

## Reviews of Books

BARUCH, BERNARD M. *Baruch: My Own Story*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1957. xii, 337 pp. \$5.00

This is the intriguing and warmhearted self-portrait of a unique American whose life has spanned the most decisive half-century in our national history. Emerging on the scene of Wall Street at a time when significant shifts were taking place in the American economy, he managed with shrewd speculative insight to weather the strains and storms of our highly individualistic and intensely competitive social order. Yet, withal, despite his early infatuation with financial success, Bernard M. Baruch succeeded in retaining a certain perspective on human affairs and a bent for idealistic striving as well as a profoundly sympathetic understanding of his fellow men. Through the lenses of his personal experiences, one gains a penetrating view into the inner mechanisms of Wall Street and receives a well-authenticated introduction into the mysteries of high finance and investments. What captivates the reader's attention, however, is not the manipulations of legendary financiers and capitalists in the halcyon days of our country, but the image of Baruch as a man of integrity and lofty principles, proud of his own private set of loyalties, daring and sagacious, eagerly in search of finding meaning in life and somehow haunted by the example which his distinguished father had set.

We regret that the book does not probe deeply enough into the nature of the inner man. There are very few clues to be picked up as to the particular qualities that spelled his unusual success at such an early age in life. At times, caught in the allure of his personal reminiscences and pet memories, the writer tends to wander far afield. Often the rambling effect of the style detracts from the interest aroused by his spectacular rise to fame and glory and by his illuminating ruminations on the stock market, international trade, the threat of nuclear war, the proper role of government, and the like. Striking intellectual sparks fly off the anvil of his mind to light up the narrative, and these help, in part, to explain the unique phenomenon that he has been in the history of our country. And yet we are left with considerable puzzlement concerning the dynamics of his personality, the sources of his amazing gift for making money, and the hidden motivations of his penchant for doing much good with it.

Some Jewish reviewers have become bogged down in the mire of egocentric evaluation of his greatness. They have called attention to the enigma of his Jewishness, and have been hard pressed to reconcile Baruch's unabashed acknowledgement of his origins with his apparent indifference to the causes and institutions that matter most to Jews. While we would likewise bemoan his loss to the Jewish enclave, such a fact does not becloud our estimate of his significance in the larger framework of the American dream. His life is a tribute to the qualities which have made our country great, while his lapse from the fold is further proof of the price that must sometimes be paid for the benefits of equality. Men of his stature, it would seem, cannot be confined to the narrower and more parochial climate of the ethnic group. The entire land, even the globe at times, is required to give full scope to their boundless vitality. In rendering service to the cause of humanity, they are in a deeper sense perhaps fulfilling the inherent traditions of their own people. The wisdom and warmth which have become the hallmark of Bernard Baruch and his attainments in the fields of both national and international affairs transcend our inclination to categorize the men of distinction in racial or religious terms. The great men of our times, among whom Baruch is bound to be reckoned even beyond the judgment of the moment, belong to history — they reflect honor on the entire human race.

*Grand Rapids, Mich.*

HARRY ESSRIG

EMMANUEL, ISAAC S. *Precious Stones of the Jews of Curaçao: Curaçoon Jewry, 1656-1957*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company. 1957. 584 pp. \$10.00

Precious, indeed, are the records that Dr. Isaac S. Emmanuel has preserved for us, for this is the account of a community unique in American Jewish annals. Curaçao shelters the only West Indian Jewish community which can trace its origins to the seventeenth century in an unbroken line and whose communal institutions are still flourishing. There are, of course, good reasons for the island's resistance to dissolution: in the first half of the nineteenth century, when other West Indian islands — and Jewish communities — were destroyed economically by the fall in the price of sugar, Curaçao, because of its proximity to the South American mainland, catered to the rising economies of the newly established republics of Venezuela and Colombia. The present century, which found the other Antilles in a state of economic depression, gave Curaçao a new prosperity with oil refineries and a free-trade port. Furthermore, except for occasional

epidemics of tropical fevers, Curaçao remained immune to the earthquakes, hurricanes, fires, and unchecked tropical vegetation which took their toll of synagogues, cemeteries, and Jewish citizens elsewhere in the Caribbean. As a consequence, Mikvé Israel Synagogue, erected in 1732, is still standing, and the cemetery has remained in continuous use from its first known burial of 1668(?).

