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MENORAH



REVIEW • THE JUDAIC STUDIES PROGRAM OF VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY • NUMBER 11 • FALL 1987

WHY IT'S FUNDAMENTAL

A Dictionary of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Edited by Leon Klenicki and
Geoffrey Wigoder
Paulist Press

Biblical Studies—Meeting Ground of Jews and Christians

Edited by Lawrence Boadt,
Helga Croner, and Leon
Klenicki

Paulist Press

Evangelicals and Jews in An Age of Pluralism

Edited by Marc H. Tanenbaum,
Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James
Rudin
Baker Book House

A Review essay by Ira Gissen

In the last 20 years, more progress has been made in improving the relationship between Christians and Jews than in the almost 2,000-year history dating from the inception of the Christian faith. Such books as these can be written, not only to attest to that progress but also to further the advancement of understanding between the faiths.

Pope John Paul II's visit to the historic Rome Synagogue, the first ever made by a Pontiff to a Jewish house of worship, is an extraordinary symbol of an extraordinary development in our time. Prefatory to the Holy Father's visit were the celebratory events marking the 20th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*. In that historic document, promulgated by Vatican II, within 15 Latin sentences, 2,221 Council Fathers committed the Roman Catholic Church to an irrevocable reconsideration of its relationship with the Jewish people.

Pope John XXIII had laid the irreversible groundwork for the reconsideration by the Council of the

Church's historic attitude of contempt toward the Jewish people; Vatican II rose to this historic challenge. A relationship that had endured for 1,900 years began to undergo a metamorphosis, epitomized in the words of John Paul II, speaking at the 20th anniversary colloquium of *Nostra Aetate* in Rome:

In this gathering of such important institutions for the purpose of celebrating *Nostra Aetate*, I see a way of putting into practice one of the main recommendations of the Declaration, where it says that "since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is . . . so great, this Sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues" (*Nostra Aetate*, No. 4).

Jews and Christians must get to know each other better. Not just superficially as people of different religions, merely co-existing in the same place, but as members of such religions which are so closely linked to one another (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4). This implies that Christians try to know as exactly as possible the distinctive beliefs, religious practices and spirituality of the Jews, and conversely that the Jews try to know the beliefs and practices and spirituality of Christians.

Such seems to be the proper way to dispel prejudices. But also to discover, on the Christian side, the deep Jewish roots of Christianity and, on the Jewish side, to appreciate better the special way in which the Church, since the day of the Apostles, had read the Old Testament and received the Jewish Heritage.

Jewish-Christian relations are never an academic exercise. They are, on the contrary, part of the very fabric of our religious commitments and our respective vocations as Christians and as Jews. For Christians these relations have special theological and moral dimensions because of the Church's conviction, expressed in the document we are commemorating, that "she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God, in his inexpressible mercy, deigned to establish the ancient Covenant, and draws sustenance from the root of the good olive tree into which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles" (cf. Rom 11:17-24) (*Nostra Aetate*, No. 4). To commemorate the anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* is to become still more conscious of all these dimensions and to translate them into daily practice everywhere.

These extraordinary historic events, beginning with the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, were nourished by the ashes of the Holocaust.

On June 13, 1960, Pope John XXIII held a private conversation with the French Jewish historian, Jules Isaac. For two decades since the end of World War II, Isaac had devoted his life to a scholarly examination of this question: Why was the Christian world so apathetic and silent concerning the fate of European Jews? His research had concluded that the answer could be found in certain elements of the doctrines of Christianity. In his monumental, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (published the year before the Vatican II), he wrote

What, then, remains of the myth of the decide people and their

crime of crucifixion? Nothing but the perversity of habit.

Jesus died the victim of Roman authority, sentenced by Pilate, crucified by Roman soldiers. Nothing, not even the cooperation of the Jewish authorities, can extenuate the significance of this historical fact, whose certainty is beyond question.

Such are the conclusions of an investigation conducted on a purely historical level—conclusions which are limited but essential. All the rest is the product of Christian catechism—whose orientation we know—which, because of its orientation, was too often exploited to foster and support the worst prejudices.

In his chapter on "The Crime of Decide," he concludes "What has not been done in the last 1,900 years in an effort to conjure away Pilate!"

With that background, the evolution of Catholic-Jewish relations in the last score of years has been nothing less than a phenomenon in our times. Of recent origin has been the emergence within Protestantism of the Evangelicals and Fundamentalists. By sheer growth, weight of numbers, and public manifestation of energy through political activity and the "electric church," they command attention.

