

equality, which at present override the pursuit of local goods. Taylor does not seem fully to recognize how far his principles lead him away from social democracy.

In *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Charles Taylor has sketched an intellectual and political program to save modernity from itself. He is convinced that the attempt is worthwhile. Those of us less certain that modernity is worth saving nevertheless have an obligation to enter into dialogue with so generous and sympathetic a critic.

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The Fascist Moment

by Glenn N. Schram

Modern Fascism: Liquidating the Judeo-Christian Worldview

by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House; 187 pp., \$15.95



In an essay on Nietzsche written in 1947, Thomas Mann spoke of "the fascist epoch of the West" in which "we are living and, despite the military victory over fascism, shall continue to live for a long time." Gene Edward Veith, Jr., dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Concordia University of Wisconsin in Mequon, Wisconsin, agrees with Mann, for, in his opinion, there are a striking number of parallels between fascism and contemporary intellectual life.

The only definition of fascism Veith offers is that of the historian and philosopher Ernst Nolte, who sees it as "practical and violent resistance to transcendence." Simplifying slightly, we may say that by *transcendence* Nolte means man's experience of God. But this definition is as applicable to communism as it is to fascism, and Veith fails to distinguish adequately between the latter and other ways of thinking. Moreover, it is sometimes unclear whether Veith is talking about fascism as a whole or just German National Socialism.

Veith is especially concerned for the

current intellectual movement known as postmodernism, with its relativism, its disparagement of humane values, its attempt to reduce all human creativity to questions of power relations, and its refusal to deal with questions of transcendence. On all these points postmodernism parallels fascism. Veith does not consider postmodernists to be fascists, but he fears that they may be paving the way for the accession to power of a fascist regime in the United States.

As a conservative Lutheran, Veith also sees parallels between contemporary theology and the German Christians, who sought to reconcile Christianity with National Socialism. He writes:

Consider these recurring themes of modern theology: the relationship between culture and Christianity; a "this-worldly" focus versus "other-worldly" salvationism; subjective experience versus objective doctrine; Biblical criticism versus Biblical authority. The debates over these issues developed throughout the 19th century, as fascist ideology was also taking form. In each case the "modernist" positions on these issues were also the position taken by the *German Christian* movement: the privileging of culture, the politicization of the Gospel, the minimizing of doctrine, the criticism of Biblical authority.

Veith's book is valuable, but it would have been better if he had gone beyond the ideologies of fascism and contemporary intellectualism and looked at the underlying consciousness of those who espouse these beliefs. Had Veith done so, he would have had to come to terms with Eric Voegelin's work on gnosticism. For gnosticism pervaded the fascist and communist states, and it pervades contemporary Western society, including those parts whose views parallel fascism's. It is a more powerful concept than "fascism," for it shows what is at the base of fascism and also of much other modern thought.

Our problems are therefore greater than Veith realizes. Further evidence of this is the brief attention he pays to Thomas Mann's last great novel, *Doctor Faustus*. It is the tragedy of a man who can neither believe nor love, a composer who enters into a Faustian pact for the sake of his art. His philosophy and life

are modeled on those of Nietzsche; his music on that of Arnold Schönberg.

Although Veith discusses Igor Stravinsky's ballet *The Rites of Spring* as a paradigm for fascism, he fails to mention Schönberg's transvaluation of musical values as a symbol of the same thing. In short, Veith does not press far enough in diagnosing the Western crisis, nor does he come right out and say that the only thing that can save the West from future totalitarian regimes is a renaissance of traditional religion among the intellectual elite.

Glenn N. Schram writes from Hammond, Indiana.

Sixteen Hundred Years

by Jacob Neusner

The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait

by Ruth Gay

New Haven and London: Yale University Press; 336 pp., \$35.00



When a civilization nearly two millennia in the building comes to an end, common decency requires that the world take note of its passing. For if ordinary people, born only to die in much less than a century, deserve a proper burial, what obsequies are owing to a way of forming society and living life that took 20 centuries to shape but only a dozen years utterly to wipe out? In this elegant account, Ruth Gay has given the English language a worthy candidate for the epitaph for German Jewry—a great and beautiful book in words and pictures. Here closes a 2,000-year-old chapter of Western civilization, concluded in our own time.

