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LOVE AND TRADITION: MARRIAGE BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

By Egon Mayer

The following article is an excerpt from the lecture presented by Egon Mayer for the Selma and Jacob Brown Annual Lecture held last October. The annual lecture is sponsored by the Judaic Culture Advisory Committee and the Judaic Studies Program of VCU. Dr. Mayer is professor of sociology at Brooklyn College.

Why is there so much concern within the Jewish community about intermarriage? And, what should be the communal response to it?

Until the 1960s, over 90 percent of Jews "tying the knot" married other Jews. But during the past 20 years, Jewish intermarriage has grown enormously. The intermarriage rate—2 to 3 percent during the 1920s, 3 to 4 percent during the 1930s, and still only 7 to 10 percent during the 1950s and early '60s—is 20 to 30 percent among Jews who are currently getting married.

This sudden upsurge is of special concern, because it occurs in the generation after the Holocaust and at a time when American Jewish fertility is already below "zero population growth." Understandably, then, the community is tremendously sensitive to the possibility of numerical decline.

There are two other sources of demographic concern: At a time when the Jewish family also is threatened by a high divorce rate, the greatest incidence of intermarriage is among those marrying for the *second* time; and the Jewish intermarriage rate is especially high (as high as 60 percent) in the Sun Belt and Western cities (e.g. Houston, Dallas, Denver,

and Los Angeles) to which the Jewish population has been moving during the past few decades.

The main long-term historical developments that have contributed to the rising rate of intermarriage were the emergence of secular culture and the rise of the modern (nontradition-bound) family. For the pre-modern Jewish family, as for its non-Jewish counterpart, tradition and obligation largely determined marriage patterns and family life. Love was viewed as a "wild emotion," one which violated rules, crossed boundaries, and otherwise created problems. If people came to marry or stayed married out of love, that was nice. But love was not the primary reason for entering into wedlock. It was a "fringe benefit" of creating a family, not the main motivating force for doing so. More often than not, couples were brought together by their parents.

The industrial and democratic revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries began to transform the traditional Jewish family. In her wonderful

The modern family tends to "launch" children *out* rather than root them *in* basic norms.

book, *The Court Jews*, Selma Stern shows how German-Jewish entrepreneurial families, who set up Germany's first factories and were economic innovators, gained access to the upper echelons of society, where they began to mix easily with non-Jews. When intermarriage occurred among such Jews, it generally meant that the Jew married "out." Such intermarriage, then, was the final "ticket of admission" to the elite of the larger society.

Thanks to the democratic revolutions, which began in America and France at the end of the eighteenth century, the ability of the Jews to mingle with their neighbors spread from the elite to the middle class. The decline of church influence and the growth of the secular state also made intermarriage more possible. As long as marriages could be entered into only under religious auspices, intermarriage was forbidden under both *halacha* (Jewish law) and canon (Christian) law. But when people could marry without the benefit of clergy, marriage between Jews and gentiles significantly increased.

The current phenomenon of large-scale intermarriage represents not only a relatively recent historical development but also a new sociological phenomenon. The "intermarriers," as well as other couples, are creating families born out of the impulses of two people who have fallen in love. They are seeking fulfillment rather than fulfilling community or family obligations. In this context, the fact that the man and woman do not share the same religion (or the same class or economic function, for that matter) is largely coincidental. So are the wishes of parents. When individuals marry on the basis of personal desires and needs, parents' roles in mate selection become relatively minor.

A final, phenomenological change occurs in the role of the family. Once an "anchoring" institution in terms of tradition and socio-economic obligations, the modern family tends to "launch" children *out* rather than root them *in* basic norms. The new family, then, tends to be more a retreat from the outside world than an agent of the community.

The Jewish community's image of ideal family life is sharply split between traditional and modern forms.

The traditionalists view intermarriage as a threat; it both deviates from what Jewish families "always have looked like" and threatens to disrupt the continuity of the Jewish people altogether.

As I learned during the 1970s, in a study for the American Jewish Committee of 450 intermarried families, the intermarried themselves view things quite differently. They see themselves not as "intermarried" so much as simply married, their marriages having distinct pleasures and problems like any other. For most Jews involved, intermarriage does not involve an escape from Jewishness. Not that they are particularly observant or otherwise involved in their heritage, but intermarried Jews, in terms of Jewish commitment as a result of their marriage, are no different than they were before their marriage.

