

appeared in a series on religious groups in Australia (the second booklet was, I believe, on Lutheranism in Australia). This is so stated on the title page and by the series editor in his introduction. Professor Stratton's conclusions here are typical of how unfruitful and misleading his post-modernist approach is, steeped in an almost wilful refusal to take Jewish identity sympathetically or on its own terms.

William D. Rubinstein

THE NEW ZEALAND JEWISH COMMUNITY

Stephen Levine (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 1999; xix + 320pp.)

Of the world's 'distant Diasporas', New Zealand's Jewish community is probably the most remote. Its 5000-strong Jewish community is many thousands of miles from the centres of Jewish life, and seemingly too small to escape near-complete assimilation into the general community. That it survives at all is remarkable, and a searching and sophisticated examination of its structure and history is likely to prove not merely fascinating but instructive for other larger Jewish communities. This Stephen Levine's book has in large measure provided.

The New Zealand Jewish Community emerges from an invitation made by the late, much esteemed Professor David Elazar, President of the Jerusalem Centre for Public Affairs, to prepare a study of the New Zealand community based upon the approaches taken by Elazar and his group, which stress the organisational framework and institutional structure of each Jewish community as a basis for cross-national comparisons. The author carefully notes that this is not a history of the New Zealand Jewish community as such, but an account of the growth of its organisational and institutional framework and of its constitutional structure, in the context of a realistic account of how these have actually worked in fact during the recent past. Thus, of the book's 310 pages of text, not less than 161 consist of appendices giving, in full, the constitutional documents of the leading institutions of the New Zealand Jewish community, from the Bye-laws of the Dunedin Jewish Congregation, 1897, to the Rules of the Council of Jewish Women, Wellington (Incorporated), 1992. Although some will doubtless initially regard this as absurd, Elazar and his followers argue cogently that it is necessary to reproduce such documents in order to ascertain the evolution of a Jewish community.

The main body of Levine's commentary consists of a very interesting and well-informed discussion of the recent and present state of the New Zealand Jewish community, whose many problems are not disguised. These include tiny membership and a continuing decline in, particularly, Orthodox synagogue numbers not compensated for by recent immigration from Russia and elsewhere; the absence of a core centre of Jewish life; much Orthodox/Progressive animosity; the lack of a significant Jewish leadership of any real distinction; and often surprisingly chilly relationships with the New Zealand government and the local media, with the Jewish community bearing the brunt of the hostility of New Zealand Labor governments to Israeli policies as well

as experiencing some populist anti-semitism. It is, indeed, doubtful that a remote community of only 5000 can survive indefinitely without genuinely heroic efforts. There have been some positive developments, especially the growth of Jewish day schools in Auckland and Wellington, and the existence of a surprising range of communal institutions, but in general the picture is not sanguine. On the other hand, recent censuses of religious affiliation have shown some growth, and any prognosis about the future of New Zealand Jewry, and of the community in general, is probably not as dark as was the case twenty or thirty years ago. Levine's discussion of the institutions of New Zealand Jewry, and of the community in general, is written with great skill and sophistication, and shows a remarkable command of highly specialised institutions. It provides an important supplement to the history of the community written in 1958 by Rabbi L.M. Goldman, to the two-volume collection of essays on this subject edited by the Gluckmans (1990 and 1993), and to other writings on New Zealand Jewry, especially by Ann Beaglehole.

The obvious comparison which should be made in any account of New Zealand Jewry is with Australian Jewry, on which there is now a large and often impressive literature. Levine has, regrettably, only occasionally drawn any comparisons between the two, which would certainly show enormous differences. Australian Jewry is, in essence, everything that New Zealand Jewry is not: vigorous, growing, self-assured, and successful. Apart from the size difference (105,000 *versus* 5000) between the two communities, the reasons for this centre heavily in the effects of the considerable wave of Holocaust refugees and survivors who went to Australia, especially their foundation of what may well be the most successful Jewish day school system in the Diaspora. A careful examination of the evolution of the two Jewish communities which grew up under the British flag and the Southern Cross may well facilitate a much wider understanding of Diaspora Jewry than might be supposed. Dr Levine is also correct in his assertion that Australian Jewish academics had virtually no contact with their New Zealand colleagues. For instance, I never heard of Dr Levine when I lived in Australia and was closely connected with such bodies as the Australian Association for Jewish Studies. This is obviously very regrettable, and further evidence of the contrasts between the two Jewish communities.

William D. Rubinstein

STRONGER THAN FICTION: JEWS AND CHRISTIANS ARE NATURAL ALLIES

Mark Braham (London & Syd: Minerva Press, 1999; xiv + 417 pp)

For many years Mark Braham has been one of the stormy petrels of Australian Jewry, enunciating a strident Strictly Orthodox Judaism which is probably best-known for its aggressive attacks on 'secular Zionists' and Jewish supporters of Israel who lack an Orthodox religious centre to their identities. *Stronger than fiction* is Braham's autobiography, charting his life from Jewish London to Sydney and from Anglo-Orthodoxy to Strict Orthodoxy. Interspersed with