The Fundamentalist movement obtains its name from a series of publications titled "The Fundamentals," which first appeared in 1909. The principal issues in controversy that gave birth to the Fundamentalist movement were those of Darwinian evolution, higher Biblical criticism, and the concept of Supernaturalism. The Fundamentalist leaders invoked five transcendental principles that they considered to be the essence of Christianity. In their view, anything less was not another form of Christianity but, rather, not Christian. The fundamentals are the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; the deity of Christ, including his virgin birth; the substitutionary atonement of Christ's death; the literal resurrection of Christ from the dead; and the literal return of Christ in the Second-Advent.

For some Jews, the views and attitude of Fundamentalists toward Jews present something of a dilemma. On

the one hand, the approach of Evangelists and Fundamentalists to Judaism parallels that of the Roman Catholic Church during the centuries preceding Vatican II. That is, the historic Fundamentalist approach to Judaism, in many respects, follows the philosophy of the teaching of contempt. From that perspective, Judaism is regarded as the first stage of God's plan, a way of preparing the world for Jesus. Therefore, according to that school of thought, Judaism does not have a mission to witness God. The attitude of historic Fundamentalism, in general, toward Judaism is that of friendship and curiosity, but also a desire for final acceptance of Jesus.

What complicates the relationship with Fundamentalism for some Jews is the special relationship between the Fundamentalist movement and Israel and its Jewish population. Fundamentalists have avowed their total support for the Jewish state and virtually unconditional endorsement of Israel's policies. Many Fundamentalists regard the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land as portending the Second Advent of Jesus and his ultimate recognition by the Jewish people.

Efforts to establish bridges of understanding and cooperation between Jews and Fundamentalists face many obstacles. For example, the religious views of Reform Jews are, in many ways, analogous to those of Protestants whose faith encompasses the principles of higher Biblical criticism. By questioning the literal truth of the Bible (the infallibility of scripture) they occupy a religious ground that is inherently unsympathetic to the very basis of Fundamentalism. Orthodox Jews, on the other hand, by virtue of their very orthodoxy, cannot accommodate an equally orthodox religion of another faith. What of secular Jews? Their secularism is inherently unsympathetic to the acceptance of the supernaturalism embraced by Fundamentalism.

Indeed, within Judaism itself, there is a struggle with Jewish Fundamentalism. For example, in spring 1986 an Israeli religious academician, Dr. David Rosen, dean of the Sapir Center for Jewish Heritage in Jerusalem, warned that Jewish Fundamentalism is endangering Israel's democracy. He pointed out that during the past

dozen years a pronounced right wing thrust manifested itself in the emergence of a new Fundamentalist block among the Orthodox, which is reflected in the controversy about "who is a Jew." He described the Jewish Fundamentalists in Israel as "nondemocratic, noncommitted to pluralism, and concerned only with their own religious interest." Prophetically, he pointed out, "the atmosphere of religious extremism is fueled and fuels a corresponding secular extremism, which is just as destructive."

Concern about Jewish Fundamentalism is not limited to religious academicians. Barely a month after Rosen spoke, Leila Seigel, president of the International Council of Jewish Women, addressing the European conference of the organization, said, "We are disturbed by the progress of religious fundamentalism, whatever its origin. Fidelity to our faith and identity does not mean fanaticism. We have based our ideals on the Jewish tradition, which calls for mutual respect." She went on to address the Jewish fundamentalist position on religious divorce, restrictions on the presumption of widowhood, and obligations of a widow's brother-in-law.

But why the antipathy, why the malaise that afflicts so many Jews when confronted with the prospect of initiating dialogue with Protestant Evangelicals and Fundamentalists? Surely if Roman Catholics and Jews could surmount the history of centuries of contempt to achieve understanding and enlightenment in our time, the obstacles represented by mere decades of Fundamentalism are not insuperable. The problem—the barrier—may be more one of perspective than reality.

A particularly insightful view of this condition is presented by Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, who wrote in the December 1985 Reconstructionist, "Though most American Jews are somewhat vague about Fundamentalism, we seem at least positive enough about one thing: it makes us uneasy. This discomfort is not without a certain conceit—the conceit, perhaps, of the city towards the country." In the same vein, he notes, "... geography as much as theology has helped keep Evangelicals and Jews separate from

one another. Historically, the largest concentration of Jews has been in the urban centers of the Northeast and upper Midwest, while the major Evangelical population has generally been located in the Southeast and Southwest."