How then should the Jewish community respond to the surge in intermarriage? We need to recognize, first, that the phenomenon almost certainly is here to stay. After all, for marriage-minded non-Jews, Jews are "good catches." Economically, they have the highest income of any white ethnic group. A colleague of mine quips that Jews have gone "from Poland to polo in three generations." Intellectually, Jews have the highest percentage of college graduates; professionally, a disproportionate number are doctors, attorneys, and other professionals. Small wonder that polls indicate a continuing rise in the social acceptability of Jews among non-Jews.

While we sometimes are nostalgic for the cohesive Jewish family of the *shtetl*—though we might remember that even Tevye anguished when one of his daughters intermarried—I know of almost no one who would wish away our economic mobility, educational attainment, or social acceptance. So, Jews are going to keep mingling with and in many cases marrying non-Jews in the U.S., in western Europe, and elsewhere.

The community's policy of making speeches and exhorting against inter-

marriage, so prevalent during the 1950s, '60s, and early '70s, clearly has not produced more Jewish couples nor prevented intermarriages.

There is legitimate reason for concern. My statistical analysis of intermarriage reveals that it could lead to a significant decline of the American Jewish population. For in the absence of the non-Jewish partner's converting, the overwhelming majority of children in what we call "mixed marriages" do not remain Jews.

Yet, given that Jews are highly educated, well-accepted, and terrific communicators and that we hold a privileged position in the most open society in which Jews have ever lived, we could turn intermarriage into a Jewish advantage. In about 85 percent of the cases where the non-Jewish spouse converts, the children not only identify with but live their lives as Jews. And for all intents and purposes, the Jewishness of children from "conversionary families" differs very little from that of children who are born to two native Jewish parents.

The policy implication is that the Jewish community can and should respond creatively by reaching out to intermarried couples and inviting them to become part of the Jewish community. If there is not an affirmative step by the community in this direction, large members of children of one Jewish parent will not be Jewish.

Already the Reform movement is reaching out to intermarried couples and their children formally, and segments of the Conservative and Orthodox movements are doing so informally. The new and, I think, encouraging implication is that the Jewish community is "open to the public" rather than being the exclusive domain of those born into it.

In the battle of love against tradition, then, we have no choice but to recognize reality—that love has won. But we do not necessarily have to be the losers for that; quite the contrary. If we recognize the benefits that accrue from an influx of intelligent, creative, and committed Jews by choice, and of more Jewish Jews by birth, we may like the new Jewish family even more than we liked the old.

ON DOING THEOLOGY WITH TWO FEET

Discerning the Way
By Paul Van Buren
Seabury Press

A Review essay by
John S. Spong

"For every theologically thinking mind, there has to be two walking feet." This simple observation, made by Paul Van Buren in his book, *Discerning The Way*, captures both the problem and the essence of the theological enterprise in the twentieth century. It also opens the Christian theologian to new dimensions of Jewish-Christian relations and a worldwide interreligious dialogue that were not available to us a century ago.

By and large throughout past centuries, Christians managed to forget their "walking feet" and kept themselves from facing the challenge of other religious traditions by staying both separate from and ignorant of those systems of thought. Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, Taoists, and Confusionists were all lumped together historically by Christians under the banner of "pagan" and were related to primarily as romantic objects of missionary concern. Despite that mission rhetoric, however, the fact remains that in the 2,000-year period of Christian expansion, the penetration of Christianity into these other traditions was minimal.

What Christians could not convert they tended to ignore. Distance itself, and the slowness of both travel and other means of communication, allowed Christians to cling to the assumption that the missionaries they supported would in time bring the enlightenment of the gospel to those far-away benighted souls who were perishing in their ignorance. Since the vast numbers of Christians would never meet a Hindu or a Moslem, these myths were never challenged, and Christian triumphalism could continue to thrive.

Then came the twentieth century with its supersonic travel and its space-age communications, making the world seem visibly smaller. In a shrinking world, interdependence is necessary for survival, and interde-

pendence is impossible without mutual respect. The Christian caricature of the other religions of the world as uninformed, superstitious, and even godless became impossible to maintain. Thinking Christians were forced to abandon their arrogant claims that the truth of God was their sole and exclusive possession. God was not a Christian—this was the startling conclusion. Our theology was being shaped not just by eyes, minds, and hearts but also by our “walking feet.”

