

mindful attachment to his desk, leading an obituarist to later remark that Nathan had never married because "he had no time."

Finding himself unemployed, the Colonial Office yielded to Nathan's claims on its patronage when he was offered in 1920 the Governorship of Queensland which was suddenly vacant. It was thought that he would act as a brake on Premier Theodore, though the latter may have believed that the Governor would be sympathetic to a Labour Government. Indeed, Nathan raised no opposition to the legislation to abolish the Legislative Council. Nathan sensed that the Government would press for a local Governor but he agreed to a short extension of his term. He again, managed to avoid contentious issues. In his retirement he acted as Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society, chaired a Committee doing research on the Great Barrier Reef, served on a Royal Commission on the Ceylon Constitution, and held office as High Sheriff of Somerset. The author says that he was associated with the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and describes this as Nathan's "sole concession in later life to the cause of preserving a culture which he had long since deserted in favour of his land of birth." Nathan died in 1939.

Matthew Nathan, as Anthony Haydon concludes, was dedicated to the consolidation of the British Empire, his striking quality being a "caretaker mentality", albeit a narrow conception of Imperialism. The author has obviously sifted through numerous archives and source material from which he has assembled all the basic data relating to Nathan's career, with the result that this book is most readable and instructive. At all times Nathan's personality emerges. Jewish readers, in particular, are presented with many insights which indicate that the author achieved a complete understanding of the character of his subject. The book contains a lengthy and valuable Bibliography.

M.Z.F.

THE CHOSEN A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN JEWRY

by Dr. Hilary Rubinstein

The history of Australian Jewry is inextricably woven into the fabric of a wider Australian context. However distinguishable it might be through religion, language and community structure, its meanderings in a benign and "lucky" environment have been *sui generis*.

Despite a proliferation of monographs and dissertations, no-one until now has attempted to write a comprehensive history. Hilary Rubinstein, having recently wetted a foot in describing the Victorian Jewish community, now has taken the complete plunge in tackling the continental saga. One would have hoped that this pathfinder would have been a comprehensive and authoritative volume, but it falls a long way short of this expectation.

The book suffers some restraints which cannot be laid at the author's threshold. It is not big enough physically to cover all the main issues of Jewish life and survival. The author must have agonised over the components that simply could not be included. These sins of omission wherever the *culpa* is to be laid, are nevertheless considerable.

This reviewer had just read Robert Hughes *The Fatal Shore* when requested to review the Australian Jewish History. A state of euphoria prevailed after reading a history so excitingly and imaginatively penned that it was deliberately read slowly. Each page a

woe and pain, a masterpiece of reconstruction. It was read slowly to make it last.

Comparisons are not odious but instructive. Dr. Rubinstein lacks the panache of the Broad conceptual historian. It may be that had she allowed the characters to do some of the talking, one might have felt a contemporary empathy with the *dramatis personae*. We rarely hear them speak, and even a favourite character like Blaubaum (well done for restoring him at long last to his rightful position), who spent much time editorialising, does not spring to life. Thus the history remains two, and not three dimensional.

The author is much more at home in a post World War II environment. The narrative moves faster here, and carries the reader along. One hesitates to criticise the proportions and dimensions attributed to the leaders of Australian Jewry, but one detects a little sycophancy here, and a Freudian omission there. Why have full page portraits, when space is clearly at a premium.

Powerfully describing the traumatic post World War II immigration and the development of the ethnic community, she does not distinguish between Jewish ethnicity and the Italian or Greek variety. The majority of the newcomers from Poland never manifested any love of their fatherland, quite the contrary, nor did they demonstrate any love for the Polish language, or attempt to transmit it to their children. Jewish values yes, Polish no. One wonders whether the term Ethnic should be applied at all, seeing that it usually means something quite different from the Australian Jewish experience.

The glossary is usefully set at the beginning of the book, but contains errors. These clearly betray the author's lack of expertise in the Hebrew language, and in Synagogue custom. Similarly, in the volume itself there are some mistakes, e.g. that Rabbi Gurewicz of Carlton was from Poland, when in fact he was from Vilna. This is not a mere detail, but in fact distorts the image of a *Talmid Hacham* who was a Litvak through and through.

As the volume is a text book of sorts, presumably, for non Jewish as well as Jewish readers, a brief outline of the Jewish religion would have served well as a *mise en scene*.

Nature has ignored the vacuum in Australian Jewish Historiography for a long while. That vacuum no longer exists, but there is still room for an encyclopaedic, three dimensional, well illustrated history. The first step has been taken and the accolade for attempting this daunting task must be awarded to Dr. Rubinstein.

(Rabbi) Ronald Lubofsky.