Here also, Vernon C. Grounds, president emeritus of the Conservative Baptist Seminary in Denver, Colorado, writes, "As an Evangelical, I draw a sharp distinction between proselytizing and witnessing, rejecting proselytism as a perversion of witness." More recently, Arthur Gay, past president of the National Association of Evangelicals, denied that Evangelists are seeking to end the Jewish people through conversion: "Such triumphal Evangelism is not the point of proselytization." He went on to point out that one of the reasons that the Evangelical community has changed its attitude towards the Jewish people is its "understanding that the Holocaust did occur."

Just as *Nostra Aetate* arose from the ruins of the Holocaust, so too, we believe, will there emerge a new and enlightened relationship between Jews and the Evangelicals' and Fundamentalists' faith community.

Ira Gissen is director of the North Carolina Virginia Region of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

**IN SEARCH OF A MODEL FOR
LIBERAL RELIGION:
MAURICE FRIEDMAN'S
HUMAN WAY**

By Norbert M. Samuelson

At a time when the academic study of religion in America meant that Christian theology and Jewish studies were synonymous with the Bible, Maurice Friedman introduced America to the writings of Martin Buber. Since that time Friedman has largely served as a John the Baptist to Buber's Jesus; that is, Friedman has functioned as the advocate and promoter of Buber's thought. This role was the source of much criticism about Friedman's books; it was claimed that Friedman merely summarized Buber's words and did not even interpret what those words meant.

These criticisms, however, no longer apply. In recent years Friedman has moved beyond stating Buber to presenting Friedman's own ab-

sorption of Buber's thought into his own philosophy. Worthy of mention in this regard are *Touchstones of Reality: Existential Trust and the Community of Peace* (1972) and *The Human Way: A Dialogic Approach to Religion and Human Experience* (1982).

Friedman's writings exhibit many influences, but the dominant source of his faith remains the thought of Martin Buber. As such Friedman, the prophet of Buber, has become Friedman, the disciple. His thought remains that of his master, but like a disciple, Buber's philosophy has been interpreted and transformed into a theology that is distinctly Friedman's. Hence, both *Touchstones* and *The Human Way* are important books for any student of contemporary religious thought. They constitute major statements in theology by one of the most influential figures in the academic study of religion, and they provide an excellent example of one way that the thought of Martin Buber, a giant of modern religious philosophy, can be applied to current issues in religion.

The reader should be aware that *The Human Way* is a follow-up to *Touchstones*, so that it is critical that *Touchstones* be read first. Friedman's key terms in *The Human Way*—touchstones of reality, the community of otherness, existential trust, and dialogue—are explained in *Touchstones*, and, what is most important, Friedman's way of doing a philosophy of religion is developed in *Touchstones* and taken for granted in *The Human Way*.

The Human Way is Friedman's dialogic study of the philosophy of religion through touchstones of reality. The important words in this statement are "touchstones," "dialogic," and "philosophy of religion." Friedman defines the philosophy of religion as an examination of life in search of authentic existence and an investigation of the interrelation of being, knowing, and valuing. His approach stands in direct opposition to so-called objective studies of religion such as those of William James and John Dewey, which seek a universally true religious faith that underlies all human religious experience. For Friedman, the philosophy of religion is a conceptual clarification of the reality found in religion, which consists in drawing attention to the attitude that arises from the encounter of a religious person or a religious

community with the whole of reality. As such the students of the philosophy of religion enter into a personal dialogue with different experiences of encounter to increase their own witness to the reality of dialogue from their own encounters. The goal of the endeavor is to promote a community of otherness, a community of people who are open to meeting others with trust but without any guarantees of security.

Friedman defines dialogue as mutual knowing through openness, directness, and presentness. It presupposes existential trust in being open to meeting and relationship with the other, which Friedman equates with trust in God. The events in which such encounters occur become touchstones for the participants through which they apprehend all of their lived reality. These touchstones are religious symbols that point to the concrete events of meeting and give meaning to everything in life. They do not enable the participants to gain any special objective knowledge. For these people there is no absolute truth beyond the truth of each concrete relationship. For example, through touchstones you do not know what God is. But they do enable the participants to testify that beyond the apparent chaos and absurdity of life, there is some truth.