Contemporary Christian theology continues to be self-consciously in transition. The landmarks of the past are shifting. The certainties of yesterday, for which martyrs were willing to die and inquisitors were willing to kill, are in flux. Relativity is as much a part of the landscape of theology in our generation as it is a part of the post-Einstein world of physics. Theology is increasingly understood as the dialogue that people have about God as they journey, with each step locating them in a different bit of space and forcing them to view issues from a different angle. What used to be called “dogmatic theology” is no longer a compelling subject for scholarly attention. Systematic theology is a discipline increasingly available only in history where one can study the systems of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, or Tillich. No one, however, develops systematic theology in our time with any expectation of seeing it endure.

When Christian thought opens itself to relativity, the exclusive claims and infallibility assertions that marked the triumphalism of the past face rapid erosion. An ecclesiastical institution no longer able to sustain the claim to be the sole means of salvation is immediately weakened. However, the corollary to that institutional weakening is that Christians are finally allowed to throw off that life-killing poison that found expression in heresy hunts, anti-Semitism, and slanderous religious prejudice. Slowly we are becoming aware that the gains achieved with the death of religious certainty or the infallibility claims of the past far outweigh the losses.

As an inescapable part of this process, Christians have begun to look anew at that cancerous growth present throughout their history, called

anti-Semitism. This virulent negativity has infected both the rhetoric and action of the Christian church since its birth. It is found as early as the apostolic writings, which Christians call the New Testament, and it spread into the post-apostolic age in the works of Iraneus, Ignatius, and John Chrysostom. Later, it made major appearances in the lives of such Christian heroes as Jerome, Martin Luther, and Pope Pius XII. It even infected the supposedly innocent and sometimes inane Sunday school materials of various Christian bodies.

The historic relationship between Judaism and Christianity is significantly revealing. Christianity owed its life to Judaism, though it was seldom able to admit it. Judaism gave birth to and shaped the man, Jesus of Nazareth. It was the Jewish religious practices that he observed: circumcised on the eighth day, presented on the 40th day. It was the Passover that drew Jesus to Jerusalem for what Christians now call Holy Week. It was

**Christianity is Judaism's child.
Judaism is Christianity's parent.**

the book of Psalms that Jesus quoted from the cross. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the God of Jesus.

The Hebrew scriptures were made available to gentiles through a movement that was started by the Jewish Jesus. Christianity is Judaism's child. Judaism is Christianity's parent. Christians and Jews began life in history together as one family. Jews were, and are, fellow travelers with Christians. Jews and Christians are two groups of pilgrims who, according to different customs, worship the same God. Yet, it must be stated quite specifically that the God that Christians and Jews both worship is Israel's God.

Despite these facts of our common story, a separation occurred that, from the Christian perspective, defined Judaism as a pagan religion. Yet it was a religion that Christians could not ignore the way they ignored the other religions of the world. Not only was there a common heritage, but Christians and Jews shared space inside Western civilization. The Jews were never far away. They were a minority religious group always pres-

ent and, therefore, always perceived as challenging the excessive claims of the Christian religious majority.

The result was a constant exacerbation of the latent power of religious bigotry that found expression in the destructive Christian behavior toward the Jewish religion and the Jewish people. It was behavior so cruel and bizarre that it defied rationality. Yet, it endured through the centuries, reaching its crescendo in the ovens of Auschwitz and giving Christians the task of understanding and explaining the Holocaust—a murderous and horrifying outburst of religious violence that was allowed to occur through either majority duplicity or majority silence in a predominantly Christian world.

The attempt to comprehend the meaning of anti-Semitism leads us once again back to those Christian claims of infallibility and the historic attitude of triumphalism. When a religious body believes that God exists fully only in and through its particular tradition, the corollary that “those not with us are against us” cannot be escaped. When the true believers are defined narrowly, those identified as outside that community of faith are always defined pejoratively.

Hence the Jews, just by being, brought embarrassment to an ecclesiastical structure that thought of itself as the only voice of the only God and the sole means through which anyone could be saved. That embarrassment found expression in a constant subliminal rage that periodically broke forth into overt acts of violence. Only from this perspective can the Christian attitude toward Jews be understood. The taproot of anti-Semitism lies in nothing less than that exclusive claim to be the only bearer of the perfect revelation of God, a claim that became entrenched because theology forgot that it was always assisted in its task by “two walking feet.”

