

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Essence of Jewish Art, by ERNEST NAMENYI (London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960)

Is there such a thing as Jewish art? The answer is strongly affirmative, according to the author, eminent art historian, founder and first director of the Jewish Museum of Hungary. This book, translated from the French for the Popular Library Series of the World Jewish Congress by Edouard Rediti, confines itself to indicating the key ideas that have dominated the many expressions of Jewish art in the course of eighteen centuries: the notion of one God transcending history and determining its evolution; the idea of a chosen people, of belief in the Torah and in the Messianic faith. These themes, representing to the author the distinctiveness of Jewish art, are fully discussed and illustrated with photographs of the more recently discovered medieval manuscripts and archaeological excavations so that the reader may draw his own conclusions on the basis of the primary sources themselves.

Unfortunately, the author frequently misconstrues rabbinic writings, citing "the iconoclastic fury

of the rabbinate" (p. 20), "the narrow intolerance of talmudic scholarship" (p. 56) and several misrepresentations of talmudic sources. One case in point will suffice: Chatam Sofer's *Teshuvah* No. 128 (*Yoreh Deah*) is completely misunderstood and misrepresented (p. 23). Generally, however, his thesis is convincingly expressed and makes for most enjoyable and interesting reading.

Chaim Feuerman

My Faith and People, by THEODORE N. LEWIS (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1962)

A sincere love for Jews and an attachment to Israel is found in *My Faith and People*, which is composed of 1 address, 5 essays, and 36 books reviews and synopses of books written by Rabbi Lewis over a period of more than twenty years. Despite the author's pronouncements about "Klal Yisrael," the book is marred by his prejudice and scorn for Orthodox Jews who insist upon retaining the Halakhah and its processes rather than in hastily uprooting it to satisfy the demands of the hour.

Louis M. Tuchman

Briefly Noted

Jewish Wit, by THEODORE REIK (New York: Gamut Press, 1962).

Theodore Reik, disciple of Freud and well known as the author of numerous books concerned with psychoanalytical psychotherapy, (*Listening With the Third Ear, Masochism and Modern Man*) has seen fit to add to his already prolific output another chronicle under the enticing title, *Jewish Wit*. Dr. Reik has sought to examine its psychological aspects and this should not be too surprising since he has already attempted to examine the psychological aspects of practically everything else.

I do not question that Dr. Reik has approached his subject with enthusiasm and interest. The bibliography suggests more than casual care. The net result, however, gives this reader the impression that he has been wading through a potpourri of data put together loosely and in cluttered prose. Much that

is written is undeniably interesting and the anecdotes are often highly amusing, but beyond this, this reviewer cannot regard *Jewish Wit* as the serious work which I believe its author intended it to be.

Mervin Moss

Yismach Yisrael, by RABBI J. LITVIN (London: Shapiro Valentine, 1958)

The volume reflects a passionate love for the land and people of Israel. The author displays rare erudition and ingenuity in providing us with a compendium on *Ahavat Yisrael* based upon traditional sources. One cannot, however, repress the feeling that the author at times employs far too much casuistry to prove his points. He never resists the temptation to digress from his theme to explain an obscure text or *Midrash* in the light of his thesis.

Jack Burke

TRADITION: *A Journal of Orthodox Thought*

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