The Human Way is a personal expression of Maurice Friedman's faith, the faith of a student of the philosophy and psychology of religions of the East as well as the West, who has been deeply influenced by the studies of Martin Buber in philosophy, theology, and Hasidism, and who strongly feels his identity as a Jew but does not participate in any active way in the communal life of the Jewish people. In particular, Friedman affirms "the biblical covenant as a covenant of trust between God and a people, between God and every people, to be renewed in every age according to the cruel but real demands of that age." Since this kind of study of religion is dialogic, it is also highly individual. The product of the dialogue is determined by the background of the participants. Change either the student or what the student chooses to study, and you change the result. Consequently, on Friedman's own terms, his conclusions are his. As such others may or may not share them, and if they do not, their conclusions need not be

wrong; for Friedman there can be no claims of absolute truth.

In contrast, *The Human Way* can also be understood to be a polemic in which Friedman advocates the superiority of the dialogic approach through touchstones over all other ways of studying religion. He attempts to demonstrate this claim by examining in a dialogic way three major sources of tension in the philosophy of religion: (1) the relationship between the religious individual and the religious community; (2) the relationship between traditional or past religious authority and contemporary religious innovation; and (3) the relationship between religion and the state.

Concerning the individual and the community, Friedman argues that the apparent conflict between the intentions of religious individuals to expand their self-consciousness and to raise the moral sensitivity of their communities is overcome through dialogue where the two goals become mutually dependent. From the perspective of the dialogue of touchstones, relationship itself is the ultimate human ethic and reciprocity is the cardinal virtue. Dialogue must always be with another. Hence, no self-seeking can be successful that is not turned toward the welfare of the community, and no community can succeed that does not promote the welfare of its members.

Concerning tradition and innovation, the inevitable conflict between past and present values, Friedman argues that the religious must walk a careful line between the two and preserve the tension; they must avoid either extreme or merely choosing

the present or the past. Friedman gives particular attention to the move to overthrow the past in favor of the present by "Peter Pan's Shadow," that is, by freely reading new meanings into traditional symbols and, by so doing, lose the desired tension because the past ceases to have any real voice in determining modern values. His prime examples of this deviation from the true way to dialogue are Mordecai M. Kaplan's naturalist theology and the human psychologies of Erich Fromm and Carl Gustav Jung. His prime example of the correct way to preserve the tension is Buber's writings on Hasidism.

Friedman discusses the relationship between religion and state in terms of the proper role of authentic religious leaders who have a genuine desire to lead in order to help their followers to dialogue with the divine but do not want to become substitutes for that dialogue. Models for inauthentic religious leadership are the philosopher-king of Plato's *Republic*, the Tsadikim who followed the Baal Shem Tov in leading Hasidic communities, and Theodor Herzl. Models for authentic religious leadership are the prophet Samuel as understood by Buber, the Baal Shem Tov, and Buber himself as a Zionist spokesman. Authentic leaders help others to unfold and do not impose either themselves or their beliefs on their followers; they lead by the example of their lives rather than by their edicts. Only in this way can they serve to bring about a world dialogue that points to the end of a universal community of otherness.

Western religious thought from the seventeenth through the nineteenth

century was dominated by liberal voices. Its ultimate expressions were the religious philosophies of Baruch Spinoza and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Fueled by the events of two great world wars, the twentieth century has produced more conservative voices, and religious conservatism has dominated religious thought in the past generation. Its most important expressions were Christian followers of the biblical theology of Karl Barth and Jewish followers of the holocaust storytelling of Eli Wiesel. While most liberal religionists grant the excesses of their earlier models and also wish to learn the insights to be gained from recent history, they fear that the current wave of religious conservatism has forgotten the lessons that gave rise to liberalism in the first place and are insufficiently aware of the present dangers of conservative extremism. Granting that modern history and thought demands new thought, they seek new models for life that will do justice to their liberal faith. Maurice Friedman offers them hope.

I, too, share their concern, since I am firmly committed to a liberal approach to every aspect of human experience, but I could not accept Friedman's Buberian dialogic model as it stands. In particular, what is most disturbing to me is its willingness to go along with the conservative strategem of anti-intellectualism.

The contradiction in Friedman's own position is apparent in the above summary of *The Human Way*. In the first two sections of the book we are told that the way of dialogue transcends objective truth judgments, makes no truth claims of its own, and instead seeks openness to every kind of religious person and every expression of religious thought. But in the last three sections of the book Friedman strongly distinguishes between what is and is not religiously acceptable. He does not speak of true and false; instead he labels positions as authentic and inauthentic, which functionally amounts to the same thing. With appeal to these new criteria, Friedman has no trouble applying positive value to the religious examples of the biblical prophets, the Baal Shem Tov, and Martin Buber, and negative value to the expressions of Plato, the Tsadikim, Theodor Herzl, William James, John Dewey, Erich Fromm, Carl Gustav Jung, and

SAVING FACE

Be humble and likeable to all people, and specially to members of your household.—Talmud

Should I be humble and likeable to my own household of one?

