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For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

One Deity, Three Gifts

The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity
by Bernhard Lang
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

A Review Essay
by Cliff Edwards

Bernhard Lang is professor of Old Testament and religious studies at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, and Paderborn, Germany. Many will be acquainted with his earlier works—*Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship and Heaven: A History* (with Colleen McDannell).

Lang's current work demonstrates the Hebrew God's indebtedness to ancient Near Eastern civilizations, especially those of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Weaving together old as well as new sources and insights, Lang sometimes shocks, often illuminates, and always stimulates the reader to rethink accepted modes of interpretation that have focused on the "originality" of Israel's religion and God to the detriment of attending to the common religious themes and shared symbols of religion in the ancient Near East. The very richness of Lang's insights fostered by his attention to the wider cultural context may well convince readers that a return to a broader study of Near Eastern civilizations is essential for creative biblical-theological interpretation.

But we have yet to describe a basic structuring element Lang applies to his entire volume. Convinced that anthropological theory will aid in our interpretation of Hebrew religion and its God, Lang universalizes and simplifies the "three functions" of society and its sacred figures as put forward by Georges Dumézil. Dumézil (1898-1986) was the specialist in Indo-European religion and folklore who found Indo-European culture to be based on a tripartition of society into priests, warriors and food producers, mirrored in its array of divinities

who functioned as sovereign gods, war deities and divine providers of wealth.

Applying this structure to Hebrew religion, Lang discovers in the Hebrew God a Lord of Wisdom, a Lord of War and a Lord of Life—the Lord of Life functioning as Lord of animals, of individuals and of the harvest. This structure borrowed from Dumézil may seem like a rather heavy burden to be carried by a book of some 240 pages but it provides a fresh perspective with interesting interpretive results as Lang moves through a wide variety of biblical texts. As Lord of the three gifts—wisdom, victory and life—the Hebrew God's debts to the ancient Near East and functions within Hebrew society reveal unexpected interpretive treasures. The relationship of Wisdom literature to pragmatic social management, the scribal culture of Mesopotamia and the development of "book religion" appear in new and suggestive contexts. God as warrior and the change from human war-making to apocalyptic victory through a permanent overthrow of evil enacted by God's "quieter judicial role" is located in selected texts of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel.

The third function of the divine, under the images of Lord of animals, Lord of the individual and Lord of the harvest, receives the larger part of Lang's attention. As Father/Mother of wildlife, the divine blesses and bestows the power to reproduce, exemplified in fresh readings of the God speeches of Job, Psalm 104, Matthew 6:26 and more. God is revealed as gamekeeper, peacemaker among the animals, a *deus ludens*—an ideal for humans created in this divine image. Disillusioned with the God of war, humans

were called to rediscover and celebrate the elementary matters of fertility and flocks, as in the conclusion of the Book of Job.

The Lord of the individual, focused on personal piety and a nurturing deity, istraced from Egypt to the prophets (especially Jeremiah), to Psalms, to Jesus, and is viewed as a response to experienced insecurity.

God as Lord of the harvest completes the structure, focusing on the relationship of God and his people to water, land and fertility. The Hebrew dislike for cultivating grain, revealed in the curse of Adam and refusal of Cain's offering, is contrasted with the association of arboriculture and viticulture with peace, happiness and blessing. The Hebrew experience of the Babylonian Exile is described as engendering the utopian image of a transformed Palestine in the minds of Hebrews who had viewed the canals of Babylon.

And there is much more. Lang finds the origin of the Hebrew God in an Edomite deity, associates Moses with God's first function, Joshua with the second function and

FROM THE CLASSICS

A debate between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel lasted for three years. These insisted that the law be decided according to their opinion, and those insisted that the law be decided according to their opinion. Finally a heavenly voice was heard: "The opinion of these and the opinion of those are both the words of the living God! But the law should be decided according to the opinion of the School of Hillel." But how could that have been? Since both opinions were the words of the living God, what gave the School of Hillel the right to decide the law only in accordance with their opinion? It happened because the sages of the School of Hillel were friendly and modest. They studied not only their own traditions, but also those of the School of Shammai. Indeed, they transmitted the teachings of the School of Shammai even before they transmitted their own teachings.

—Talmud Erubin 13b

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Abraham with the third. Lang even ventures into an examination of "Christ as a Second God," describing Jesus as a shaman engaged in a "mystical ascent," practitioner of "theurgical rituals," initiating disciples into the "secrets of his heavenly ascent."

It would be fair to assert that Lang attempts too much for a single volume, but it is a rich experience that is bound to catch the imagination of most readers and, certainly, to challenge what many consider a developing consensus view of Hebrew religion and its God.

Cliff Edwards is professor of religious studies at Virginia Commonwealth University and editorial consultant.

