

Book Review

SCHAPPES, MORRIS U. *A Pictorial History of the Jews in the United States*. Foreword by the Reverend Dr. David de Sola Pool. New Revised Edition. New York: Marzani & Munsell. 1965. xii-xiii, 339 pp. \$7.50

Marzani & Munsell are to be congratulated upon the issuance of this revised and expanded edition of Morris U. Schappes' superb *Pictorial History of the Jews in the United States*, first published in 1958. The new edition includes, as an added feature, a short foreword by the Reverend Dr. David de Sola Pool, rabbi emeritus of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York and a prominent American Jewish historian in his own right, who notes that Schappes "presents a vivid story of what Jews have contributed to the country over three centuries."

While the revisions in the text are minor, consisting, for the most part, of corrected misprints, Schappes has added a chapter which he entitles, "Postlude: Past the Mid-Century," in which he presents the most important trends in American Jewish life during the past fifteen years and evaluates the various problems which currently confront the American Jewish community.

Schappes is no dry-as-dust chronicler of a dead past, but a historian with a philosophy of history and a set of values which he uses in judging men and issues of the past. The reader may find his views set forth explicitly in the Introduction to his pioneering volume, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875* (New York, 1950; revised edition, 1953), and implicitly throughout the present volume. Schappes sees the conflict of classes and existing economic systems as the context within which Jewish life and thought unfold in different countries and periods, and he regards Jewish history as intimately related to the history of non-Jewish society. He describes the history of Jewish culture in the United States, both religious and secular, with a sure mastery, and although he himself is a secularist, his treatment of religious thought and practice is quite fair. He traces the manifestations of anti-Semitism in American society from the very beginnings of colonial history to the present, but he also portrays, and in a very skillful manner, the great advances made by Jews, with the cooperation of their non-Jewish friends, in combatting prejudice and discrimination and in securing political, economic, and social equality. Although he indicates the parts played by Jews on both sides of such events as the Revolutionary War and the Civil

War, and in the prolonged debate on slavery, he does not hesitate to condemn or praise the opinions and actions of Jews and others which, from his point of view, have impeded or furthered the progress of justice and human dignity.

Schappes devotes more space than do other historians to such matters as the history of Jewish secularism, Yiddish culture, and the Jewish labor movement. Although he has been criticized for doing so, he deserves praise rather than censure for throwing light upon aspects of American Jewish history which are all too frequently overlooked or treated superficially by others. On the other hand, as Dr. Pool points out, the volume offers a well balanced treatment of every significant phase of American Jewish history, including the synagogue, Zionism, Hebrew, and Jewish education.

Although, in his final chapter, Schappes does not minimize the seriousness of many of the problems facing the American Jewish community today — anti-Semitism, intermarriage, Negro-Jewish relationships, and the problem of assimilation — the view which he presents is a positive and affirmative one. Based upon his analysis and evaluation of the role of cultural pluralism in American life, and of the continuance of the prophetic tradition and liberalism in Jewish life, he has confidence in the ability of the American Jewish community to solve its problems, to continue its ethnic and religious identity, and to contribute its share, indeed, more than its proportionate share, as in the past, to the building of a more democratic and a more just American society.

Our author's sympathies, it should be made clear, are with the Left, and he has undoubtedly been influenced by Marxist thought. Still, one need not agree with all his opinions and interpretations of American Jewish history to see that he has written a thoughtful history, based upon thorough research and a knowledge of primary and secondary sources, with photographs which illumine and enliven the text, and that he has thereby made an important contribution to our knowledge of the history of the Jew in the United States.

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