The price Jews have had to pay for anti-Semitism cannot be counted, so vast has it been, so enormous the number of its victims. Christians, however, have also paid a price for their anti-Semitism. That cost has not been in life, blood, property, or human dehumanization; it has come rather in the loss of vital parts of the Christian heritage and, consequently, of its own identity.

Anti-Semitism prevented Christians from seeing the Jewishness of their own Jesus. This, in turn, resulted in the construction by Christians of a theological system around Jesus that distorted his truth as much as it preserved it. Christians also lost the Jewish scriptural context that illumined the apostolic writings far more than Christians imagined. How can one understand Jesus feeding the multitudes apart from the story of manna in the wilderness; the sermon on the mount apart from the Sinai experience; Jesus's ascension apart from the story of Elijah; Jesus's ministry apart from the servant songs of Isaiah; or many, many other illustrations?

When Christians are willing to walk with their sisters and brothers of Judaism, they discover that Jesus is the means whereby gentiles are enabled to worship Israel's God. They learn that the sacred scriptures of the Jews and the apostolic writings of the Christians are the first word of the journey, the account of their common beginnings, not the last word, the account of their destiny.

For any religious system to live it must recognize that its life is not stagnant, that it moves in, with, and through time. The debilitating claim that any system, in some ultimate and unchanging form, possesses infallible truth becomes excess baggage, no longer possible for anyone to carry. Once that power-laden distortion, which has been so much a part of the Christian self-image, is broken and put aside forever, Christians will enter the exciting and real world of religious relativity with its bracing insecurity and become what in fact, and in faith, Christians have always been—a pilgrim people, journeying with many fellow travelers, engaged in honest dialogue, listening to the nuances and mystery of another's divine human encounter even while sharing their own.

Then Christians and Jews, first, and, later, all the great religions of the world, will discover that they too are but fingers on the same hand, united far more than they have ever suspected, each reflecting a holiness worthy of the other's respect. In Paul Van Buren's words, "the available

God" will draw us inexorably toward "the ultimate God." Then the evil products of religious history—anti-Semitism, religious wars, heresy hunts, verbal slander, the Irelands and the Lebanons—may become symbols of a past which, by the grace of God, will no longer plague our lives.

John S. Spong is the Episcopal Bishop of Newark.

MORALITY, SURVIVAL, AND GOD

Exodus and Revolution
By Michael Walzer
Basic Books

A Review essay by
Charles M. Swezey

The Exodus narrative is a movement, with beginning, middle, and end. Michael Walzer, a political philosopher at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, interprets the story as a political history. The beginning, located in Egypt, sets the problem and introduces the themes of oppression and deliverance. The problem of oppression is understood as political corruption, tyranny, and exploitation. Deliverance from bondage may stress the mighty hand of the Lord of the slowness of the march to the wilderness. The middle, located in the wilderness, is about struggle and introduces the themes of purging and schooling. The tradition of the murmurings—the longing to return to Egypt, the refusal to accept deliverance—culminates with the golden calf incident and the killing of the people. Moses is a man of blood. By contrast, the tradition of covenant depicts Moses as a gentle and successful teacher. It emphasizes the need for schooling and for the gradual development of a character fit for free people. The first, Leninist reading is in the text, as is the second, social democratic reading; which to stress becomes a fundamental choice.

The end, set in the promised land, is about resolution. It introduces the themes of a land flowing with milk and honey and of the people as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Either theme, or both, envision a new

society. For Walzer, the dual existence of these themes in continuing political life is important. The Israelites cross the Jordan to find themselves back in Egypt; they end up oppressing one another. Milk and honey envision material blessings, but also moral requirements: A land without scarcity ought to be a land without oppression. A holy nation and a kingdom of priests require the participation of every man and woman in a way of life that forms a political culture of liberty and justice. The purpose of the narrative as a whole, then, is to teach the importance of the march and of discipline in a political and historical existence tempted to corruption, tyranny, and exploitation. Walzer repeats Santayana's maxim in a prophetic mode: To not remember past deliverance is to repeat oppression in the present.