Non-Canonical Literature Remembered

The Lost Bible: Forgotten Scriptures Revealed
by J.R. Porter
University of Chicago Press

A Review Essay
by Kristin Swenson

From our early 21st-century vantage point, when the lines between Judaism, Christianity and Islam seem strikingly clear, it is easy to forget that such has not always been the case. Indeed, Christianity emerged messily in widely diverse groups from Judaism, which itself was far from tidy and monolithic; and common traditions, legends, even theology were adopted and sustained in Islam, the youngest of the three religions. *The Lost Bible: Forgotten Scriptures Revealed* by J.R. Porter is not a history book, chronicling the development of these religions. Rather, it is a pleasing collection of text excerpts, brief commentary on the ancient books from which the excerpts come and reproductions of fascinating artwork illustrating aspects of the texts. As Porter notes in the first sentence of his introduction, "*The Lost Bible* is an anthology of ancient scriptures which did not become part of the Jewish or Christian Bibles" (p. 6). That's all. Nevertheless, in its pages, representing many different extrabiblical texts, *The Lost Bible* demonstrates how permeable the membranes between religious traditions have been.

Indeed, its sampling of diverse and copious literature related in time, style, subject and theology to canonical texts suggests that some of what distinguishes the three "Religions of the Book" is the product of small changes, even chance, here and over the centuries rather than of grand, once-and-for-all decisions made by a founder or handful of leaders. Like an individual's life, seemingly

small decisions lead here and not there until the sum of all realized possibilities (and absence of those not realized) is something no one might have anticipated. You take this step here and not there and so on until you may find that who are a folk musician in Missouri who fishes with her crazy brother-in-law on weekends rather than a pastry chef in Manhattan who discusses psychotherapy with similarly chic, single friends.

In his brief (4-page) introduction, Porter notes that the books composing the Hebrew Bible and New Testament were selected during a period of time from a larger body of literature that also was considered authoritative by many people. It is with this latter, the books that were not finally canonized, that Porter is concerned, particularly with those that have been especially "lost," not Old Testament Apocrypha or Dead Sea Scrolls. The book is arranged in two main parts—titled "The 'Lost' Hebrew Scriptures" and "The 'Lost' New Testament." Individual texts are sampled and reviewed under subheadings: "In the Beginning," "Words of the Patriarchs," "Lost Writings of the Prophets," "Psalms, Songs and Odes," and "Wisdom and Philosophy" for Part I; "The Missing Years of Jesus," "Gospels of the Passion," "Gnostic Mysteries," "Legends of the Apostles," "Visions of the End of Time" and "Lost Letters to the Faithful" for Part II. That the headings within each of these subsections are sometimes the names of individual books and sometimes the subject of individual books can be confusing.

However, Porter provides aids to help readers keep the literature straight. They include a timechart on pages 8-9 that extends from the period of the Babylonian exile in the early Sixth century BCE to the mid Sixth century CE, when the Babylonian Talmud was compiled. Colored lines distinguish the different collections of sacred text, with relative dating of individual books. Readers will find the chart especially helpful as they work their way through the many and various texts that Porter excerpts and discusses. Unfortunately, the line distinguishing New Testament books does not appear, although bubbles identifying the dates of Paul's letters, the gospels and Revelation do. Furthermore, with each entry, Porter provides a small data box that includes information about the book's original date of composition, original language, provenance and earliest extant manuscript. Readers also may find helpful the brief (single page) glossary and index at the end of the book.

Text excerpts and Porter's commentary reveal an intriguing world of religious development during the last centuries before the common era as well as early centuries of the common era. They appeal to that part of us wanting to know what cannot be proved, such as the following: Where do angels come from? What happens after we die?

What was Mary like as a child? How did Joseph and Asenath negotiate an interracial, interfaith marriage? Many of the non-canonical texts Porter reviews are concerned with just such things. Sometimes, too, they tell pedagogical stories about biblical heroes, such as Abraham's condemnation of idols and John's episode with the bedbugs. And sometimes they tell things that believers would rather not hear, like Jesus' feisty temper and violent outbursts as a child or the silence of God in the face of Ezra's accusation that God is to blame for Adam's fall.

Complementing the imaginative and colorful texts Porter describes and excerpts are stunning pictures of art and photographs illustrating the texts and their themes. The artwork itself spans centuries and continents that comes from manuscripts, mosaics, frescoes, carvings and paintings. They include a papyrus manuscript depicting judgment after death (p. 41); a highly detailed, medieval painting depicting "The Testament and Death of Moses" by Luca Signorelli (p. 66); a drawing of Baruch in the first printed Bible produced by Gutenberg in the mid-15th century (p. 88); and, a 14th-century mosaic in what is now a mosque in Istanbul depicting scenes from Mary's life (pp. 132-133). The reader meets such images with every turned page, making the book suitable for "coffee-table" browsing.

The Lost Bible is not a substitute for a study of non-canonical ancient scriptures and some readers may be frustrated, on one hand, by the small size of the excerpts and, on the other, by the lack of a synthesizing discussion introducing or concluding the anthology. Nevertheless, the dazzlingly numerous and diverse books from which Porter draws create a valuable collection for people interested in ancient literature related to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Furthermore, Porter's brief commentary on each one gives readers a sense of the greater books from which the excerpts come and may compel readers to study particular books and/or themes in greater detail on their own. Although Porter's bibliography provides minimal direction for such interested readers, they may turn, for a start, to the collections that Porter cites at the end of his introduction as the sources for his excerpts—"the standard scholarly collections of the *Pseudepigrapha* by J.H. Charlesworth and of the *New Testament Apocrypha* by W. Schneemelcher" (p. 9).

