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BOOK REVIEWS*

Culture and Judaism

by DR. S. B. ULLMAN

(Toronto: Lieberman's Book Centre, 1956.)

Living Religions of the World

by FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG

(New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956.)

Peshat (Plain Exegesis) in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature

by RABBI DR. ISRAEL FRANKEL

Evaluation by Rabbi Leo Jung and Foreword by B. Travers Herford. (Toronto: La Salle Press, 1956, pp. 211.)

Your Neighbor Celebrates

by ARTHUR GILBERT and OSCAR TARCOV

(New York: Friendly House Publishers, 1957, pp. 118.)

He Spoke in Parables

by HERMAN A. GLATT

(New York: Jay Bithmar Publications, 1957. Distributed by Ph. Feldheim, Inc.)

* Only selected books of those received will be reviewed at length — Ed.

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Culture and Judaism by DR. S. B. ULLMAN

The author of this group of nineteen essays defines his task in the Introduction, as follows: "In all these articles, which are written from a strictly scientific point of view, I have tried to show that there is *no real conflict* (italics are the author's) between Science and Judaism." This reviewer has long shared the feeling of Orthodox scientists for the urgent need to bring more closely together Modern Science and Traditional Judaism from both the halakhic and philosophic points of view. It is, therefore, all the more regrettable to have to say at the outset that this work falls far short of its announced intention.

The author's general approach is to present theories which he feels threaten the traditional point of view and then to marshal generalized counter-statements in rebuttal. These statements are in the form of pseudo-scientific armchair speculations not backed by any presented scientific evidence. The attempt to discredit the theories which the author feels are incompatible with Orthodox Judaism turns into a list of *who* said *what* and *what* was said *about* it, rather than an objective examination and critique of the data and the hypotheses drawn therefrom. This approach leads him to a conclusion which becomes a recurrent theme in this cacophonous medley of essays—"ignoramus ignorabimus" (we do not know and we shall never know).

Some typical examples where this conclusion is applied are:
From "Old and Modern Cosmogonies":

"We can see that there is no theory which can explain all the

facts discovered by modern Astronomy. No theory can really explain to us the Origin of Heaven and Earth without conflicting with facts accepted in Modern Science."

From "Miracles":

"Obviously, therefore, science cannot attempt a purely mathematical explanation of the miracles." Or, again, from "Evolution versus Creation":

"Professor Price quotes scientists who agree that man cannot know anything whatsoever concerning the origin of the universe and the formation of organisms. *These scientists admit that creation* remains an insoluble riddle." (Italics are the author's.)

This is hardly "a scientific point of view" as claimed by Dr. Ullman in his Introduction! Rather, these essays are polemics with the continual resort to *argumentum ad hominem*. They might stand up well as sermons or talks before conventions (where some of these essays were originally delivered), but are mealy fare even for the embryonic scientist.

In his zeal to defend the faith, he "blesses Mordecai and curses Haman." Without scientific analysis of the ideas presented, without evidence to support or deny the scientific claims made, the author groups various scientists and philosophers into productive and destructive categories. "On what foundation and what suppositions have those scientists and philosophers (Spinoza, Malthus, Marx, Darwin, the two Huxleys, Weininger, Freud, Nietzsche) who have destroyed the morality of the modern world based themselves?" On the other hand, "Most of the basic fundamental discoveries have been made by *private*

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men, especially *clergymen, teachers* (Priestley, Dalton, Copernicus, Ohm, Hales, Mendel, etc.), physicians, pharmacists and engineers." (Italics are the author's.) But no matter how sympathetic one might be to these evaluations, one cannot help but realize they are based on the strong wine of emotion.

This is a pot-pourri, a collection of assorted articles which are uneven and unnecessarily repetitious. With extensive consolidation and judicious editing, they might serve as an introduction to a more formidable work which the author here and there gives indications that he is capable of undertaking.