But nature and the oil refineries have been kinder to the Jews than to their monumental inscriptions; for many of the 2,574 tombstones catalogued by Dr. Emmanuel have indecipherable epitaphs, and he reports that many others are being destroyed by chemical fumes from the refineries. This volume, therefore, takes on added significance by preserving data that are gradually becoming unobtainable.

The present work is actually Part II of the author's *History of the Jews of Curaçao*. Part I remains in manuscript, but we are given many allusions to it throughout this volume. While it is to be hoped that the first part will eventually see the light of publication, Dr. Emmanuel has given us so much detail in the part in print that the historian — and even the casual reader — can draw from it the origins, institutions, history, customs, biography, and genealogy of a major segment of Curaçao Jewry.

Ten chapters, covering over 100 pages, are devoted to the history of the cemetery, burial societies, burial customs, and Sephardic names. The author goes to great lengths to derive from the tombstones the beliefs of the Jewish community, the costs of funerals, the testamentary arrangements of the deceased, the elaborate art work of the tombstones, and a host of mortality statistics.

Two hundred and four epitaphs with biographical, historical, and genealogical data regarding the interred and their families fill the bulk of the book. These 204 were chosen as examples of the variety of languages used, of individuals who were professional or lay leaders of the community, as well as forty-two of the earliest epitaphs. The last two biographies are those of the eighteenth-century *Haham* [rabbi] Haim Isaac Carigal and the nineteenth-century *Haham* Aron Mendes Chumaceiro, the former buried in Barbados, the latter at Amsterdam. They are included because of their importance as rabbinic leaders of Curaçao Jewry. The inclusion of their biographies is characteristic of Dr. Emmanuel's eclectic approach. He has filled his work with valuable data, but much of it is only incidental to the history of the Jews of Curaçao. Thus, while the historian rejoices that he has made such extensive use of the Sephardic Archives of Amsterdam and the Dutch State Archives at The Hague to give us heretofore unavailable information regarding the origins of many Sephardic-American

families, the reader is wearied by much repetition of detail throughout the biographies.

The last ninety pages of the book are devoted to the important listing of 2,574 tombstones with death dates, where legible; a series of appendices; a glossary; and an index. Here, too, one might wish that, instead of devoting time and space to the compilation of how many times a given name was used by the Jews of Curaçao, the author had extended his index to include an alphabetical listing by catalogue number of those individuals listed in the catalogue. (His index merely indicates all the pages on which a family name occurs, thereby requiring much searching for a specific individual.)

But these criticisms are minor ones. Jewish historians will be eternally indebted to Dr. Emmanuel — and to the Jewish community of Curaçao, which made possible the publication of his book — for the largest and most important volume of data yet to appear on West Indian Jewry. Add this to Arnold Wiznitzer's useful record of Brazilian Jewry, *The Records of the Earliest Jewish Community in the New World* (New York, 1954), to David de Sola Pool's New York story, *Portraits Etched in Stone* (New York, 1952), and to numerous West Indian articles in the *Publications* of the American Jewish Historical Society, and one has a growing picture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American Jewry, for whom the Caribbean was Main Street. Indeed, when Eustace M. Shilstone's long-awaited *Monumental Inscriptions in the Jewish Cemetery at Barbados* appears (supplementing Wilfred Samuel's splendid article in Volume XIII of the *Transactions* of the Jewish Historical Society of England), and when the index of St. Thomas Jewry, being compiled by the island's librarian, Miss Enid M. Baa, comes to light, it will be possible to compile a biographical dictionary of many early American Jews, tracing their history and their wanderings.