While *The Lost Bible* successfully introduces readers to the fascinating world of ancient literature related to the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, it also demonstrates elements common especially to Judaism and Christianity. As Porter notes of those books that he calls the "Lost Hebrew Scriptures": "These writings are now recognized as essential for understanding the formative period of both Judaism and Chris-

tianity. They show the Judaism of this epoch to have been lively, diverse and speculative, open to a range of influences from the surrounding world yet concerned to preserve and reinterpret its traditions in the face of outside threats. The adoption of these works by the Church reveals how deeply the new religion remained rooted in the soil of Judaism" (p. 8).

And it seems that dependence went in the other direction, too. Porter explains that texts such as "The Gospel of the Hebrews" attest to the existence of "Jewish Christians" who believed that Jesus was the Messiah but continued to observe Jewish practice. Furthermore, texts such as the Jewish "Sibylline Oracles" suggest less a problem with Gentiles, who are portrayed in a positive light, than with Greece and Rome. Finally, although the texts reviewed are related particularly to the Jewish and Christian Bibles, some of the traditions they describe also are represented in Islamic texts and images. For example, Porter includes a 17th-century Persian miniature, "The Angels Adoring Adam" (p. 23), depicting a belligerent Iblis (Islam's Satan) and a 16th-century Turkish miniature of Enoch, known as *Idris in Islam*, talking with angels (p. 31). Both of these attest to extrabiblical traditions about Enoch that were common in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. *The Lost Bible* is a beautiful book proffering thought-provoking glimpses into the multi-faceted past that we share.

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Zion and America

Are We One? Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel
by Jerold S. Auerbach
New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers
University Press

A Review Essay
by Rafael Medoff

Jerold Auerbach has turned the traditional slogan of international Jewish solidarity, "We are one," into a thought-provoking question that frames his intriguing new study of the relationship between American Jewry and the State of Israel. The American-Jewish relationship with Zionism and, later, with the State of Israel, was always shaped to a significant extent by American Jews' concerns about non-Jewish opinion, Auerbach maintains. To pre-empt accusations that Jews were more loyal to Zion than to the United States, "American-Zionists molded

their Jewish nationalism to fit the requirements of American patriotism... Americanized Zionism was entirely compatible with the main currents of liberalism that transformed American political culture in the 20th century. American Jews could become Zionists yet remain assured of their place in the American liberal mainstream."

This observation, one of the major themes of *Are We One?*, echoes a remark by Abba Eban in his autobiography, describing his years as Israeli ambassador to the United States: "In the American Jewish community I always found a warm welcome but I often felt that while they listened to me, American Jews had one eye directed to the genteel audience whom I was trying to convince. Their pride was often a function of Israel's capacity to impress non-Jewish Americans."

"We Are One!" may have been "a compelling fund-raising slogan for American Jews [but it] nonetheless obscures an extremely unstable relationship between the American Diaspora and the Jewish homeland," Auerbach writes. "Historical reality is more complex than the comforting myth of unity suggests. American Jews, to be sure, have taken Israel to their hearts. But not always, or unconditionally." He recalls, for example, the outrage among American Jewish leaders when Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion made statements encouraging Diaspora Jews to immigrate to Israel and the tension after the 1956 war, when some Jewish leaders pressed Israel to accede to the Eisenhower administration's demand for a unilateral surrender of the Sinai to Nasser.

After Israel's victory in the 1967 Six Day War, "American Jews basked in the glow of their new identification with a daring, courageous, triumphant Israel," Auerbach notes. But that sentiment was short-lived because Israel now found itself accused of "conquest, domination and ultimately—and most preposterously—"racism'." Such attacks often emanated from sources on the political left and in the African-American community with which many American Jews had allied themselves. "For Jewish radicals, who were disproportionately represented in New Left politics, the choice was easy: Israel, after South Africa, their favorite pariah state, was dispensable. For mainstream Jews, who disproportionately flocked to liberal causes, the discomfort was acute. What if they must choose between their liberalism and Judaism?"

That discomfort accelerated during the election in 1977 of Menachem Begin, "the first prime minister of Israel to conspicuously identify himself as a Jew rather than an Israeli... He had a disconcerting way of reminding [American Jews] of their Old World relatives, whom they preferred to forget." Auerbach describes how Israeli policies in the years to follow irritated liberal American Jews. Begin invoked reli-

gious-nationalist themes that were alien to many in the Diaspora. And, when his policies aroused the wrath of official Washington and the media, some Jews became unnerved at the prospect of being identified with an unpopular Israel.

In the second half of *Are We One?*, Auerbach turns to more recent trends in the relationship between American Jewry and Israel. He contrasts the old Israel, both as it was and as it existed in the American Jewish imagination, with Israel as it is today. Auerbach is critical of efforts by some Israeli intellectuals to radically redefine their nation's identity and culture. He cites numerous examples of Israeli historians who have rewritten Zionist history to blame Israel for the Arab-Israeli wars; polemicists who heap scorn and ridicule on traditional Judaism; and playwrights, artists and entertainers who champion the idea of a state "depleted of Jewish content." Will American Jews who are at home in a secularized America likewise prefer an increasingly de-Judaized Israel? Or, will they consider the process of "self-laceration," as Auerbach calls it, to have taken Israel too far astray from the vision of the Zionist founding fathers?