The Exodus story etches a pattern, for Walzer the fundamental pattern, of Western political consciousness. The linear movement from oppression and deliverance, through covenant and struggle, toward a new society leaves room for debate. For example, one can remain faithful to the text and argue the necessity of purging rather than the need for slow schooling. But one cannot seek to escape history and remain faithful to the text. Walzer's polemic is directed at "political messianism," the attempt to bring heaven to earth and complete history within history. The point of his polemic is clear. In contrast to "Exodus Zionism," which emphasizes the need for patience and training, Walzer is opposed to "Messianic Zionism," which looks for a "total reversal" of human nature and politics within history. Assured of the unconditional support of God, Messianic Zionism is tempted to force the coming of the end.

Much satisfaction comes with reading Walzer's often luminous prose. Still, there are many places that elicit critical response. I shall make an observation about the theology and then suggest three points for debate.

Walzer is a political philosopher. For professional and perhaps personal reasons, he has not given a theological interpretation. Though nearly always respectful of theology, some of his remarks about its claims deserve comment. When he distinguishes a "religious" from a "secu-

lar" account of the Exodus in his introduction, for example, the religious account turns out to have a "miraculous" emphasis on divine intervention, while the secular is this-worldly and historical. Many contemporary theologians would find this dichotomy false. They have little interest in portraying God as a *direct causal* agent. Indeed, if God directly causes human events, human freedom and responsibility are trivialized and negated. The theological claim, rather, is that God's power and presence are *mediated*.

Consider the Exodus deliverance. On any accounting, the event as recorded has historical, political, and economic dimensions. These do not count against the religious dimension of a perception of God but are a basis for it. It is in and through these "secular" media, and at the same time, that religious consciousness perceives the disclosure of God (see John E. Smith, *Experience and God*, Oxford, 1968, p. 52). No theologian, for example, denies that pagan armies destroyed the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in inaugurating the Exile. The religious perception is that God's power is mediated and disclosed in and through the "free" and "responsible" actions of Assyrian and Babylonian rulers. Again, to claim that life is received as a gift from God recognizes that humans do not choose life; they choose to participate in a life process, which is given, beyond all choice. The religious claim need not be confused with the causes and effects of human reproduction. Births are directly caused by biological functions; theologians set these functions in the larger frame of dependence on God.

Thus if the Exodus story emphasizes the mighty arm of the Lord in deliverance and the need for human initiative in the wilderness, as Walzer insists, it would be a mistake to interpret turns in the narrative as if God sometimes directly causes human events, and on other occasions humans are free to act. In the religious traditions of the West, humans are morally accountable. They have capacities to act but always in response to powers that bear down upon them, which theologians seek to interpret as mediating the power of God.

Let me now suggest three points for debate. First, Walzer provides a

choice between covenant and purge. Yet Sinai and the idolatry of the golden calf appear in the same narrative. Is it a choice? I am as terrified by the killings as Walzer and just as reluctant to begin purges. The point of the story, however, concerns idolatry. Idolatry is a matter of a way of life, and the golden calf episode occurs in the midst of divine commandments. To have a golden calf is to reject the "two tables" Moses brings down the mountain. To have no other god is to meet moral requirements, which enable society's survival. To honor parents and forbid adultery stabilizes the institution of the family; not to steal ensures a system of property; to prohibit false witness provides a just law-court; and not to kill forbids willful murder in an ordered community. Theologically, the Decalogue is concerned with the governing power of God and how that power makes society possible, as well as the perception that the partners of this covenant are not equal and that religion itself can be a means of breaking covenant. The ethical concern is with moral requisites needed for the survival of community. When these are not met, the consequences are ugly. Hobbes' perception that life is "nasty and brutish" is not always true, but sometimes it is. The integrity of the story would seem to argue against a choice between covenant and purge. What is morally and religiously at stake are covenant requirements that, when flouted, have terrifying consequences. Strangely, Walzer neglects even the second table of the Decalogue.

Second, Walzer's use of a distinction between two types of covenant raises large issues. The covenants with Noah, Abraham, and David are "absolute and unconditional"; on the other hand, the covenant of Sinai and its successors are "contingent" and "conditional." Walzer rightly emphasizes the moral energy of the conditional covenants ("if you will be my people, then . . ."). He is also right to note abuses that come with the absolute assurance that God favors unconditionally the royal dynasty of David. The question is whether there are features in these wider covenants that need retrieval in a continuing political tradition. The covenants with Noah, for example, include "every living creature" (Gen. 9:10) as

well as the whole realm of nature (Gen. 8:22). This needs to be retrieved, though it goes unmentioned by Walzer. His focus on the Exodus narrative as a political paradigm omits elements of its larger setting and also in the story itself, which set political life in the larger context of all creation.

