

*The Jewish Experience in America.* Edited and with Introductions by ABRAHAM KARP. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1969. Five Vols. Pp. 2,010. Indices, Bibliographies. \$49.50.)

Three hundred and sixteen years ago, in 1654, four men, six women, and thirteen youngsters arrived in the town of New Amsterdam.

They were the founders of the first Jewish community in what was to become the United States of America more than one hundred twenty years later.

Those twenty-three souls, refugees from the implacable Inquisition of the Church, fled Recife, Brazil, when that town was recaptured by the Portuguese from the Dutch. They had to flee for their lives. When the French frigate *Sainte Catherine* brought the twenty-three Jewish seekers of religious freedom to the village of New Amsterdam, where the Hudson River meets the Atlantic Ocean, in 1654, on the shore already to greet them were at least two co-religionists, Jacob Barsimson and Solomon Pietersen.

What wouldn't we give now to be able to hear their first words of encouragement and to watch the tears of relief course down those cheeks which had weathered so much hardship.

Their worries were not over. Far from it. Peter Stuyvesant, mean and dour, and his Council bade them no welcome.

Author Abraham Karp, Rabbi of Temple Beth El, Rochester, New York; Associate Professor of Jewish History at the Jewish Theological Seminary; Professor of Theology at St. John Fisher College, Rochester; author of *The Jewish Way of Life* and contributor to scholarly journals on American history and Jewish theology, takes a warm but clinical long view of man's search for freedom.

"Colonial history demonstrates," remarks Professor Karp, "that whatever may be the conditions of freedom and tolerance which exist in the mother country, they are seldom exported to the colonies."

The "newcomers" of 1654 had to struggle for simple human rights — to engage in trade, to own property, to keep "watch and ward" over their town, and to gain citizenship.

In fact, the right to work at crafts, to hold public office, to build their synagogue house of worship, or the right to public religious services were never fully won in New Amsterdam. These rights were won later, when the British took control of the colony and renamed it New York.

History plays unfunny tricks. The twenty-three who fled the

persecution of the Inquisition of the Catholic Church were used by Governor Peter Stuyvesant as a blocking force against Catholic and non-Dutch Protestants coming to the colony. Wrote Stuyvesant to the Dutch West India Directors in Amsterdam in October 1655: "Giving them liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and the Papists."

The freedom of Amsterdam in the Old World did not soon come to the New Amsterdam in the New World. American freedom was not built in a day.

This makes the five-volume study, *The Jewish Experience in America*, all the more fascinating as a route map on the highways of America the Free. The books are formed of selected studies from the publications of the American Jewish Historical Society. It is the stuff of a thousand novels yet unwritten.

Volume I deals with *The Colonial Period*. It is really a period of searching, a time when the Jewish citizens of future America were laying the groundwork for one of the wonders of freedom — what a persecuted people could do for their country and their community in a free nation.

All five volumes of this set are actually a "heshbon ha-nefesh," a deep social audit of the soul, as that great historian, Dr. Salo Baron of Columbia, used that term in the chapter on "American Jewish Communal Pioneering."

*The Colonial Period* covers the time from the Exodus from Brazil to New Amsterdam, the delineation of the battle for Civil Liberties and the Jewish Tradition in Early America. Too many of us have come to look on civil rights as something risen full panoplied from the forehead of our generation.

The record of the "Two Jewish Functionaries in Colonial Pennsylvania" will be fascinating reading for citizens of this state, and will intrigue Western Pennsylvanians with its references to Mordecai Moses Mordecai, called "of Pittsburgh."

George Washington's famous correspondence with his Jewish fellow citizens of the new-born United States is revealing for its depth and its meaning today.

New light on the Jewish settlement of Savannah, the diaries of Ezra Stiles, the Gratz Papers, the patriots and the loyalists in the War of American Independence, the Haym Salomon letter, the "Minute Books" of the famed Shearith Israel Congregation in New York (still functioning in our day), the history of the Jews mentioned in the *Journal of the Continental Congress* — and more — open up to

us a hitherto unknown wide-screen presentation of Jewish history in colonial America.