It seems that Israel's contemporary domestic controversies have focused a spotlight on something that Israelis and American Jews continue to share: the enduring dilemma of Jewish self-identification. As Auerbach puts it: "For [Israeli] Zionists, no less than for Diaspora Jews, emancipation continues to pose a stark choice: integration or isolation; normalization or distinctiveness. All modern Jews, wherever they may live, confront the identical dilemma: whether to assert their Jewish distinctiveness and remain a people apart or relinquish it and submerge themselves in the dominant culture."

Are We One? will be seen by some as the American Jewish counterpart to Dr. Yoram Hazony's *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul*, which analyzed the impact of "post-Zionist" intellectuals on Israeli culture and politics. Hazony's study triggered the liveliest Israeli public debate (on a non-security related issue) in recent memory and has already led to changes in the Israeli Ministry of Education's high school curriculum. Perhaps most important, it has prodded many Israelis—among the intellectual elite and beyond—to take a serious look at the future of Israel's national identity and the meaning of Jewishness in the modern Jewish state.

Jerold Auerbach's thoughtful and well-written volume aims to ignite a comparable debate about the meaning of American Jewish identity and Zionism in the 21st century. He may succeed for *Are We One?* is one of the most provocative books on Israel-Diaspora relations since Hillel Halkin's land-

mark *Letters to an American Jewish Friend* stirred the U.S. Jewish community 25 years ago. The critic Robert Alter described Halkin's book as "an intellectual event." The same may be said of Jerold Auerbach's *Are We One?*

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Weighing the Prospects for Dialogue

Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America
by Egal Feldman
Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press

A Review Essay
by Earle J. Coleman

Asked about interreligious dialogue between Jews and Catholics, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner replied, "The most optimistic sign is that Jews and Catholics are just beginning to talk about the Holocaust seriously." That this exchange appeared in a recent issue of a Jesuit magazine, *America*, would further suggest that now is the time for a sustained conversation between Catholics and Jews. In the main, Egal Feldman's book looks cautiously but sanguinely on such a possibility because events in the 20th century appeared to be uniquely promising to promote enhanced relations between Jews and Catholics, and between Jews and other Christians. In the above-mentioned periodical, a book review discusses David I. Kertzer's work, *The Pope Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Antisemitism*, which explores the involvement of the papacy in the growth of anti-Semitism from 1814 to 1939 and the accession of Pope Pius XII. Just a half century ago, such a study, referring as it does to "a pervasive culture of Vatican antisemitism," could scarcely have been discussed in a Catholic publication.

Early in the 20th century, there were, of course, various grounds of alienation between Catholics and Jews. Clearly, divisiveness between the two is as old as the Catholic conviction that Jews were primarily responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Indeed, embittered Catholics have long described their Jewish neighbors as "Christ killers." And from the Jewish perspective, decide was not the only charge that called for refutation because, for example, the Christian characterization of the

Pharisees conveyed a false impression of Judaism in the time of Jesus. But much worse for the Jewish tradition, Catholics have long held, and some still maintain, that the arrival of Jesus superseded all of Judaism. Traditionally, Catholic theologians have believed that eventually all Jews would convert to Christianity. Presumably, the purpose of missionaries is to effect or expedite this inevitable process. Feldman observes that many Jews regarded conversion as a kind of spiritual death. Nonetheless, Pope Pius X (1903-1914) declared, "The Jewish religion was the foundation of our own, but it was superseded by the teachings of Christ, and we cannot concede it any further validity." In 1942, David Goldstein, a convert to Catholicism, warned that as long as Jews refused to accept Jesus, anti-Semitism would flourish. In 1954, Father Edward Flannery, at the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, stated that "the doctrine of Israel's final return to the Christ is theologically certain, for it is most firmly anchored in the sources of the Catholic faith." But in the last quarter of the 20th century, Pope John Paul I repudiated the idea that one testament supersedes the other. Some Catholics had already drawn the inference that converting Jews would be improper. Feldman cites the priest and theologian Michael B. McGarry, "After what some Christians did (and did not do) during the Holocaust, Catholics should have the courtesy to leave the Jews alone."

Catholic supersessionism was extended to Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and all other religions. Ironically, and perhaps predictably, Catholics esteem their faith above all others, even when Catholics are not well informed concerning other traditions. John Paul II, in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, mistakenly declares that the Buddha's enlightenment reduces to the idea that the world is bad. To the contrary, Buddhism does not teach that the world is bad but that *clinging* to it yields suffering. And it should not be overlooked that many Buddhists maintain that samsara is nirvana, refusing to distinguish between this world and the ideal condition. It is no wonder that, after the appearance of the above book, a number of Buddhists canceled their plans to meet with John Paul II when he visited Sri Lanka. After all, he asserted the following in his book: "Carmelite mysticism begins at the point where the reflections of Buddha end."

Of course, a turn to history also reveals manifold Catholic offenses against Jews, including massacres, forced baptisms and the burning of Talmudic writings. Feldman deserves credit for noting exceptional Catholics such as Pope Innocent IV, who renounced the claim that Jews were responsible for such offenses as ritual murder (i.e., using blood of murdered Christian children in their religious practices). Typically, a defender of Judaism received scathing criticism, as

when the cleric James Cardinal Gibbons spoke on behalf of the Jewish tradition and a French priest, Father Henry Delassus, accused Gibbons of working with the Jews to effect the triumph of the anti-Christ. In 1934, after reciting a list of stereotypes concerning Jews, the priest John F.X. Murphy made the chilling declaration that Hitler might be right in his persecution of them.