The covenant with David is more problematic. I would wish to retrieve the perception, as in Psalm 89, that the political realm is an ordering of God's creation. A question to ask Walzer is how to construe the Davidic covenant in a continuing tradition. It exists alongside the denunciations of the prophets, which are informed by other sources, which, contra Walzer's apparent assumption, are not reducible to "messianism" (pp. 117 f.). Most decisive is the growing awareness that God is not only a deliverer but also a governing power who will not be manipulated by idolatry or perverted nationalism. So, for example, the Exile. I would place this covenant in a tradition that includes the Exodus, but is yet still larger. (For a view which does not place Moses and

LITIGATION

First of all
as you might have suspected
we only took
the story of MOSES AND THE
BURNING BUSH
because of the initial
wording of the contract
concerning
the manifestation

of miracles
in which the Jews
threatened to
sue the Lord
if He would have deemed it
necessary

to part the sea
and leave His people
stranded in a desert
for more than
forty years

and with nothing
to eat but
manna

—Carol Adler

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

David in perpetual opposition, see Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*. Winston Press, 1985, especially pp. 209–217.)

A third issue is “revolution.” Is it the fundamental metaphor for political life? Walzer consistently refers to dramatic illustrations, from the Puritan Revolution to liberation theology. For him, however, the basic meaning of revolution is change: seeking deliverance from tyranny, oppression, and corruption; and, through schooling or purging, seeking in a social democratic mode a new republican society opposed to monarchy.

Does the focus on innovation change blur the need for the stabilizing continuity of political structures? Walzer cites Exodus 18 and Numbers 11 to argue that political rule must be republican and antimonarchical. According to recent historical scholarship, however, these “constitutional texts” refer to events also treated in Deuteronomy 1 and I Chronicles 19, namely, to monarchical reform. But whatever the form of government in these texts, no pre-industrial society moving from nomadic to agrarian life is going to have large political institutions. One need not be a monarchist to appeal at this point to a larger narrative that gives greater attention to political structure.

To use the categories of Sheldon Wolin (*Politics and Vision*, Little-Brown, 1960, chapter 5), Walzer emphasizes social fellowship at the expense of political structure. But both are required. Why, for example, are F.D.R. and the New Deal missing from Walzer’s illustrations? I suspect that the deficiencies of the administration that preceded Roosevelt are not best described as “pharaonic oppression” and that the programs of the New Deal are not best described as a socially democratic rule that minimizes political structure. Change is present in the 1930s, to be sure, but also continuity and the use of fairly large political institutions.

The vision of political authority and participation that Walzer offers in other writings coheres with his account of the Exodus. I agree that the Exodus narrative provides a vision of politics and options in social policy. However, my own vision, instructed by the same narrative, includes the need for political structures that ensure the moral requisites

needed for the survival of society in response to the ordering God. What Walzer writes is both instructive and rewarding, but it is not sufficient.

Charles M. Swezey is professor of Christian ethics at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia.

“JUSTICE SHALT THOU PURSUE . . .”

The Outraged Conscience: Seekers of Justice for Nazi War Criminals in America

By Rochelle G. Sidel
State University of New York Press

A Review essay by
Joseph Sungolowsky

Rochelle Sidel has aptly entitled her book *The Outraged Conscience*. Such a title not only describes the efforts of all those who have dedicated themselves to seeking justice for Nazi war criminals in America. It should also apply to any human being who remains indignant at the laxity that has allowed many war criminals to resume normal lives or even to occupy positions in high places through the years that have elapsed since the end of World War II. Can anyone’s conscience be otherwise than “outraged” when one realizes that Mengele benefited from protection by governments and individuals who made it impossible for him to be caught alive, or that Kurt Waldheim’s past was left unchecked throughout his career as Secretary General of the United Nations?

Sidel writes that she was awakened to the issue of war criminals in America while deportation hearings were going on in Albany, her hometown, against Vilis Hazners, who set afire a synagogue filled with Jews in Riga. Those hearings coincided with the Jewish holiday of Purim, and she explained to her children that, symbolically, she ought to bake *Haznerstaschen* rather than the traditional “hamantashen.” Not only is Nazi genocide an aspect of age-old persecutions against the Jewish people, but it must be qualified henceforth in the annals of history as the archetypal crime against humanity.