In the essay on "Science in the Tanach and the Talmud," the author is on firmer ground. From both personal experience and the biological literature, he presents some interesting data as to how botany and zoology are reflected in the Scriptures. This orientation to the interpretation of Torah needs encouragement and expansion. It is important that the language and conceptual methods of the day be used to expound the Torah in each generation so as to bring it into the minds and hearts of the people. Pioneering attempts have been made by well-learned but unfortunately not scientifically-trained individuals; e.g., an intriguing *sefer* written by an "old country" *talmid chakham* which tried to classify talmudic literature in terms of scientific disciplines, entitled *The Talmud and The Universal Science* by Rabbi K. Kamelhar (Lwow, 1928—printed in Hebrew). This is a desperate need of our times—to couch the ideology of our Torah in terms that the modern generation can intellectually appreciate and easily accept.

In the same vein, the change wrought by modern science and technology in the world in which we live and the scholarly application of Halakhah to these advances is the crying need of our generation. In this endeavor, both the *talmid chakham* who can understand the language of science and the scientist who respects and values the Halakhah must join forces.

Experience has shown that at the present time substantial progress in research can best be accomplished by teamwork. The needs of the time demand the cooperative effort of the religious scholar and the scientist.

W.F.

Living Religions of the World by
FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG

The author, Professor of Indian Culture and Thought in the Department of Asiatic Studies at Stanford University, surveys here all of the world's major religions. In the chapters on the object of religion and the proofs of the evidence of God, his theme is man's realization of the miracle of being. The doctrines, the historical beginnings, and the views of different religions are all evaluated.

We are here concerned with his chapter on Judaism, which covers 15 pages. After a brief outline of the history of the Hebrews, the author defines Judaism as having much of its basic mythology derived from the beliefs of Babylonia, and from those of Egypt. He is greatly influenced by T. E. Lawrence and his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* wherein the thesis is proposed that the geography of Palestine influenced the development of Judaism. To the Jewish eye it is strange to read, "In addition, the

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of view. The photograph of a *Sukkot* celebration, for example, is quite striking at first glance, but on closer inspection one notices that this *Sukkah* is quite unusual; *it is built indoors*. The Seder table is complete with three matzohs, Seder plate, Haggadah, and wine. But the head of the household forgot to don his *yarmulke*. The photograph of the Jewish wedding ceremony has nothing in it to differentiate it from a ceremony of any faith. There is no *chupah*, and, obviously, the rabbi and the groom wear no head covering. The Friday night Kiddush; a rabbi teaching boys to read from the Torah; a rabbi blessing his pupils against a huge backdrop of the Ten Commandments; a man and his children decorating the *Sukkah*; a choir singing on Rosh Hashanah;—is it too much to ask that at least in some of these beautiful illustrations a trace of a *yarmulke* should be seen?

Your Neighbor Celebrates has an aura of false gaiety about it. Judaism here is not the austere and powerful faith which God gave to Israel through the Torah. In this volume Judaism is a breathless round of holidays and celebrations, of flower-bedecked tables and smiling faces of children, of wine, feasting, and song. It is true that the Torah tells us, "Thou shalt rejoice in thy festivals and thou shalt be exceedingly glad." But this law is tempered with the rabbinical admonition of "half of the joy is directed towards God and half for yourselves." Half of the joy is that spiritual and edifying kind which is found in worship and study. In this book, it is all *chatzi lakhem*. The authors would have us think that Jewish life is a merry-go-round of joy piled on joy. Rosh Hashanah is joyous, Yom Kippur is

joyous, Sukkot is joyous, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, Shebuot—all are carefree and joyous festivals, filled with laughter and song. Are there any demands made upon the recipients of all this joy? Are there *mitzvot*? On Sukkot, for example, do we not have to *build a sukkah*? Well, says the author, "in bygone days it was customary for each Jewish family to build its *sukkah*, but today, with smaller families and city living, it has become more usual for the members of a synagogue to build one large *sukkah* for the entire congregation." This is the tenor of the entire book. The first sentence of the Simchat Torah chapter states jubilantly: "Flags, songs, candles, parades, laughter . . . these are the sights and sounds that announce the arrival of Simchat Torah." Purim "has the spirit of a social event; there are carnivals and parties, costume plays and dances and—last but not least—*hamantashen* . . ." Even Tishah B'Ab does not escape the joy-tinted pen of the writer. The book notes happily that "in recent years, Tishah B'Ab has lost much of its tragic overtones. While the Jewish people still look back with compassion at the hard lives of their forefathers, they are overjoyed that freedom is flourishing in so many parts of the world." In view of the fact that in recent years six million Jews were exterminated, and that in recent years Communism has enslaved many more millions of human beings, this statement has a very hollow ring.

