religious practice, moreover, involves more than questions of form. Specific situations arise from time to time that involve basic principles. Should a Reform Rabbi officiate at the marriage of a widow to her late husband's brother, or at a mixed marriage? May a member of the Christian Science Church be buried in a Jewish cemetery? These are not questions of mere taste.

An important contribution to the whole subject was made by Dr. Solomon B. Freehof in his small but meaty volume, *Reform Jewish Practice and Its Rabbinic Background*, published in 1944. Since that time, a considerable body of additional material has been brought together, and is now presented as volume two of the same work, which it follows in method and arrangement.

Dr. Freehof's procedure is unique. He states in brief, clear sentences the prevailing Reform practice in a number of areas. Each of these statements is followed by an account of the traditional view on the subject, as found in the Bible, Talmud, codes, and *responsa* literature. Frequently, the Reform practice is found to be in consonance with the traditional *halakah*, or to have some support by earlier authorities, or at least to be not incompatible with tradition. But unlike some of the Reformers of an earlier generation, Dr. Freehof does not quote such precedent as if it alone justified current procedure. And where Reform practice is at variance with the *halakah*, our author

makes this perfectly plain, stating the older law, and explaining the reasons which prompted us to abandon it. In this connection he often cites pronouncements of the Central Conference of American Rabbis and of other Reform bodies.

The first volume dealt with public worship, marriage and divorce, circumcision and naming of children, burial and mourning. Volume two contains an important section on the synagogue building and congregational procedures, and extensive new material on marriage, conversion, and mourning. The clear and readable presentation is adorned by an amazing scholarship. A great variety of traditional authorities, including Orthodox scholars of recent generations, are quoted; many of the cases cited are of unusual interest. One is surprised to learn that Orthodox tradition does not entirely preclude such practices as the participation of women and children in the synagogue service and the employment of Gentile choir singers—practices which have been vehemently denounced by the conservatives of our day.

Only a scholar of Dr. Freehof's exceptional attainments could have provided this rich store of information in so enjoyable a form. We are most grateful for the new volume.

This review, however, provides an opportunity to outline some of the further studies that are needed in this field. What follows is in no sense a criticism of Dr. Freehof. He has done admirably the task he set out to do—to outline prevailing Reform practice and to explain its background in rabbinic tradition. He has not attempted to describe this practice in detail, to trace its history and variations, or to evaluate it. Many items are omitted because they are observed only by some Reform congregations or some Reform Jews, but are not today sufficiently widespread to be considered "prevailing practice." Observances in the home are not treated, for the same reason. There is room, then, for a fuller descriptive treatment, as well as for a program of Reform Jewish practice. Recent discussions by both laymen and rabbis point toward the preparation of a guide indicating what (in the opinion of some serious-minded informed leaders) Reform practice *ought* to be.

What more directly concerns such a publication as this, we need further investigation into the history of modern Jewish observances. Dr. Freehof refers (Vol. II, pp. 123 ff.) to the custom of tombstone dedication, the "unveiling," which plays so large a role in Jewish life today. He points to some interesting antecedents of this custom in rabbinic literature, but does not attempt to shed light on the origin of the present practice. My impression is that it originated in New York City a little more than a half century ago; a careful study of the subject is desirable.

Dr. Freehof does not mention the memorial service held in many

congregational cemeteries on the Sunday morning between Rosh Ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur. I believe this custom arose in Baltimore under rather unusual circumstances; the facts ought to be checked and published.

The fact that Dr. Freehof's book is a stimulus to further studies is itself a tribute to its merits. We look forward to many more volumes from his learned and graceful pen.

New York City

BERNARD J. BAMBERGER

UNDER STRANGE SKIES. By Harry Simonhoff. *New York: Philosophical Library*. 1953. x, 349 pp. \$3.50

Lawyer and journalist Harry Simonhoff has written a travel book in the tradition of Benjamin of Tudela. The last ninety pages are concerned with American Jewry.

Interested primarily in Southern Jewry, particularly the community of Miami, Fla., the author says: "East and North, a notion persists that the South is a kind of Sahara for Judaism A trip to certain old Southern cities will disclose an early adjustment to an environment hardly attained by more recent communities anywhere in the land These cities have on their side the slower pace of age, tradition, and better orientation to native backgrounds and public opinion."

He follows these kind words with a devastating indictment of these communities. He notes the Marrano instinct to hide Jewishness, Gothic synagogues, declining Jewish fervor. As a traveler, he returns again and again to the same themes, anti-Semitism, local snobbery, local colonial Jewish history. He does little to mitigate the North-Eastern notion.

An interesting essay follows on "The Miami Community." Mr. Simonhoff, part of this community from its hectic earlier years, was involved in almost every major community activity. He tells of the fight against virulent Florida anti-Semitism, the fight for Israel, the philanthropies and hospitals, and the millions for the UJA. Narrating "chiefly the writer's personal experiences in the communal affairs of his adopted city," Mr. Simonhoff has contributed a valuable source document for future work.

Revealing certain assumptions, Mr. Simonhoff tells us that "The forms, and even some of the content, of Judaism may be undergoing a transformation." He writes of the air-conditioned synagogues unused by "the larger proportion of congregational membership." But to assume from this that Judaism faces a threat to its survival is a somewhat rash assumption. "The Miami community takes on newer forms without altogether abandoning the old ones. The newer approaches

are but the homely old virtues in full dress." If it is so, one need not worry. But in his text, Mr. Simonhoff reveals a Jewish life that may be very full indeed, if one but retains one's sympathy for Israel and a concern for the financial success of local Jewish institutions, and guards against anti-Semitism. However, the homely old virtue of religion, the organic function of the priest people, does not seem to appear in any dress at all. (The synagogues are generally pictured in *Under Strange Skies* in the midst of bitter quarrels with one another.)

The text itself is written in a rather peculiar alternation of present and past tense. This contributes, perhaps, to its quaintness as a document, but scarcely to greater clarity.

Under Strange Skies is interesting and, no doubt, will prove of use to future historians of the American Jewish scene.

Oxford, England

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