Neglecting to bring Nazi war criminals to trial can only benefit those

views that minimize the magnitude of the catastrophe and even to wipe the slate of guilt clean once and for all on the grounds that enough has been said about it. Yet, the nature of Nazi genocide is such that, despite an abundant literature on the subject, we have only begun to realize its significance. It may take many more years to understand the refinements of the destructive machine and the unspeakable sufferings of the victims. It is necessary, therefore, that we keep hearing from both executioner and victim even if their testimony becomes repetitive and tiresome, for it cannot fail to shed additional light upon the mystery of a demented hatred that succeeded in its endeavors.

No political, moral, or judicial consideration should stand in the way when it comes to unmasking the “murderers among us,” and it is high time to shelve indefinitely such issues as reconciliation and pardon. In reality, very few past and present Nazi war criminals repented. One need only recall the cynicism displayed by them at Nuremberg and by the Auschwitz guards at their trial held in 1960 (portrayed by Peter Weiss in his play, *The Investigation*) to become convinced that, in the words of the French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch, “pardon has died in the death camps.”

Nor can one invoke the issue of reparations paid by Germany to the survivors or the statute of limitations as grounds for a possible amnesty to be granted to war criminals. When the government of Israel agreed to the principle of reparations, it stressed that these payments could by no means obscure the memory of the crimes that were perpetrated. Commenting upon the word “reparations” when he discusses the perspective of a Jewish-German dialogue after World War II, the French Jewish thinker André Neher explains that “irreparable damage was done.” Long before he came to power, Hitler made it well known that he intended to exterminate the Jews. Unlike other genocides, the destruction of Jews was meant to eradicate them from the face of the earth. In view of the revolting nature of the crime, the idea of a statute of limitations should not even be entertained. Rather, let any decent human being fight against

BOOK BRIEFINGS

oblivion and continue to demand that Nazi war criminals and their collaborators be brought to trial whenever and wherever they are found. Besides, the martyrs rely upon us alone to see to it that justice is done.

The Outraged Conscience is a pertinent assessment of the issue of war criminals in America. However, it cannot be considered an exhaustive study of the situation. It fails to give the reader a precise idea about the number of criminals involved, their full record, and the extent of the proceedings initiated against them (such information can be obtained from the Office of Special Investigations). It mentions, for the most part, the names of criminals known to the public from press reports. The book is rather a journalistic venture based on personal interviews and news items.

Rochelle Sidel is chiefly interested in focusing on the activities of the people who, coming from different walks of life, became involved in the issue. Among them are journalists, politicians, government employees, rabbis, and survivors. Despite a wide array of motives, they have demonstrated commitment and dedication to the cause. *The Outraged Conscience* makes the reader aware that they are only a handful, and they deserve the recognition they are given in this book. Prominent among them is Charles Allen (a fourth of the book is devoted to him), who identified Nazi war criminals (Trifa, Artukovic, and others) as early as 1952, whose booklet *Nazi War Criminals Among Us* provided thorough documentation on the issue and who remained interested in it as late as 1978, despite other occupations and lack of support from Jewish organizations that suspected him of leftism. Charles Kremer identified Trifa in 1950 and in 1979, in his 80s, handcuffed himself to the White House to protest inaction against him. Elizabeth Holtzman and Joshua Eilberg brought the matter to the attention of Congress. Upon Holtzman's initiative, Nazi war criminals were barred from entering the United States.

A second objective of this book is to emphasize the often uncooperative attitude of government agencies and Jewish organizations. De Vito and Schiano of the Immigration and Naturalization Service succeeded in ob-

taining the deportation of Hermine Braunsteiner, an SS guard in Ravensbrück, despite initial obstruction by that agency. The Special Litigation Unit of the same agency mishandled the case of Vilis Hazners, which has remained unresolved. Trifa was invited by former President Nixon to deliver an opening prayer in the Senate. The U.S. government apparently extended some form of protection to Barbie himself, because his knowledge could be useful in the cold war, and to Strughold who experimented with humans at Dachau and could therefore supply information to the space program. Jewish organizations did not support the efforts of people seeking to expose Nazi war criminals in order not to endanger the granting of reparations and, rather, chose to fight against racism or abortion. When Rabbi Paul Silton led spectacular demonstrations in various cities to advocate that action be taken on a national level, he found little sympathy with the Rabbinical Assembly or even the 1983 Gathering of Holocaust Survivors.