Researchers in early American Jewish history, and in the history of West Indian Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, will lean heavily on Dr. Emmanuel's findings. Those who wish detailed descriptions of Sephardic rites and customs will find this work invaluable. And families who can trace their genealogies to West Indian Sephardim will undoubtedly find help among these data.

The Bloch Publishing Company has clothed the volume in an adequate, but not overly sturdy, binding. The print is very legible, but the physical format of the book suffers greatly by comparison with the Columbia University Press's treatment of the above-mentioned work by Dr. David de Sola Pool. Dr. Emmanuel's book, however, contains five very helpful maps and seventy-nine photographic illustrations. The latter are remarkable

because of the beauty of the tombstone carvings portrayed. We know of no other cemetery in which such lavish use is made of pictorial illustration. The majority of the illustrations are of biblical scenes, tasteful allusions to the biblical surnames of those interred; indeed, employing these photographs, one could create an attractive illustrated book of biblical narratives.

Norfolk, Virginia

MALCOLM H. STERN

FAST, HOWARD. *The Naked God*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc. 1957. 197 pp. \$3.50

*The Naked God* (an allusion to the naked king in Hans Christian Andersen's famous fairy tale) is Howard Fast's moving account of how he came to enter the Communist Party in 1947 and how he finally left it ten years later. Although he had been seared by the very successful efforts of the Communist Party to mutilate his talents as a creative writer, and although he had experienced the utter ruthlessness of the apparatus of the Communist Party, he still clung stubbornly and even desperately to the illusion that somehow the word was the reality and that his own crippling was a necessary sacrifice to ideology. Only Nikita S. Khrushchev's speech denouncing Joseph Stalin's excesses proved to be of sufficient weight to make Fast aware of the meaning of the whole process that had engulfed him and to lead him to leave the Communist Party and to write *The Naked God*.

The book is as painful a book to read as it must have been to write. To see so sensitive a soul, so dedicated a personality, and so talented a writer destroy himself (pp. 154-55; cf. pp. 145-46) and — as Fast himself confesses — seek to destroy others (p. 157) is truly an awesome experience. To see the complete abdication of reason, the infantile worship of omniscient, omnipotent, and unerring authority, the self-mortification of a proud artist before the verbal whiplashing of cruel, sadistic, and power-greedy commissars — leaders who in this country had no power of coercion other than the ideology of liberation that they manipulated — truly, to witness such a tragedy is to be moved beyond words.

Much of *The Naked God* is devoted to Fast's own story of why he joined the Communist Party and his own personal feelings about the people whom he met and associated with, his doubts, his tribulations, his suffering. All of this helps us to understand Fast's personal dilemma. Of more enduring interest, however, are those elements in the book which enable us to comprehend the character and nature of the Communist Party

as a structure which has proved to be so effective through the years in corralling intellectuals and creative artists. This is all the more important in view of the fact that the Communist Party invariably works to crush creative talent, such talent being, as Fast came to realize, a threat to monolithic structures.

Fast contributes to the comprehension of this destructive process in his portrait of the Communist Party leader (pp. 88-97) and in his analysis of the magical character of the ideology and its manipulation (pp. 101-6). The Communist Party is made up of two elements: the rank and file membership who for the most part take the ideology seriously; and the paid members of the permanent apparatus who, being in complete and absolute control, are the wielders and authoritative expositors of the ideology (pp. 74-82). Since the structure of power is totally in the hands of the functionaries, the rank and file are helpless even when the deception begins to dawn upon them.