One distinguished Jesuit priest and professor of law, Robert F. Drinan, has characterized the Christian response to the Holocaust as tepid, nebulous and overdue. Concerning Pope Pius XII, whom many Jews accuse of inaction during the Holocaust, Feldman notes that many Catholics and even some Jews credit this pope with saving hundreds of thousands of Jews. But most Jews, as well as some Catholics, condemn his silence during the extermination of innocent men, women and children. Also, it is frustrating to learn that John Paul II failed to find fault with Pope Pius XII's silence. Feldman states that many Jews, as well as some Catholics, are still waiting for a more complete statement on the role of the church during the *Shoah*. When the Israeli court imposed the death penalty on Adolf Eichmann, the Catholic press passionately condemned the sentence and, as Feldman expresses it, "The state of Israel, according to the Christian press, should have risen to a higher level of behavior, one befitting the ideals of the post-war era." An eminent rabbi and scholar, Arthur Gilbert, wisely questioned the timing of the Catholic criticism of the death penalty.

When the state of Israel was born in 1948, Catholics tended to be indifferent or opposed to the event, with the Vatican going so far as to declare that "modern Zionism is not the true heir of Biblical Israel, but a secular state...therefore, the Holy Land and its sacred sites belong to Christianity, the True Israel!" Some Catholics questioned Zionism because they interpreted the Diaspora as divine punishment and inferred that until Jews embraced Jesus and converted to Christianity, they would not be eligible for the land of promise.

Pope John XXIII, who lived through the opening years of the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II (1962-1965), worked heroically to save Jews from being sent to death camps. He also insisted that the expression "unbelieving Jews" be excised from the Good Friday service. Thus John XXIII became known as the pope who threw open the windows of the church to admit fresh air and many Catholics believed these windows could never be shut completely again. As for Vatican II itself, Arthur Gilbert was among many Jews and Christians alike who maintained that it created a more open atmosphere for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Its "Declaration on the Jews" (Nostra Aetate, No. 4) categorically denied that Jews were

responsible for the death of Christ. A more recent and popular statement appeared in *Time* magazine, April 4, 1994. As early as 1964, Cardinal Albert Meyer of Chicago issued a sweeping call for the church to specifically acknowledge the great harms that it had done to Jewish people throughout the centuries. On the Jewish side of dialogue, the American Jewish Committee advised participants to receive Catholics "in the fullness of their differences." Openness was in, proselytizing was out. There was a special interest in the potential of dialogue for eliminating fallacious ideas about Jews from Christian doctrine. Accordingly, Feldman states "that thoughtful Catholic thinkers have agreed to examine their sacred scriptures as an inspiration for crimes against the Jewish people is evidence of the distance traveled since the 1965 Vatican council."

From 1969 to 1971, various documents, which were intended to foster better relations between Jews and Christians, were developed by the archdioceses of New York, Cincinnati and Galveston-Houston. The latter guidelines warned, for example, that Judaism should not be characterized as a legalistic religion that lacks the call for love of God and neighbor. Among the most promising of post-Vatican II events was the signing of a "Fundamental Agreement" by the Holy See and the state of Israel (1993) in which both parties pledged to fight anti-Semitism and to protect Catholic shrines. Mark L. Winer, a Jewish speaker at the Jerusalem symposium, attributed great historical and theological import to the document, called it the fulfillment of the promises of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, and he further affirmed that "it acknowledges the eternal nature of the Jewish people's covenant with God."

Feldman devotes a chapter to the pitfalls of dialogue, for like anything promising interfaith conversation is not free of risks. Abraham Joshua Heschel, for instance, asks how one can balance loyalty to his own religion with reverence toward different traditions. Other thinkers are concerned that dialogue can culminate in relativism, a view that flourishes in secular thought. Feldman observes that the rapid growth of secularism, a threat to Judaism and Catholicism, convinced some members of both traditions of the need for interreligious dialogue. While allowing that Catholics and Jews were on parallel paths, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, an esteemed rabbi and head of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, expressed reservations about dialogue and insisted that one must remember that the two faiths are unique (i.e., fundamentally opposed). He concluded that inter-faith discussion should focus on common social-political issues and exclude the distinctive theological beliefs of the participants. Jacob Neusner, a prominent

scholar of rabbinic Judaism, also questioned the usefulness of dialogue between Christians and Jews. One answer to such questioning might come from other religions that have enjoyed highly successful conversations for decades. The Buddhist-Christian Society has been meeting long enough that participants from both faiths know the basic tenets, sub-tenets and philosophical underpinnings of the other tradition. Each party knows a great deal about the religious life and thought of the other. While they continue to meet for cognitive reasons, fellowship is sometimes, at least, as important to them. In short, they meet for the joy of encountering each other and for the joy of establishing and sustaining I-Thou relations. Some readers of the periodical *Christian Jewish Relations* would surely affirm such possibilities. The Jewish theologian Richard L. Rubenstein expresses a related idea, "If we concentrate less on what our religious inheritances promise and [focus] on the human existence which we share through the traditions, we will achieve the superlative yet simple knowledge of who we truly are...the community of men is possible only through the encounter of persons rather than of myths and abstractions."