Volume II, *In the Early Republic*, deals with both the romance and the rub of life in the 19th century. Mordecai Manuel Noah and his Ararat State, Judah Touro, merchant and philanthropist; Jacob Solis, traveling advocate; Surgeon Moses Albert Levy, the Texas patriot; the role of America in condemning the Damascus persecutions of 1840 (Have times changed?); correspondence with Thomas Jefferson; pioneering in California all lend a vigorous breath of air to the growth of America and its growing Jewish community.

Volume III shows the outlines of *The Emerging Community*. Now the pioneering individuals and the pioneering individual institutions begin to take on the form of a community in an America with unity in diversity. Jews and the slavery issue; Major Louis Gratz, from peddler to regimental commander in two years; the 1869 petition on behalf of persecuted Russian Jews (Have times changed?); Benjamin F. Peixotto's Mission to Roumania; Lincoln and his Jewish fellow citizens; the Civil War outline the fires in which American community and communities were forged in steel.

Volume IV, *The Era of Immigration*, offers insight to a great human dilemma of a persecuted people who see history in terms of centuries, nay, thousands of years. Emigration to America or reconstruction in Europe; the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Boston under the impact of immigration and philanthropy; Ludwig Lewisohn in Charleston; a Chief Rabbi for New York's Jewish community; Abraham Cahan and a journalist's influence on a literature-centered people; the dream of Israel reborn in the Holy Land; socio-religious impact on services; the persecuted Russian Jews embrace American freedom — help to chronicle the strivings of a people at one with the ideals flashed to the "tempest-tossed" by the Lady of Liberty in New York harbor.

Volume V, *At Home in America*, points out clearly that "Well into the twentieth century immigration continued to be the single most important factor in the American Jewish historic experience." Life is with people, says a book on the Jewish experience in the Old World, and so it is.

Security itself has a human base. Social defense, religious developments, protection of the bewildered immigrant, ethnic politics, refugees and immigration restriction; social discrimination; contribution to the American union movement; and emerging cultural

patterns in American Jewish life make up a colorful tapestry of history in developing America.

Throughout the history of the Jewish Experience in America, beauty has had to endure the pain of bigotry. Nor is freedom won but once. Every generation must secure the blessings of this freedom to the oncoming generations. By the age patterns of history, America is a very young country. A very old people, full of the wisdom of history, from America's earliest days has nurtured the ideals and potentials that make it the greatest social dynamo for human redemption that mankind has ever witnessed.

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*George Bourne and The Book and Slavery Irreconcilable.* By JOHN W. CHRISTIE and DWIGHT L. DUMOND. (The Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, and the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, 1969. Pp. ix, 206. \$5.00.)

This book is the product of an unpremeditated but fortunate collaboration. Dr. Christie (who grew up in Pittsburgh and attended the theological seminary there) is a Presbyterian minister of Wilmington, Delaware. He is a close student of Presbyterian history and his special interest is the antislavery movement. Dr. Dumond was, until his recent retirement, a professor of American history at the University of Michigan. His major field of research and publication is American slavery, on which he is an outstanding authority.

Dr. Christie got on the trail of George Bourne some forty years ago, through a brief reference to him in connection with the Garrisonian antislavery campaign. Over the years Christie made a wide-ranging search for information about Bourne, which was not too plentiful. But Bourne was a voluminous writer, and his biographer-to-be steeped himself so thoroughly in the Bourne literary style that he could spot it in the unsigned contributions which Bourne made to Garrison's *Liberator*.

At length, having come to the end of his research, Christie was getting his findings ready for publication, when, almost by chance, he met Dumond on the campus of the University of Delaware, where Christie was a familiar figure, having done some teaching there himself, and where Dumond, now retired from Michigan, was a summer-session visiting professor. Said Christie to Dumond, "Will you help