One suspects, however, that the phenomenon is more complex. The behavior of Fast, and of the many individuals like him who were sincerely dedicated to the ideals that the Communist leadership merely manipulated, betrays a rebellious-submissive syndrome which the leadership may have activated, but did not create. The Communist leaders in this country had no coercive power at their disposal to compel Fast to abandon his critical faculties or to destroy his creative powers. They did, however, succeed in activating in Fast — as in so many others like him — an intra-psychical struggle over the problem of authority in which the rebellious impulse was linked to the ideal goals verbalized by the Communist leadership, while the impulse to be completely submissive to authority manifested itself in the blind and humiliating debasement before the demands of the apparatus. Unless we assume some such psychic pattern, it is indeed difficult to understand how Fast not only joined the Communist Party as late as 1947 — a time when claims of ignorance as to the structural character of the Communist Party could hardly be taken seriously — but also how he remained in the Party after his books were condemned (pp. 135-54) — *My Glorious Brothers*, dealing with the struggle of the Maccabees, led to the charge by the secretariat of the Party that Fast was guilty of Jewish bourgeois nationalism (p. 143) — after he had suffered many personal humiliations, after he had been virtually stripped of all his savings, and, above all, after Soviet anti-Semitism had so openly manifested itself with the Doctors' Plot, the Slansky trials, and the liquidation of such Yiddish poets as David Bergelson and Itzik Feffer (cf. pp. 129-31). Lack of evidence of the character of Communism either in the United

States or in Russia was thus obviously not the reason that Fast and others remained in the Communist Party. And it would seem that, had not Khrushchev made his revelations exposing Stalin — the new authority permitting the exposure of the old — Fast might still have remained a willing sacrifice to *The Naked God*.

By once more demonstrating that glorious ideologies are manipulated by ruthless men and that the *structure* of power, not the verbalizations which it employs, is the decisive reality, Fast has benefited others through his agonizing experience.

Hebrew Union College - Jewish  
Institute of Religion

ELLIS RIVKIN

SCHWARZ, JACOB D. *The Life and Letters of Montgomery Prunejuice*. New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations. 1957. 246 pp. \$3.00

*A religion requires not only a body of priests who know what they are doing but a body of worshippers who know what is being done.* — T. S. Eliot

Rabbi Jacob D. Schwarz has set himself the task of educating lay temple leaders, with an occasional animadversion to rabbis as well, in the humble but fine art of synagogmanship. As we may well expect, he is confronted by a lackadaisical attitude on the subject. The rabbis take it for granted that they know how, and many laymen still find it a needless area of interest.

With excellent judgment and skill, the author takes refuge in a delightful use of sarcastic humor. He paints a group of characters who debate many subjects. Among them is an old-fashioned, overly talkative skeptic, Mr. Montgomery Prunejuice, who delivers his opinions in a mottled jargon of German and American patois, on every conceivable religious subject. To be more accurate, his skepticism is not a striving for reasoned judgment, but rather the stirrings of a slothful mind which regards everything new as useless and abhors spending more money.

Opposed to Mr. Prunejuice is a group of idealistic temple board members, men and women of modern education, animated by a sincere desire to modernize the temple program and to live their Judaism. Mr. Prunejuice reports the proceedings at the board meetings in a series of letters to the editor of *The Synagogue* magazine, where they were originally published.

The result is a continuous Round Table of vigorous but not overly

clever assertions by Mr. Prunejuice and shrewd repartee by the members of the board of Holy Moses Congregation, which subsequently changed its name to Congregation Heavenly Rest.

The subjects of temple board discussion, as portrayed in these letters, range from "Why must temple members go to services?" to "Why should religion take a three months vacation in the summer?", from "How to select a teacher for the religious school" to "How to choose a rabbi." Whether they deal with "Adult education" or "Gambling in the synagogue" or "Certain snobbish tendencies in Jewish life as these are reflected in the synagogue" or "Rabbis' pensions" or "Board members' length of service" or "Synagogue architecture" — they all evidence a wealth of information, a modernity of viewpoint, a delicious humor that make them very readable. The book is appropriately illustrated with quaint sketches by Russel Newton Roman.

The letters illustrate not only how to make the undesirable *ridiculous*, but are a subtle education in synagogmanship.

The author once confided to this reviewer what he considered the greatest compliment which he had ever received. A number of years ago the late Adolph Rosenberg, then president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was in New York for a conference with the president of a large and influential congregation in that city, a person who until recently held an important post in the Federal government. This man happened to mention Prunejuice, and Mr. Rosenberg said, with some amazement: "Do you read Prunejuice?" "Mr. Rosenberg," he replied, "I never miss them. I see myself."

