

about the fate of even the most securely placed Jewish settlements. Who can ever be sure? Nazi Germany was really no accident; it was merely repeating the lessons of Spain. In our own day no Jewish community was apparently better anchored than in South Africa. Now it seems doomed, and the oldest families are grateful to the tenacious Zionists who had preached so fervently that Israel was really "a homeland in reserve." Even the Jews of the powerful settlement in the Argentine are sending their children abroad.

How long will it be, ask the disillusioned realists, before the bell tolls in the United States? The confident assertion that life in America has no parallel in history, and that the Jewish settlement is now too deeply rooted, is met by reference to the historic process. "Remember Spain. Seven hundred years and then the Inquisition, the *autos-da-fé* in the great squares of the Spanish cities, the expulsion in an edict signed by their Catholic majesties with only ninety days to get out, taking along nothing."

This is the mournful conclusion, implied rather than stated, that emerges from the two volumes under review. Dr. Kamen is a revisionist. He brings vast research to bear on his thesis that the Inquisition was not simply the vile creation of Catholic bigots whose sadism has been so luridly described and kept alive by the Protestant theologians and historians. These special pleaders, according to Kamen, have consistently treated the Inquisition as if it were an independent, never varying, monolithic institution foisted on the Spanish people by fanatics such as Torquemada for the sole purpose of combating the tender growth of the Reformation in Spain. In truth, Kamen insists, the Inquisition rose out of the envy and the greed of the newly emergent Spanish middle class and the nobility, those who wanted the place and the position that had been earned or won by the Jews. Anti-Semitism, rooted in envy, came first; the Holy Office followed. The Inquisition answered the popular cry for elimination of the Jews and Jewish influence.

**B**AER'S volume, completing a work which has gone to the foundations of Jewish life in Spain, details the magnificent contributions of the Jews, their cultural enrichment, their economic contribution. But, as in Kamen's study, the point is made that their very productivity was their undoing. They could not escape hatred when poverty prodded the despair of the Spaniards; nor could they escape when affluence made the highest groups, zealous for Spanish "honor," begrudge the success of their Jewish neighbors. It was not only the ignorant who gloried in the Inquisition's tortures and who screamed their delight when the

flames consumed "the Jewish swine." The most educated applauded too what Machiavelli called "the pious cruelty" of the Expulsion.

These volumes, well documented, opening out new sources, are immensely saddening in their implication. They strengthen the resolve of many Jewish leaders of today never to take kindly sentiments or protestations of amity and

good will too seriously. They insist that Jews must rely more and more on inner strength, on their own resources, on self-help. For after the catastrophe that followed an idyl of seven centuries in Spain there can be no permanent safety for a historic group, in bad times and in good, that again and again brings into play the dormant envies which Adam, falling from grace, brought with him from Eden.

## Converts in the Vatican

***Popes from the Ghetto: A View of Medieval Christendom*, by Joachim Prinz (Horizon. 256 pp. \$6.50), finds in its exploration of Vatican history that three popes—Anaclet II, Gregory VI, and Gregory VII—were descended from an erstwhile-Jewish banking family, the Pierleoni. Albert H. Friedlander is on the staff of Columbia University.**

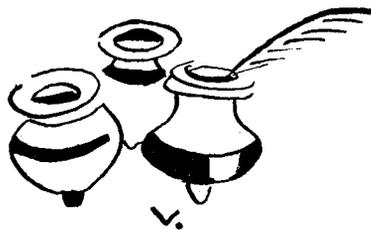
By ALBERT H. FRIEDLANDER

**T**HE HISTORY of early and medieval Christianity is rarely presented with an emphasis upon Jewish sources and from a Jewish point of view. Newark Rabbi Joachim Prinz, past president of the American Jewish Congress, and a competent writer in the field of Jewish history, here gives us a highly partisan but always readable account of the Pierleoni family and its impact upon Church history. The Pierleoni, a leading Jewish banking family of Rome, converted to Christianity at the time of Pope Leo IX in 1030 A.D. Together with such other Roman families as the Frangipani, the Pierleoni came to exert an enormous influence on Church politics on the side of the Reform movement within the papacy. One member of the family, Peter Pierleoni, ruled in Rome from 1130 until his death in 1138 as Pope Anaclet II (Church history considers him the anti-pope to Innocent II). Earlier, the family had given their fullest support to Pope Gregory VI and to the great Hildebrand, who, as Gregory VII, forced the Emperor Henry to come barefoot to Canossa. It is Rabbi Prinz's contention that both of these popes were

also members of the Pierleoni family and thus of Jewish descent.