For what am I
if meek and mild
but a parody of traits
I've purposely labored to
shed in order to be honest
with myself—
What is self-directed humility
but self-indulgent pride?

And if indeed a divided household
can't stand
in order to live with myself
and save face I'd have to
excommunicate that
teacher's pet:

Complacency is vain
and vanity disrespect—

So for one I say
an eye for an eye.
Charity begins at home.

—Carol Adler

Carol Adler, a poet living in Pittsford, New York, is a frequent contributor to Menorah Review.

Mordecai M. Kaplan. In fact, should we apply Friedman's own criterion of openness as a test, his closed-mindedness to what these thinkers had to say, particularly in the case of Kaplan, would disqualify him as an authentic religious expert.

It is not like I object to Friedman making these judgments. Rather, I merely wish to point out the inconsistency between his general approach and how he applies it in the particular. And in this case I believe that there is more to be learned from his particular judgments than from his general statements.

Friedman tells us that relation is the ultimate human ethic and reciprocity is its cardinal virtue. Certainly these are high values in any liberal conception of the human universe. But so is truth an ultimate human ethic and honesty a cardinal virtue. These latter values necessarily enter into conflict with the former, and often they must take precedence. I am not open to every kind of religious model; I am only open to those that may be true. For example, while there is much that is of interest and of value in the medieval Jewish/Muslim/Christian religious conception of cosmology, there is much that I must reject, not because it does not speak to me in my present world, but because I know that it is false. For instance, no reasonably well-educated person can still believe that there is such a thing as a realm of fixed stars. Without a doubt, all stars undergo a process of birth, growth, decay, life, and death whose major difference from this process in our lives is length of time. Furthermore, there are all kinds of people with whom I am not willing to enter into dialogue on moral grounds. For example, I am not open to any form of relation with Klansmen and Nazis; to the extent that I am willing to have discourse with them at all, it is either to convert them or to destroy them. I can take this closed, absolutist stance solely because I know without any reasonable doubt that what they advocate is evil.

In the past liberals judged tradition by standards of truth. They made many mistakes, but it seems to me that their intention was correct. What counts as true and false or good and bad is far more complex than anything that they imagined. But that does not mean that we must abandon

judgment. They were too quick to dismiss the deep values of their past and to accept the superficial values of their present. But that does not mean that the past and the present have equal claims on our fidelity. Friedman's model for a new religious liberalism is helpful, because it does justice to the virtue of openness, but in itself it is not satisfactory. Other models must be sought that do equal justice to the liberal virtue of truthfulness.

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ONE NATION UNDER A PROTESTANT GOD

Jews, Turks, and Infidels
By Morton Borden
The University of North
Carolina Press

A Review essay by
Robert M. Goldman

In a recent decision, *Lynch v. Donnelly*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that a nativity scene put up by the city of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, during Christmas did not violate the constitutional separation of church and state required by the First Amendment. In a remarkable concurring majority opinion, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, President Reagan's first court appointee, observed that while government actions "that purport to celebrate or acknowledge events with religious significance" deserved careful judicial scrutiny as to their constitutionality, she could not agree that a display that included the depiction of the birth of Christ "was intended to endorse or had the effect of endorsing Christianity."

By itself this decision might not seem much more than a minor breach of the constitutional "wall" the courts have erected over the past 30 years between the religious and the secular. Yet coupled with the increased evangelical activity personified by the Moral Majority, the resurgence of neo-Nazis and the Klan, and the various attempts being made to circumvent or change by amendment the ban on prayers in public schools, the court's ruling in *Lynch* may well signify something more ominous for religious liberty in general, and for American Jews in particular.

Questions involving the extent of religious liberty and the constitutional boundaries between church and state have appeared throughout the course of American history, often generating a good deal of controversy and emotion. This was particularly so when those involved were groups whose beliefs and practices were viewed with mistrust or hostility as, for example, the Mormons in the nineteenth century and the Jehovah's Witnesses in the twentieth. Furthermore, such issues do not always admit to easy solutions that can satisfy both the principle of majority rule and our commitment to minority rights.