Mrs. Gay's wit and wisdom, taste and judgment, have produced a volume rich in insight and beauty, and the only appropriate praise can be that her book is worthy of its subject and of the task she has taken for herself. What is at stake in her perspective comes to expression in Peter Gay's introduction: "To reduce German Jewish history to an unrelieved sequence of outrages is to slight the

times of tranquility and the reality of Jewish achievement." From the beginnings of Jewish settlement in the Rhine, in Roman times, to the first Crusade, a period of 700 years, Jews in the German lands enjoyed a normal and ordinary life, within the context of normality that then prevailed. It was only with the mass killings at the time of the plague of 1348-1349, when Jews were blamed for the black death and whole communities were wiped out, that large numbers of German Jews fled to the tolerant pioneering territories of the East—Poland, for example. Mrs. Gay notes, "There were only nine Jewish settlements in Poland at the end of the 14th century; in the next century, 50 more were established. . . . German Jews were the dominant element and formed the basis of Jewish life in Eastern Europe for the next five centuries." Even from the Crusades through the black death and on to the theological anti-Semitism of Luther and the ideological anti-Semitism of Hitler, as Peter Gay notes, "Jews managed to build a sturdy culture in their German settlements, partly independent of their gentile neighbors, partly intertwined with them. Jewish learning, however isolated; Jewish prosperity, however precarious; Jewish public service, however limited; even Jewish participation in the wider society, all claim our attention. After all, even the language they developed—Yiddish—wrongly despised as a mere dialect and ridiculed as a debased version of German, was a remarkable venture in adaptation in its own right, with an impressive literature to its credit."

It is to that long and deeply human history of ordinary people living commonplace lives that Mrs. Gay devotes

most of her pictures and gentle, factual narratives. With words, maps, but—especially—with illustrations of all kinds, she works her way through the long story, covering such topics as the origins and institutions of Jewish life; German Jewish history from the Middle Ages to the Court Jews; the return to history; the struggle for emancipation; the 50-year empire; and the end. What is fresh in her account is the balance—seven chapters of approximately equal length. Other books on the same subject, like Holocaust museums bound between covers, set forth a perfunctory survey of everything down to the National Socialists, with attention given mostly to the rehearsal of the tragic denouement. Mrs. Gay defies the obsession with the Holocaust that has captured American Jewish consciousness, insisting on the contrary that everything must be seen in perspective and with a certain balance. A great life that ends with cancer is not rightly captured by a brief résumé listing the deceased's jobs, followed by a day-to-day detailed reproduction of the doctor's medical records complete with blood counts and urine samples; Mrs. Gay dwells on each segment in a long history, according to them all proper appreciation.

Her chapters follow a simple pattern: narrative introduction interspersed with extensive illustrations, themselves fully explained; the book makes its impact both verbally and visually. Mrs. Gay not only narrates public and political history, but portrays the private and inner life of the people, their devotion to God, and their shaping of every day in response to the Torah. What happened in the world beyond takes place as if on a distant planet; the views of Israel at home re-

mind us of the purpose of its shared, enduring community. Mrs. Gay's touch is so sure that anyone who wants to know what it has meant, and now means, to live the Judaic life will find here, in words and in pictures, as authentic an account of Judaism as a living religion as today exists in print. Theology, philosophy, learning, and mysticism—these take their rightful place in the narrative, alongside massacre, repression, and, ultimately, extermination. The final chapter—mercifully, if unstylishly, brief—is all the more depressing because by then we know the people. In these pages the Holocaust happened to real people, whom Mrs. Gay has made us esteem: "When the counting stopped, it was clear that 170,000 German Jews had been killed in the camps. Sixteen hundred years of German Jewish history were over."

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Thy Will Be Done

by Edward B. Anderson

The Children of Men

by P.D. James
New York: Alfred A. Knopf;
241 pp., \$22.00



LIBERAL ARTS

SPREADING SENSITIVITY

In Harrogate, Yorkshire (England), a children's choir so impressed musicians that they made a video recording of the group. It was brought to the government's attention that there were no black kids in the choir, and the video was withdrawn until this disgusting fault was remedied. In vain it was pointed out that there *are* no blacks in Harrogate. A few token blacks were then ferried up from London to mime on the recording.

—Louis B. Delpino

P.D. James has attracted notice for how well she is able, within the confines of her mystery novels, to write about contemporary British society. Reviewing *Devices and Desires* in the *New York Review of Books* some time ago, Hilary Mantel made the suggestion that it was perhaps time for James to "slide out of her handcuffs, kick off her concrete boots, and stride onto the territory of the mainstream novel." James had been getting this advice for some time, not least, one suspects, from herself. One might have thought that James would write her first serious novel by carrying on in the same vein as her earlier mys-