The evidence presented by the author in support of his contention, particularly in the case of Gregory VII, is less than conclusive. But there is certainly enough material on hand to justify a serious exploration of this picturesque byway of Church history. And it is quite true that Peter Pierleoni, Anaclet II, a man of the utmost probity and decency, was dubbed "the apocalyptic beast upon the throne" (a play upon his family name "lion") by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and was constantly attacked by his enemies on the basis of his undoubted Jewish background. Nevertheless, it must be argued that the main thesis of this book is self-defeating: once the Pierleoni had converted *en masse*, they remained loyal Christians completely divorced from their Jewish background. If Anaclet II was attacked as "that Jew on the throne of Peter" by his contemporary foes, the turning of this charge into a compliment in modern times can be a dangerous assertion. Rabbi Prinz rightly insists in his work that Anaclet's Jewish ancestry should only be viewed as an interesting fact of history. But in the enthusiasm of the book that fact comes to be overstated.

The history of the Pierleoni family is handled with skill and discernment, although it would have been worthwhile to include an account of Anaclet's brother Jordan Pierleoni, who became the head of the Roman republic when Rome declared its independence in 1144. Early documents relating to the conversion of the Jews and to the relationship between the Church and the Jewish community are quoted and give insights of particular value for the current ecumenical climate. The ancient and modern landmarks of Rome—castles, towers, and synagogues—are woven into the story with intimate knowledge and sensitivity by the author. In its study of medieval Christendom, *Popes from the Ghetto* gives us another view of an area that is of particular concern to a Church presently engaged in reassessing its Jewish heritage.



# Approaches to Endings

*Alpha and Omega*, by Isaac Rosenfeld (Viking, 279 pp. \$5.95), contains short stories whose themes are divided between the "underground man" who despises himself and the abstract man who acts out the author's political despair. Emile Capouya's critiques of contemporary fiction appear frequently in *Saturday Review*.

By EMILE CAPOUYA

THE FIRST story in Isaac Rosenfeld's collection is called "The Hand That Fed Me." It is told in a series of letters, and in one letter the following passage occurs:

But one more thing. On your card you have written, "From Ellen. Do you remember me?" A pretty little disingenuous note! I assure you, your card was sent in the deepest conviction that I had not once ceased to think of you. I'm sure of it. If you thought I'd forgotten you, you wouldn't have dared send a card. What, a man should receive a card from a certain Ellen and wonder who she is? Any time you'd leave yourself open!

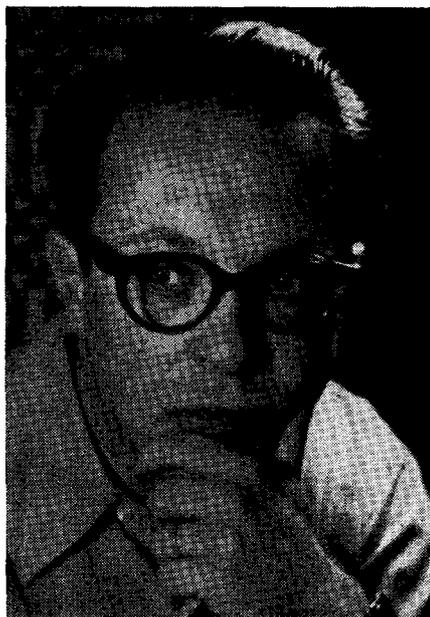
It is clear that the writer of the letter despises himself. He is like Dostoevsky's underground man, except that, a hundred years later, he cannot regard his situation as a horrible novelty.