Despite this condition there also seems to be a certain consensus surrounding the role of religious freedom with respect to our past. For most Americans such liberty has traditionally been part of the constellation of fundamental rights for which the Revolution was fought and upon which our Republic was founded. This history is symbolized by Jefferson's "Statute on Religious Toleration" and its constitutional expression in Article III, Section 6, prohibiting religious tests for federal office, as well as the first Amendment. While there have been outbreaks of antireligious feelings of one kind or another, these have been considered aberrations, exceptions that only proved the rule that the right to freely practice one's religion was nowhere better protected than in the U.S.

As Americans, Jews have generally shared this perception, especially in regard to the nineteenth century. The assumption has been that prior to the great flood of immigration of Eastern European Jews during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were too few Jews in most places to present any focus for anti-Semitic activity. According to Leonard Dinnerstein, one authority on anti-Semitism in America, "As a result of the [Jews'] small numbers and unobtrusiveness, there were few incidents of anti-Semitism in this country before the end of the nineteenth century."

In *Jews, Turks, and Infidels* Morton Borden suggests otherwise. Borden, an expert on early American politics, argues that religious liberty for Jews and other non-Protestants was not completely accepted at the time of the Revolution, nor was such liberty

granted by the Constitution. In fact, from the very beginning “many Americans defined the U.S. as a Christian nation.” According to Borden, there was a real hesitancy about extending religious equality to non-Protestants. Even the prohibition on religious tests for office in Article III was supported by the pro-Constitution Federalists for “tactical” reasons rather than because of any commitment to religious equality on principle.

In addition, while Jews and others could worship freely, they had “no right” to participate in the political process. Early state constitutions of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Maryland included religious restrictions on office-holding that excluded Jews and nonbelievers. State and local Sunday-closing laws, as well as court decisions and statutes on blasphemy and evidentiary testimony, likewise reflected a pattern of majoritarian Protestant hostility to non-Christians. Most of these restrictions were eventually eliminated but often not without a fierce struggle, as exemplified by the conflict over Maryland’s “Jew Bill.”

Even the federal government, despite the Constitution, was not immune from acts of political discrimination against Jews. Borden illustrates this discrimination through analysis of the national government’s response to the treatment of American Jews abroad, in particular through our treaty obligations with such countries as Tripoli, China, and Switzerland. By treaty with Switzerland the rights of Christian-Americans were explicitly recognized, but no reference was made to the rights of Jews living or traveling there, despite the anti-Semitic character of many of the Swiss cantons’ laws.

Most remarkable, for those who may think of the Moral Majority as a recent and unique phenomenon, Borden describes the formation and work of the National Reform Association. The NRA was organized in 1863 during the Civil War, at a time when anti-Jewish sentiment appeared in both the North and the South. The main goal of the association was to secure a constitutional amendment that would reword the Preamble to acknowledge “Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, and . . .

the Lord Jesus Christ as the Governor among nations, His revealed will as the Supreme Law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government.”

Although the amendment never received congressional approval, both it and the organization had the support of a number of prominent nineteenth-century Americans, including the Reverend Charles Finney and Supreme Court Justices William Strong and David Brewer. And the association itself continued to press its cause of saving the nation by putting Christ in the Constitution up until the 1930s.

Borden has written a fascinating account of a hitherto relatively unexamined period and aspect of American Jewish history. But it may be questioned to what extent this study has radically altered the view of nineteenth-century America and its treatment of religious liberty and Jews. In focusing on individual incidents and barriers, there is always the risk of ignoring the context.

For example, it seems to be assumed that during the early national period, religious liberty in America was equated with political equality and that constitutional protection of the right to worship freely included the right to political participation. However, the evidence beyond the state religious restrictions described by Borden might suggest something else. If Jews, Moslems, and nonbelievers were excluded from holding office in some states and localities, so also were women, Indians, blacks, and, in many of the states, non-property holders. Indeed, the debates Borden discusses on the removal of religious qualifications against Jews and others were concurrent with similar debates and controversies on the removal of property restrictions. It is also during this same period that the woman’s suffrage movement appears. Without mention of suffrage, Borden makes it appear as though the debate on the nature of suffrage and political participation in the nineteenth century was focused on religious grounds, even though it wasn’t.