As a result of the efforts of the activists discussed in this book, several of the major war criminals, who lived peacefully in the United States for many years, were denaturalized, deported, and extradited; some were even sentenced. This book also shows the progress that was accomplished by the creation of the Office of Special Investigations, which proved to be more efficient than the indecisive policies of previous agencies. By reading *The Outraged Conscience*, one may discover to what extent one should support those who continue to be active in this issue and persuade the society we live in to become more sensitive to it. Above all, reading this book awakens from indifference and apathy.

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Inclusion of a book in "Briefings" does not preclude its being reviewed in a future issue of Menorah Review.

Dogma in Medieval Jewish Thought: From Maimonides to Abravanel. By Menachem Kellner. Oxford University Press. The author traces the development of creed formation in Judaism from its inception with Maimonides to the beginning of the sixteenth century when systematic attention to the problem disappeared from the agenda of Jewish intellectuals. Among the theses defended in this fascinating book are the following: Systematic attention to dogma was a new feature in Jewish theology; the subject languished for two centuries after Maimonides' death until it was revived in fifteenth-century Spain in response to Christian attacks on Judaism; differing systems of dogma offered by medieval Jewish thinkers reflect, not different conceptions of what Judaism is, but different conceptions of what a principle of Judaism is; the very project of creed formulation reflects an essential Greek view of the nature of religious faith.

The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia. By Moshe Idel. State University of New York Press. This book represents the first wide-scale presentation of a major Jewish mystic, the founder of the ecstatic Kabbalah. It includes a description of the techniques employed by this master, including the role of music. There is a discussion of the characteristics of his mystical experience and the erotic imagery by which it was expressed. Based on all the manuscript material of Abulafia, the book opens the way to a new understanding of Jewish mysticism. It points to the importance of the ecstatic Kabbalah for the later developments in mystical Judaism.

Ben-Gurion: The Burning Ground, 1886-1948. By Shabtai Tevet. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Chronicling the statesman's life up to the declaration of the state of Israel, this book is a biographical tour de force that reveals the complex man and his work and the fledgling nation that molded him as he struggled to mold it. Tevet

skillfully describes the events that led directly to the establishment of Israel. He reveals Ben-Gurion not only as statesman, visionary, and politician, but also as son, husband, father, and lover. The book is carefully researched and brilliantly written.

Sarah: A Novel of Sarah Bernhardt. By Joel Gross. New York: William Morrow & Company. This is a panoramic historical novel based on the life of one of the world's most celebrated actresses. The author of the *Rachel* books has created an incomparable tale of a frail child who overcame obstacles and followed her dream, becoming the toast of nineteenth-century Paris and the world.

Judaism Viewed from Within and from Without. Edited by Harvey E. Goldberg. Albany: State University of New York Press. This book encompasses three themes. The first applies anthropological analyses to classic textual material in Judaism, the second presents studies of different expressions of Jewish life in America, while the third portrays varieties of Judaism among different cultural groups in

contemporary Israel. The overall thrust of the volume is the intersection of Judaic studies and anthropology. It also points to the many possibilities of future research in this field.

Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming. By Arnold M. Eisen. Indiana University Press. The notions of exile and homecoming have preoccupied the Jewish imagination for two millennia. Generations of Jews have meditated upon their wandering and dreamed of their homecoming. This tradition of reflection on exile and homecoming continues even today. The author analyzes this age-old, yet contemporary debate over the possible and proper meanings of exile and homecoming for Jews of diaspora, Israelies, and modern man in the twentieth century. He examines the classical sources and modern thinkers. His goal is to provoke today's generation of exiles—both political and spiritual—to reexamine the notion of *galut* and achieve a true homecoming.

Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews. By Jonathan S. Woocher. Indiana University Press. Alongside its explicitly religious institutions, American Jewry has built a voluntary polity of fund-raising, social service, educational, and community organizations. Through this polity, American Jewry has expressed its self-conception as a moral community with a special destiny and purpose to fulfill among worldwide Jewry. The myths, symbols, and rituals that animate American Jewry's "civil religion" are perhaps the closest thing to a common American Jewish faith.

The author presents the first detailed study of the "civil Judaism" and its importance in American Jewish life. He argues that "civil Judaism" represents more than just an institutional ideology—it is the expression of a profound Jewish religious sensibility, a passionate commitment to the survival of Jews, Judaism, and the moral values of the Jewish tradition.



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