Here is another passage, the first paragraph of the story "Alpha and Omega"; a postman presents himself:

They call me Little Giant. In the morning, when my work begins, the bag is heavy. I pull it onto my shoulder with a groan. All day it grows lighter and lighter; my head rises of its own accord. I take longer, quicker steps, my strength, courage, and good humor return to me. Late in the afternoon, when the burden is gone, I am a new man. But it is late in the afternoon, the day's work is done, and tomorrow begins a new day.

The speaker is not really speaking at all. He is being spoken, as it were, by the author, for he is an abstraction.

Isaac Rosenfeld's characters seem to fall mainly into one of two classes. The underground man speaks, in a variant of colloquial English, and we suffer with him through his recital of his peculiarities—as Baudelaire says, feeding our



Isaac Rosenfeld—a vision of the ultimate defeat of the human race.

pleasant remorse as beggars feed their fleas. Or else abstract man is presented to us, in language that is often a kind of strangled poetry, and we learn from him "how it is."

The two best stories in the collection—and I think they would be remarkable in any company—are "The Colony" and "The New Egypt." In both of these it is abstract man who acts and suffers, carrying the burden of Rosenfeld's political despair. In both, the language of the narrative is an invented English that, while easy enough to read, is strangely official, remote, and unechoing. What it most resembles is a translation of Kafka. At the same time it is lighted by flashes of curious poetry ("my head rises of its own accord").

"THE Colony" was first published in 1945. It is about a nationalist leader, vaguely East Indian, Nehru-esque, whose movement and party are tolerated by the colonial government up to the point where their opposition threatens to become effective. The population is poverty-stricken and weaponless; at a mass-meeting the leader announces a policy of radical noncooperation with the colonial government, passive resistance, non-violence, absolute boycott. Immediately, the movement is crushed and its chiefs imprisoned. After a long period of solitary confinement in an "experimental camp," the leader is allowed to see a

group of his former colleagues, prisoners like himself. He has been refusing food, and so, apparently, have they. Scarcely able to stand, they crowd around him, full of love and admiration. Then the leader is presented to a second group of his imprisoned followers. They look well fed; they have not been abused. The mere sight of him stirs them to fury and they fall upon him. The leader begins to understand the nature of the "experiment."

The story seems endlessly suggestive as a political parable—for example, it tells us something about Big Labor's endorsement of the war against Vietnam. But it is nevertheless historically specific, dating from a period in which we had not yet become accustomed to the spectacle of dark-skinned men armed with automatic weapons. Rosenfeld's vision is of the ultimate defeat of the human race. That may come about, of course, but it no longer appears that it will be effected by landing-parties dispatched from Western strongholds.

"THE New Egypt" was written in 1946. Its central idea is that our necrophiliac society, and the industrial landscape that captures all the grace and gaiety of Karnak, is thoroughly Egyptoid in inspiration. The notion no longer seems as original as it once did, perhaps because it strikes us as more gallingly accurate than it appeared to be a generation ago. In any case, Rosenfeld's legend of a time when men are immortal and enslaved is a gloss on Thoreau's comment on the Egyptian pyramids—"built for some ambitious booby whom it would have been cheaper and manlier to drown in the Nile." Well, Rosenfeld suggests, that is not what men do with their ambitious boobies. Instead they labor under taskmasters, on a diet of garlic and encouraged with the whip. It would be pleasant to be able to suggest that this tale, too, suffers somewhat from historical provincialism, hailing as it does from the dark ages before the dawn of automation, with its promise to bring about the New Jerusalem and in general make everything nice. Is it superstition only that warns us against basing our criticism of Rosenfeld on so flattering an estimate of our future?

Isaac Rosenfeld died in 1956. A teacher and critic as well as the author of stories and one novel, he appears to have inspired during his lifetime affectionate admiration such as few literary men are accorded. It seems strange that his strength as a writer should lie in dealing with the public thing. Most of his contemporaries, and himself much of the time, confine themselves to the personal subjects they believe they can control. "The Colony" and "The New Egypt" suggest what we may be missing because of that common resolution.