Borden also never explains why, if the first Amendment and Article III of the Constitution prohibited religious barriers to federal office-holding, individual states could—and did. In 1832 Chief Justice John Mar-

shall, otherwise known for his strong nationalism, held in the case *Barron v. Baltimore* that the Bill of Rights did not apply to the states. That it does so today is the result of court rulings “incorporating” the protections of the Bill of Rights as against state infringement through the 14th Amendment. That this double-standard existed in the nineteenth century was as much, if not more, a reflection of nineteenth-century views of federalism as it was an expression of religious intolerance.

Yet it may be suggested that this same issue now represents the most serious of threats to religious liberty in America, of which the *Lynch* decision is but the tip of the iceberg. In recent years the Supreme Court, as well as lower federal courts, has allowed more discretion to states and localities to act in a wide range of areas, from dealing with pornography to the rights of the criminally accused to voter apportionment. In part this shift is a reflection of President Reagan’s “New Federalism” and is certainly evidenced in the appointments the president has made to the federal bench, notably Justice O’Connor.

It has been estimated that before he leaves office, President Reagan will have the opportunity to appoint a majority of lower federal court judges and perhaps a majority of Supreme Court Justices as well. That these judges will support the “new” federalism seems certain; that they will also reflect what Senator Jesse Helms refers to constantly as “Christian principles” is also likely. If so, what effect will that have on the protection of religious freedom from the kind of infringement demonstrated in the *Lynch* case? Given what Borden tells us about the nineteenth century, the possibilities should give us serious concern.

Indeed, whether or not Borden has demonstrated a pattern of official anti-Semitism in the nineteenth century, his book clearly resonates with immediacy. There are frightening echoes of the NRA in the agendas of groups like the Moral Majority, and our concern for the rights of American Jews overseas has broadened to include, through treaties such as the Helsinki Accords, the rights of Jews in other countries, especially the Soviet Union, to worship freely and be free from official sanctions.

In the nineteenth century, as Borden describes it, many of the laws and restrictions on religious liberty were vocally opposed by Jews themselves. Two notable examples of this were Solomon Etting of Maryland and Isaac Lesser of Philadelphia. These men spoke out and fought against such restrictions in the name of religious freedom for all. They battled public opinion, which even included that of their own co-religionists. The implication, though unstated, seems clear enough. What is needed today are the Isaac Lessers and Solomon Ettings who are willing to speak out for the principle enunciated so well by Jefferson two centuries ago: "that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

Robert M. Goldman is associate professor of history and political science at Virginia Union University.

BOOK BRIEFINGS

The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881. By Steven J. Zipperstein. California: Stanford University Press. In this history of Jewish Odessa, the author traces the rise of Odessa's Jewish community from the earliest days to the pogroms of 1881 that erupted after the assassination of Alexander II. The author emphasizes the acculturation of the Jewish community, describing changes in behavior, attitude, and ideology as reflected in its schools, synagogues, newspapers, and other institutions.

At the Crossroads: Essays on Ahad Ha-Am. Edited by Jacques Kornberg. Albany: State University of New York Press. This collection of 14 essays by internationally known scholars in modern Jewish history and literature range from studies of Ahad Ha-am as a literary stylist, his role in the revival of Hebrew, his political thought and activity, his debates with famous contemporaries about the Jewish future, and the reinterpretation of his ideas by his Zionist disciples. The overall picture presented is a new image of Ahad Ha-am—far less westernized and far more embedded in the nineteenth-century Jewish and

Russian cultural milieu than was previously thought.

Who was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish-Christian Schism. By Lawrence H. Schiffman. Hoboken, New Jersey: KTAV Publishing House, Inc. The author explains the relationship between Halakha and the issue of "who was a Jew," showing that the Jewish-Christian schism was a result of the halakhic definition of Jewish identity. Using talmudic sources, he examines the halakhot governing the Jew by birth, conversion, heretics and apostates, and the rabbinic reaction to the early Christians, and discusses the narratives illustrating rabbinic contact with Jewish Christians. He concludes that the Christians were regarded initially by the rabbis as *minim*, Jews who had heretical beliefs. With the ascendancy of Gentile Christianity, the rabbis could no longer regard the Christians as Jewish since they lacked the legal requirements for Jewish status. Therefore, in the early second century, the rabbis began to regard them as members of another religious community.

Strangers in Their Own Land: Young Jews in Germany and Austria Today. By Peter Sichrovsky. New York: Basic Books, Inc. There are about 35,000 Jews in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Austria born after 1945. This is the generation whose parents survived the Holocaust. Why did these Jews return and bring their children back? How do the children of the survivors cope with the German and Austrian environment? How do the children of the victims live in the same country with children of the killers? The author decided to find out. In a series of conversations with 13 young Jewish men and women living in Germany and Austria today, he asked these and other difficult questions. Each subject tells his or her own story, and the stories speak for themselves. The book confirms that the horrors of the Nazi era linger on into the second and even the third generation.