As Catholics and Jews come to know more and more about each other's traditions, their dialogue may extend beyond the cognitive to the existential meeting in which each come to know and care about the other; and both participate in a fellowship that is mutually enriching. Improved relations between Catholics and Jews have not, of course, prevented subsequent controversies between them. For example, in 1984, when Carmelite nuns elected to erect a convent on the edge of the death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Jews demonstrated and John Paul's intervention effected a resolution but only after five years had past. The announcement of the proposed canonization of Pope Pius XII, who reigned during the Holocaust and was accused of ignoring it, was strongly contested by Jews and some Catholics.

Catholics, who consider Feldman's account, will hardly be in a position to defend Catholicism against his numerous and far-reaching charges. Rather they should feel great remorse for the many inhumane acts performed by Catholics, and especially members of the hierarchy, against the Jewish people. Still, the Catholic reader may wish to advance one critical point, which is no mere cavil, by challenging Arthur Gilbert's request that Catholics stop praying for the conversion and salvation of all Jews. For if Catholics (or Jews, Buddhists, Muslims or Hindus) sincerely believe their path is best and if they want the best for their non-Catholic brothers and sisters, why wouldn't Catholics pray that others would join their religion? Indeed, the Catholic may think he has a moral obligation to win others to his

faith. In the words of Father John Pawlikowski, who was struggling with the propriety of conversion, "I still believe that Christians have a responsibility to present the meaning of the Christ event to the world, including Jewish people." Of course, overt conversion efforts are one thing and the most interior act of praying is another; human beings determine the success of the former but only the divine determines the success of the latter.

Earle J. Coleman is professor of philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University and a contributing editor.

Renewing the Faith of a Diminishing Minority

*Judaism Within Modernity:
Essays on Jewish History
and Religion*

by Michael A. Meyer
Detroit: Wayne State University
Press

A Review Essay
by Peter J. Haas

This book brings together some 22 essays from one of the deans of the history of Jews in modernity. The single subject of these essays, addressed from a variety of angles, is how Judaism struggled to transverse the parlous terrain the modern world laid before it. With one exception, these essays, written between 1975 and 1998, have all appeared elsewhere, so there is nothing particularly new in this volume as far as content. But there is something to gain from reading all these essays together in a sort of logical order. What emerges is not only a series of connected probes into the Jewish encounter with modernity (and to a lesser extent modernity's encounter with Judaism) but insight into the very writing of that history. This is not an introductory collection aimed at those unfamiliar with the names and events of that encounter: Moses Mendelssohn, the French Revolution, die Wissenschaft des Judenthums, Heinrich Graetz and so on. Rather, it is a collection for those who know details but are interested in reflecting on our, and our predecessors', understanding of these events and people as they in turn worked to construct the modern Judaism we now so much take for granted.

The early essays deal, logically enough, with the basic questions. It is clear that even from the vantage point of the late 18th century there was a sense that Jews had entered a new era, one that was already being labeled by those going through it as "modern." But

what exactly marked that era as new? For some it was emancipation, the ability of Jews finally to become part of the surrounding society. The flagship example here, of course, is Moses Mendelssohn. For others, the Rubicon was religious, the opportunity to move beyond the medieval matrix of halachah and to allow Judaism to grow into its true spiritual destiny, the perspective of Reform. For a third group, exemplified by historians like Ben Zion Dinur, it was an event in the national life of the Jewish people, namely, the beginning of serious return to the Land. Whatever the orientation, it was in all events this shared sense of coming to the end of one era and setting foot into another that provoked, Meyer suggests, not only a sense of "modernity" but the whole enterprise of writing Jewish history in the first place. But, just as there were disagreements as to what marked modernity from what went before, so there were disagreements as to what function the writing of that history would perform. Some held that the purpose was to instill pride in the Jewish people and so stem, or at least channel, assimilation, others thought the primary object was to answer the anti-Semites, still others wanted to create a scientific basis for religious reform, and some even hoped that, by shedding light on the Jewish experience, they could add to the knowledge of the history of Germany and the West more generally. So what emerged in the history of Jewish historiography by the middle of the 19th century was neither necessary nor neutral. Jewish historiography, for Meyer, was itself an artifact of the history it was itself creating.

One theme that surfaces in a number of essays in the first part of the book is the interrelationship between what Jewish historians were writing about the Jews and what non-Jewish historians were writing about these same people. In other words, one subtext of these new Jewish histories was shaped not by dynamics internal to the Jewish community but by pressures from the outside. The paradigmatic comparison, detailed in Chapter 4, is the intellectual conversation between two Heinrichs, namely Graetz and von Treitschke. Although when it comes to modern times both are looking at the same data, they systematically draw opposite conclusions about what lessons should be learned. What is important for the one is precisely what is anathema to the other. Graetz celebrates, particularly, Jewish contributions to German culture, for instance. For him, this is an argument for allowing greater cultural interaction between the two communities. Von Treitschke sees such interaction, of course, as exactly the problem and uses his historical studies to argue that such cultural cross-contamination should be limited. Along these lines, von Treitschke delivers as positive examples those German Jews who have most thoroughly assimilated;

precisely the people Graetz treats as an example of what can go wrong with emancipation. What is important is not so much the disagreement but rather the insight that the new Jewish historians were caught in a terrible dilemma. They wanted both to promote Enlightenment and the accompanying emancipation while yet documenting and even promoting some level of particularistic Jewish cultural identity. The notion of the "German Jew" was a hybrid concept, shaped by the very oddness of its structure.