It is unfair to expect a publication of this type, designed for youngsters, to delve very profoundly into Judaism. But it is not unfair to expect a less shallow and more accurate treatment of Jewish life.

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Through the entire volume there are undertones of A.D.L.'s official policy: brotherhood, good will, the universality of Judaism, inter-group relationships. Thus we find that "the family spirit of devotion on the Sabbath inspires a feeling of love and friendship for all people . . ." Passover "unites men in an eternal confidence of brotherhood." Purim reminds us that evil can be defeated "if people of good faith work together." The *lulab* and *etrog* "taught man a lesson about brotherhood." While all this is fine and noble, and while A.D.L.'s ideals are not being challenged here, it is questionable whether all the ideals of A.D.L. can be successfully carried over into Judaism without in some way diluting Judaism. Judaism, after all, does go a little deeper than good will and brotherhood and friendship.

Despite these reservations, this little volume is an excellent weapon in the battle against ignorance of Jewish life which plagues so many non-Jews. The explanatory notes, the five-year holiday calendar, and the glossary of Hebrew words should be very helpful to the non-Jewish reader—and, alas, to many Jewish readers as well. If the book does depict Jewish life a bit narrowly, it nevertheless performs a service to the young Christian reader, and will make him more aware and more sympathetic to his Jewish neighbor. As such, the book achieves the general purpose for which it was written, and A.D.L. can take a real measure of pride in this effort.

E.F.

He Spoke in Parables by HERMAN
A. GLATT

The name "Dubno Maggid" has become synonymous with preaching

and especially with *mashal* or parable. The Maggid, Rabbi Jacob Kranz of the 18th century, was a master of the homily, a tool with which he ingeniously interpreted difficult passages in the Torah, attacked harsh opponents, and entertained both mental giants and simple laborers. So adept was he in the art of the parable that the Vilna Gaon, a very close friend of the Maggid's, took up the Dubno Maggid's challenge by selecting, at random, a passage from the Prayerbook, whereupon the Maggid presented a problem concerning it by means of the parable, and then presented the solution by means of another parable. The results of this game, as Herman Glatt describes it, are truly magnificent. Indeed, Moses Mendelssohn, another contemporary, called the Maggid "The Jewish Aesop."

The genius of the Maggid lay not only in the weaving of the parable, however, but in its application to the times, to the teeming passions of the Jewish soul of the 18th century. It was an era that felt the conflicting tensions of Chasidism, Rabbinism, and Haskalah, and heard the last gasping breaths of the false Messiahs in the movement of Frankism. In the heat of these emotions, the profound humanity and gentle castigation of the Dubno Maggid came as a cool and clearing breeze, for he was first of all an *Oheb Yisrael*, and the parable, which he so artfully manipulated, is by its nature geared to soft chastisement and homely lesson.

Glatt presents to the English-speaking public an able volume on the life and works of the Dubno Maggid. The structure of the book, however, is awkward. The lengthy introduction is a compilation of

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scarcely related materials which could easily have been interwoven into the fabric of the biography. The result is considerable repetition that is unnecessary and disconcerting. After a brief biography, Glatt gives a sprinkling of ideas culled from the Dubno's sermons in a chapter entitled "Philosophy of Life." Immediately following is a chapter on "Methods of Preaching," in which the author presents the sermon outlines that the Maggid used and documents them extensively.

The book does show extensive research by the author, who has done an admirable work of collecting and translating some of the Maggid's finest parables. By doing this, he encourages the reader to turn to the works of his subject, which is, after all, the purpose of such a volume. With only slight changes in the applications, these very homilies contained in *He Spoke in Parables* offer a goldmine of *derush* and *mashal* for the Rabbi or knowledgeable layman.

M.L.