The Siege: The Saga of Israel and Zionism. By Conor Cruise O'Brien. New York: Simon and Schuster. This is a stirring portrait of a people and a nation besieged, the struggle of the Jews to establish, maintain, and secure Israel, their heritage, and their

future. The author creates a spell-binding portrait of the Zionist dream that illuminates modern Israel's achievements, failures, and dilemmas. He tackles such controversial issues as the displacement of Palestinian Arabs, the status of Oriental Jews, the Arab citizens of Israel, and the complex and enormous impact of the Holocaust on the Israeli psyche.

Biblical Images: Men and Women of the Book. By Adin Steinsaltz. New York: Basic Books, Inc. Biblical heroes and heroines are not only personalities in their own right, but archetypes that continue to speak to us across the generations. In these penetrating character studies, the author reflects on the stories and legends surrounding 25 fascinating biblical figures who exemplify profound truths about the human species.

Job and Jonah: Questioning the Hidden God. By Bruce Vawter. New York: Paulist Press. The author explores the remarkable thoughts of two biblical books that claim to be examples of wisdom and prophecy. Instead they parody many of the traditional answers offered by the prophets and wise teachers of Israel who were content with comfortable reassurance that all would be well. Vawter brings out the real questioning of the old certainties of faith that have been shattered by Israel's experience of exile and destruction. The God of both Job and Jonah is a hidden God. When will this God reveal Himself? He did not in the age of Job and Jonah. The author opens up new understandings of a biblical faith that dealt with skepticism and doubt, with honesty and humor.

Odyssey. By John Bierman. New York: Simon and Schuster. With no other means of escape, more than 500 Jews crowded aboard the Pentcho, a decrepit paddle steamer, to begin one of the most remarkable voyages in modern history. The time: May 1940, eight months after the outbreak of World War II. The place: Bratislava, capital of the Nazi puppet state of Slovakia. Their route: down the Danube River and out into the open sea. Their destination: Palestine. It was a journey that should have taken a month; but four years of frustration and severe hardship would pass before they finally reached Palestine. The author tells the story for the first time, a story both heroic and pro-

foundly human in its proportions. It is based on the recollections of the passengers themselves, illustrated by photographs taken during the voyage.

The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws. By David Novak. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press. This book deals with the role of the image of the non-Jew in the history of Judaism. This image has had a profound influence on the way Jews have interacted with the actual non-Jews they have encountered in their history. It also has had a profound influence on the way they have understood their own identity in determining what distinguishes them from the non-Jews around them. Since rabbinic times the concept of the Noahide Laws has provided the framework for just about every serious Jewish treatment of the image of the non-Jew. It is this framework that the author examines thoroughly by exploring the use of the Noahic concept in both Jewish law and theology. The result is a fascinating study of Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Muslim relations.

REJOINDER

In the review of David Novak's book, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (*Menorah Review*, No. 10, Spring 1987), Professor Frank states that after the revelation of the Torah at Sinai, "acceptance of the Noahide laws by gentiles depends not upon awareness of their divine foundation, but rather upon their inherent rationality."

If this is, in fact, the author's contention it is at variance with the view of Maimonides who is presumably stating the historical, normative position of Judaism. In his *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkot Melakim 8:11, Maimonides writes, "Whoever accepts the seven commandments (the Noahide laws) and is careful to observe them is deemed to be among the righteous of the nations of the world, and he has a portion in the world to come, providing he accepts them and observes them because the Holy One, blessed is He, commanded them. . . . But if he observes them merely by reason of his own judgments he is not considered a *ger toshav* and he is

not of the righteous among the nations of the world, nor of their wise men [variant reading, "but of their wise men"]." Acknowledgment of their divine origin is thus the desired motive and a prime condition in the attainment of the ultimate reward of eternal life for those who observe the Noahide laws.

For a discussion of the Noahide laws as representing a divinely ordained universal code of morality, as well as the variant reading in Maimonides, see my book, *A Philosophy of Mitzvot: The Religious-Ethical Concepts of Judaism, Their Roots in Biblical Law and the Oral Tradition*, pp. 123 ff. (Ktav, 1975).

—Gershon Appel
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