The second section of the book looks at the larger political and social context in which this academic jousting was taking place. In one way, the six essays in this section can be seen as vertical bores, examining the layers of some one aspect of the German Jewish community as it struggled to come to terms with modern discourse: the traditions of Judaism to modern Biblical criticism (Chapter Eight), for example, or the response to German politics in general (Chapters Nine and 10), or to the Prussian government's policies in particular (Chapter 11), or even to Jewish political leadership under the Nazis (Chapter 12). In another way, this group of essays is an important complement to the first section, functioning as a series of studies in the sociology of knowledge. We come to see that the academic arguments cited in the first section were not merely polemics or case studies in logic and method but were shaped (at times profoundly) by the political and social buffeting to which the Jewish community was subject. The result of German-Jewish scholarship in the 19th century emerge in their distinctiveness as genuine creations of the very odd configuration of Jewish life in the

German-speaking lands as these were struggling to coalesce into the nation-state of Germany.

The third section explores the implications that these historical and political controversies had on the conceptualization of Jewish religion. What emerges in this section is that Jewish intellectuals were fighting not a one-or two-front war but a five- or six-front war. Liberal Jews (the focus of the book) had to fight, for instance, not only their non-Jewish colleagues (like von Treitschke) and the Orthodox establishment but also the government, the Zionist movement and a Jewish population that was increasingly indifferent to, and even alienated from, all things Jewish (Chapters 13 to 15). For the government, especially in the Vormarz period, any attempt at religious reform emanating from the Jews was seen as part of the radical enlightenment whose icon was the French Revolution. In this, of course, the reactionary political forces in Germany were right. The Jews themselves understood religious reform to be part and parcel of the whole process of Enlightenment and Emancipation. But, to make their case against the suspicious bureaucracy, Jewish leaders had to redouble their claims to be nonetheless extraordinarily German. But even after the political implications of the enlightenment were accepted, the job was hardly over. A good proportion of the non-Jewish German intellectual and political elite continued to oppose reform of Judaism because, for them, Judaism (if not religion more generally) was a thing of the past, superseded respectively by Christianity or the secular Enlightenment. Reforming Judaism so as to make it more compatible with contemporary sensibilities was, from their point of view, not only inauthentic but would prolong artificially the Jews' stubborn attachment to their heritage and religion. In short, every possible gesture made in one direction only provoked negative reaction somewhere else. The dilemma of the German Jewish historians was deliciously complex.

Thus, for example, Meyer shows us that in making the arguments necessary to convince the government that Liberal Judaism was both German and worthwhile, the leaders of religious reform alienated not only the Orthodox but also the Zionists. For the Orthodox, of course, the point of being German was, at best, irrelevant and, at worse, a betrayal of Sinai. For the Zionists, each claim that emancipated Jews were as German as their non-Jewish neighbors was an act of national suicide. Yet in trying not to alienate the Orthodox and Zionists entirely, the religious reformers only distanced themselves further from the Jewish masses, for whom being German was a dominant desire. As the intellectuals were getting themselves more and more entangled in this web of mutual incompatibilities, the Jewish popu-

FROM THE CLASSICS

It is prohibited to kill an animal with its young on the same day so that people should be restrained and prevented from killing the two together in such a manner that the young is slain in the sight of the mother; for the pain of the animals under such circumstances is very great. There is no difference in this case between the pain of man and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for her young ones is not produced by reasoning but by imagination, and this faculty exists not only in man but in most living things. ...The same reason applies to the law that enjoins us to let the mother fly away when we take the young. ...If the law provides that such grief should not be caused to cattle or birds, how much more careful must we be not to cause grief to our fellow humans.

—Maimonides,
Moreh Nevuchim 3.48

NOTEWORTHY BOOKS

Editor's Note: The following is a list of books received from publishers but, as of this printing, have not been reviewed for Menorah Review.