I cannot help recalling the author's comment on meetings of the Union Councils where he was frequently called upon to lead discussion meetings devoted to temple problems. "There was an unusual group of laymen present who quite preempted the discussions." This fact, this hope, this dream was a constant source of encouragement to him.

*Director Emeritus of the*

*Union of American Hebrew Congregations*

GEORGE ZEPIN

## Brief Notices

BAR-DANIEL, ELIAHU. *From Daniel to Daniel: Observations by an American, a Russian-born Jew, Now Residing in Israel*. New York: Vantage Press. 1957. 319 pp. \$3.50

In this engrossing autobiographical work, the author, son of the title's first Daniel and grandfather of its second Daniel, the first born in Poland, the second in Israel, recounts his revolutionary activities in Czarist Russia, his rise to prosperity in America, and his final settlement, in 1950, in Israel. The bulk of the book presents an analysis, both sympathetic and critical, of Israeli life and problems.

BOKSER, BEN ZION. *Judaism and Modern Man: Essays in Jewish Theology*. New York: Philosophical Library. 1957. 153 pp. \$3.75

Dr. Bokser, the noted Conservative rabbi, presents here twelve essays on the themes of Spirit and Culture, Piety and Life, and Religion and Economics. The essays examine Judaism's relationship to modern political and social ideologies, culture, and religion. Included among them is a lucid essay on "The Future of American Jewry."

BRESLAU, DAVID, *et al.*, Edited by. *Adventure in Pioneering: The Story of 25 Years of Habonim Camping*. New York: Chay Commission of the Labor Zionist Movement. 1957. 198 pp.

This book contains a collection of materials relating to the history and development of Labor Zionist youth (Habonim) camping in the United States and Canada. Included are items gleaned from convention reports, organizational bulletins, personal memoirs, and the like, and also several necrologies.

COHON, BERYL D. *Out of the Heart: Intimate Talks from a Jewish Pulpit on the Personal Issues of Life*. New York: Vantage Press. 1957. 120 pp. \$2.75

This volume, a collection of eighteen sermons by Dr. Cohon, a prominent Reform rabbi of Boston, deals vigorously with pressing moral and spiritual problems of modern life, and includes an introduction

by Dr. Benjamin B. Hersey, Dean of Crane Theological School, Tufts University, Medford, Mass.

EDELMAN, LILY. *Israel: New People in an Old Land*. New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons. 1958. 208 pp. \$2.95

This volume is a sympathetic study of the new State of Israel, its history, its institutions, its problems, its ideals. Mrs. Edelman's book features many fine photographs, a map of Israel, a bibliography, a glossary of Hebrew terms, and a foreword by the famous archaeologist, William F. Albright.

FREUND, MICHAEL. *Training for Jewish Social Welfare with Special Reference to the Training Bureau for Jewish Communal Service*. New York: Continuing Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Training Bureau for Jewish Communal Service. 1956. 2 parts. 405, XXI, xvi pp.

These two mimeographed volumes, a report concerned primarily with the experiences of the Training Bureau for Jewish Communal Service, constitute a study of that Jewish social welfare agency, whose activities were suspended in 1951, and its relation to previous training projects under Jewish auspices.

HESCHELES, JEREMIAH. *Soneten fun Tohu Vavohu: Lieder, Poems*. New York: Farlag "Eignweg." 1957. 192 pp.

A volume of Yiddish poems, composed by Jeremiah Heschel between 1932 and 1957.

LEVITAN, TINA. *The Firsts of American Jewish History*. 2nd ed. Brooklyn, N. Y.: Charuth Press. 1957. 285 pp. \$4.50

Miss Levitan presents here a revised and enlarged edition of a book first published in 1952. The present volume contains, in addition to several illustrations and an extensive bibliography, 112 chapters dealing with American Jewish historical beginnings from 1492 to the present. Included are chapters on Luis de Torres, Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, Jacob Lumbroso, Aaron Lopez, Harmon Hendricks, Rebecca Gratz, Mordecai Manuel Noah, Penina Moise, Arnold Fischel, Leopold Damrosch, Henrietta Szold, Samuel Gompers, Jacob Joseph, Jacob Henry Schiff, Albert A. Michelson, Samuel Goldwyn, Louis D. Brandeis, David Sarnoff, Edna Ferber, Selman Waksman, and Anna Rosenberg, to mention but a few of the many personalities portrayed in these pages. The book is published at 435 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn.

