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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The New Religious Right: Piety, Patriotism, and Politics* by Walter H. Capps

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at the peak of the Soviet food crisis. Although the food sent by the United States during the war years came to a bit less than ten ounces per day for each soldier in the Red Army, the fact that even that small amount actually was almost half again as much as Red Army soldiers fighting in defense of Moscow received from their own quartermasters makes that figure more significant than it now seems. Such quibbling, though, is not meant to detract from Moskoff's broad and impressive accomplishment. This is the best book on the subject yet to appear in any language, and it is a delight to have it in print.

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CAPPS, WALTER H. *The New Religious Right: Piety, Patriotism, and Politics*. Pp. xii, 246. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990. \$27.95. Paperbound, \$12.95.

In this survey of leaders of the new religious Right and their worlds—Jerry Falwell, Francis Shaeffer, the Bob Joneses, Jim and Tammy Bakker, and Pat Robertson—Walter Capps presents some portraits and draws some conclusions relevant to the discussion of American civil religion. These portraits are based on attendance at meetings, interviews with the protagonists and their lieutenants—there are lots of direct quotations—and a reading of their literature; the portraits are evenhanded, with an effort to take the intentions and intellectual worldviews of each seriously as well as to analyze the nature of their appeal and their place in American religious and political life. The result is a balanced,

well-told account that should serve as an introduction to these figures for the general reader. But there are few surprises, apart perhaps from the inclusion of Shaeffer with the other, better-known figures. The importance of Shaeffer's thought in the evangelical and Fundamentalist worlds is brought out, with connections made between it and the political agenda of the religious Right.

It is in the opening and closing chapters that Capps develops his argument that the religious Right is, as such, more a political and nationalistic than a religious phenomenon, with its primary concern being devotion to the nation and its revitalization as a "Christian America." The movement is convinced that America has a decisive role to play in the unfolding of God's plan for the world. Capps argues that the ideas of the religious Right represent a conservative alternative to the mainstream forms of civil religion that have flourished in the United States, noting that earlier commentators such as Robert Bellah could write Fundamentalism off as marginal to American civil religion; this, he is convinced, is no longer possible.

For all its excellence as an introduction to the topic for the general reader, there are some limitations to Capps's work. The most important of these is that the religious Right is rather narrowly defined and treated in isolation from the larger history of Fundamentalism and evangelicalism in America. There is little reference to the standard literature on these subjects and little historical context. There has, after all, always been a political agenda for at least some important Fundamentalists, and much of what his subjects say about America's role and destiny under God echoes earlier themes now grown anachronistic to the wider public and thus seems to me the persistence of elements of civil religion long abroad in the culture rather than a clear-

cut alternative to earlier versions of American civil religion.

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FELDMAN, EGAL. *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America*. Pp. xi, 339. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1990. \$34.95.

Egal Feldman has provided a detailed, comprehensive, narrative history of Protestant-Jewish relations in the United States. The scope of the volume extends from the European roots of both Protestantism and Judaism to the recent relationship between Israel and the American Christian Right. This impressive work is certain to become a standard reference in the history of American anti-Semitism.

Feldman's sensitive and nuanced analysis suggests that American Protestants have always felt a deep ambivalence about Judaism. Among more conservative, "evangelical" Protestants, Judaism has been regarded as the source of an inerrant Old Testament and as the source of Christianity itself. The state of Israel also figures prominently in the premillennialist theology that characterized many Protestant fundamentalists. The Jews' refusal to accept Christ, however, has regularly led to virulent anti-Semitism on the part of many conservative Christians. Similarly, more liberal Protestants have lacked the religious particularism necessary to sustain consistent anti-Semitic feelings but have often been repelled by what is taken to be Judaism's excessive legalism. Thus different traditions within American Protestantism have promulgated distinctive Jewish stereotypes.

Feldman's historical account suggests that Jews have suffered from negative

stereotyping and prejudice from all quarters of American Protestantism. While the particular relationship between Jews and Christians varies according to circumstances, an inability to accept Judaism on its own terms is a constant characteristic of Protestantism in the United States. Along this line, Feldman's description of the "unrelenting" efforts of Christians to convert Jews is most instructive. Even among leaders or denominations relatively tolerant of Judaism, Jews are regarded as "pre-Christians" or "potential Christians" rather than as carriers of an autonomous, authentic religious tradition.

The pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in the United States suggests that the religious freedom of American Jewry cannot be attributed to any positive characteristics of Protestantism in this country. Jewish-Protestant coalitions are ultimately unreliable and unstable. Rather, the religious liberty of Jews is preserved in the United States through the diversity of American Protestantism. Protestant, anti-Jewish coalitions are difficult to form and maintain, due to the theological and stylistic diversity of Protestant churches in the United States.

The major strength of this volume is its detail and its documentation. Feldman has produced an impressive work, which is likely to guide future scholarship for some time to come. The most obvious weakness is the relatively weak analysis. Feldman does not settle on an analytical framework at the outset of his work but allows the reader to become overwhelmed in the mass of historical detail. While Feldman does draw some conclusions in a brief concluding chapter, the readability of this volume would have been enhanced if a few explicit themes had been established and if the events of particular historical periods had been organized around these themes.