- A Short Story About Mr. Silberstein.*** (A novel) by Erland Josephson. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- His Majesty's Enemies: Great Britain's War Against Holocaust Victims and Survivors.*** By Itamar Levin. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- One Step Ahead: A Jewish Fugitive in Hitler's Europe.*** By Alfred Feldman. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Yentl's Revenge: The Next Wave of Jewish Feminism.*** Edited by Danya Ruttenberg. Seattle, WA: Seal Press.
- New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970.*** By Eli Lederhendler. Syracuse University Press.
- Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust and the Christian Doctrine of Sin.*** By Alistair McFadyen. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate.*** By Neil Baldwin. New York: Public Affairs.
- Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905-1914.*** By Mikhail Krutikov. Stanford University Press.
- The Jews of New Jersey: A Pictorial History.*** By Patricia M. Ard and Michael Aaron Rockland. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- The Lost Bible: Forgotten Scriptures Revealed.*** By J.R. Porter. University of Chicago Press.
- Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World.*** Edited by Nicholas de Lange. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- The Haunted Smile: The Story of Jewish Comedians in America.*** By Lawrence J. Epstein. New York: Public Affairs.
- Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913-1983: Patterns of Jewish Survival in the Greek Provinces Before and After the Holocaust.*** By Joshua Eli Plaut. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.
- Autonomy in Jewish Philosophy.*** By Kenneth Seeskin. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Practicing Exile: The Religious Odyssey of an American Jew.*** By Marc H. Ellis. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Strangers in the House: Coming of Age in Occupied Palestine.*** By Raja Shehadeh. South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press.
- Class, Networks and Identity: Replanting Lives From Nazi Germany to Rural New York.*** By Rhonda F. Levine. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism.*** Edited by C.A. Carson et al. New York: Baker Book House.
- An Ethnic at Large: A Memoir of America in the Thirties and Forties.*** By Jerre Mangione. Syracuse University Press.
- Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority.*** By J. Samuel Preus. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader.*** Edited by Martin D. Yafee. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- By a Twist of History: The Three Lives of a Polish Jew.*** By Mietek Sieradzki. London: Valentine Mitchell.
- Christian Attitudes Toward the State of Israel.*** By Paul Charles Merkley. Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- The Expulsion of the Jews From Spain.*** By Haim Beinart. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Abraham Miguel Cardozo: Selected Writings.*** Translated and introduced by David J. Halperin. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia.*** By ChaeRan Freeze. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Crossing the Green Line: Between the West Bank and Israel.*** By Avram S. Bornstein. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Principles of Spiritual Activism.*** By Avi Weiss. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc.
- Haskalah and History: The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness.*** By Shmuel Feiner. Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization.
- Understanding Fundamentalism: Christian, Islamic and Jewish Movements.*** By Richard T. Antoun. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group Inc.
- Jews and Medicine: An Epic Saga.*** By Frank Heynick. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House Inc.
- Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse.*** By Richard Wolin. Princeton University Press.
- The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial.*** By Robert Jan van Pelt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Politics and the Limits of Law: Secularizing the Political in Medieval Jewish Thought.*** By Menachem Lorberbaum. Stanford University Press.
- The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society and the Military.*** By Baruch Kimminger. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Passover Revisited: Philadelphia's Efforts to Aid Soviet Jews, 1963-1998.*** By Andrew Harrison. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

lation itself was growing increasingly distant from the official Gemeinde synagogue services that were aesthetically pleasing but spiritually empty. This led, by the turn of the century, to the creation of alternative prayer meetings that stressed *gemeinschaft* over *gesellschaft*, arguing that the real function of the synagogue should be to serve as a place for spiritual community rather than as a locus for institutional association (Chapter 16). So yet another node of contention was emerging. On the other hand, however, this essay shows that a kind of consensus was actually beginning to emerge during the Weimar period and into the early 1930s. Seen from this perspective, the coming to power of the Nazis only hastened the move to communal unity, already hesitantly underway.

The last two essays in this section (numbers 17 and 18) introduce an important corrective. For a variety of reasons, we conceive of the formation of modern Judaism as taking place entirely within the German-speaking lands. But, other reform and/or liberal Judaism were developing elsewhere as well—for example, in Russia, to the east, and, in Britain, to the west. These two essays deal respectively with each of these contexts, showing the influence of German thought on these communities as well as the

different paths each chartered as compared to their German compatriots. These comparisons not only let us see that these areas had their own contributions to make in the formation of modern Judaism but help us to put the German initiatives in perspective.

The last group of essays (Chapters 19 through 22) address the American scene. The first two essays here cover ground that one rarely sees discussed. The first (Chapter 19) examines the emotional and intellectual break with the German mother-country that occurred in American Judaism in the 1970s. The second looks at the initiative of Hebrew Union College in the 1930s to bring German-Jewish intellectuals as faculty members so as to rescue them from Germany outside the visa quotas. This is a detailed and fascinating look at the 10 men who were on the list and gives some insight into the kinds of barriers the State Department could throw up toward the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust. The final essays deal with the assimilation of Zionism into the American, specifically Reform, Jewish community in the first half of the 20th century. The final chapter looks in detail at the position of Abba Hillel Silver as Reform rabbi and Zionist.

In the end, of course, a book like this cannot talk about everything. There is a

clear center of attention that emerges on a full reading—that is the formation of Reform Judaism. The collection ends up leaving the reader with a sense of the struggle among various Jewish reformers to negotiate the various and usually contradictory themes that were buffeting the Jewish world, and especially the world of German-speaking Jewry, during the last two centuries. What is amazing is how successful the movement was in addressing and encompassing these diverse themes and the needs informing them. But, it is also clear how amorphous the result was. The journey of Judaism through the waters of modernity has hardly been a tranquil sail and it is clear from reading these essays that many of the shoals and straits encountered along the way have not yet been successfully negotiated. However, at least we have what the subjects of this book did not have—some account of what the traveling has been like during the past 200 years. We are left with a sense of the intellectual achievement of these thinkers in trying to tease out what a modern Judaism could possibly be.

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