MEYER, ISIDORE S., Edited by. *Early History of Zionism in America*. New York: The American Jewish Historical Society and the Theodor Herzl Foundation. 1958. viii, 340 pp.

This is a collection of papers presented at the Conference on the Early History of Zionism in America, convened by the American Jewish Historical Society and the Herzl Foundation in New York City, in December, 1955. The papers deal with pre-Herzlian as well as Herzlian Zionism, and were presented by Abraham J. Karp, Samuel H. Levine, Shlomo Noble, Milton Plesur, Arthur Zeiger, Alex Bein, Abraham G. Duker, Sylvia Landress, Anita Libman Lebeson, Maxwell Whiteman, Hyman B. Grinstein, Rose G. Jacobs, Herbert Parzen, C. Bezalel Sherman, Irwin Oder, Joseph Rappaport, and Eisig Silberschlag.

*The Pursuit of Equality: A Half Century with the American Jewish Committee*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc. 1957. 109 pp. \$6.00

This handsomely produced volume, supplied with an introduction by Jacob Blaustein and a foreword by Irving M. Engel, records the American Jewish Committee's contribution to the cause of human rights in America and throughout the world.

ROBACK, A. A. *Di Imperye Yiddish*. Mexico. 1958. (Distributed by SCI-Art Publishers, Cambridge, Mass.) 554 pp. \$5.00

Dr. A. A. Roback has collected in this volume a series of essays dealing with many aspects of Yiddish literature.

SHANKMAN, SAM. *Baron Hirsch Congregation from Ur to Memphis*. Memphis, Tenn.: Baron Hirsch Congregation. 1957. 153 pp.

Published for the dedication of the new Baron Hirsch Synagogue in the closing weeks of 1957, this attractively printed and illustrated volume constitutes a history of the congregation, which was founded in 1860 and named after the famous philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch.

SILVER, ABBA HILLEL. *Where Judaism Differed: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1957. 318 pp. \$4.50

Dr. Silver, one of America's leading Reform rabbis and Zionist leaders, has written an eloquent, forthright, and scholarly book on the differences between Judaism and Christianity and the features which render the Jewish experience unique and divergent.

SUWOL, SAMUEL M. *Jewish History of Oregon*. Portland, Ore.: S. M. Suwol. 1958. 11 pp.

This pamphlet contains seven brief chapters on Oregon Jewish history, which began in 1840.

WEITZ, MARTIN M. *Life Without Strife*. New York: Bloch Publishing Company. 1957. xiii, 200 pp. \$3.00

Dr. Weitz, a prominent Reform rabbi in New Jersey, offers here a collection of his writings on four themes: God, Torah, Israel, and Man. The selections, which include both prose and poetry, feature, among other things, essays on Jewish life in America and the State of Israel. The book contains a preface by Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, Director of the American Jewish Archives, and an introduction by Dr. David B. Allman, president of the American Medical Association.

### STILL AVAILABLE

The following publications may be obtained from the American Jewish Archives. Write for prices.

BERTRAM W. KORN — *Eventful Years and Experiences*

A series of research studies dealing with the life of the American Jew during the nineteenth century.

JACOB R. MARCUS — *Jewish Americana* — A Supplement to A. S. W. Rosenbach, *An American Jewish Bibliography*

A catalogue of books and articles by Jews or relating to them, printed in the United States from the earliest days to 1850 and found in the Library of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati.

ISAAC MAYER WISE — *The World of My Books*

A series of short essays published in *Die Deborah*, 1896-97. Translated from the German by Albert H. Friedlander.

## The American Jewish Archives

CINCINNATI 20, OHIO