

find the painting memorable and remarkable whether or not they have a background in art, in history, or in psychology. . . . [T]he girls in this magical . . . picture still haunt our imagination” (pp. 217–19). As Hirschler acknowledges, this is what masterpieces always do. Her book arms us with welcome new material for continued consideration of this particular masterpiece and its very special appeal.

Mary Crawford-Volk, *author of SARGENT’S “EL JALEO” (1992), is completing SARGENT AT LARGE, a book about the artist’s mural projects, for Yale University Press.*

Becoming American Jews: Temple Israel of Boston. By Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan, Susan L. Porter, and Lisa Fagin Davis. (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press/Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2009. Pp. xvii, 259. \$24.95 paper.)

Perhaps no synagogue in American history has been better served by scholarship than has Boston’s Temple Israel. The melodies that have been integral to its liturgy were explored in Jeffrey A. Summit’s ethnomusicological study, *The Lord’s Song in a Strange Land* (2000). Joseph Reimer showed unusual faith in the effectiveness of religious schooling in his volume examining Temple Israel, *Succeeding at Jewish Education: How One Synagogue Made It Work* (1997). In 1954, during the tercentennial celebration of the Jewish arrival in Nieuw Amsterdam, Arthur Mann edited *Growth and Achievement: Temple Israel, 1854–1954*. Mann was a specialist in the rise of American progressivism (and of its ethnic inflections). Reform Judaism flourished at the same time as Christianity was being influenced by the Social Gospel, with its idealistic expectations of amelioration through humanitarian and enlightened activism.

More than six decades after the publication of Mann’s volume, significant changes in Reform Judaism have become evident—above all, the renewed appreciation of ritual as well as the shift from a universalist credo to the sense of distinctive peoplehood. The authors of *Becoming American Jews* have made full use of the oral histories, interviews, and minutes of temple board meetings that were unavailable to Mann and his collaborators. By updating the institution’s history to the present day, this excellent book emphasizes the go-with-the-flow resilience of a synagogue that became the flagship of the region’s Reform movement.

“Religious institutions in America functioned as autonomous voluntary associations” (p. xi), the authors remind us, and Temple Israel was, like other synagogues, the creation of its lay leadership. Businessmen selected the sites, paid the bills, and were ultimately responsible for hiring and firing the rabbis who served the congregation (called Congregation Adath Israel upon its inauguration in 1854). Given the hegemony of laypeople in the history of Temple Israel, it is something of a paradox that *Becoming American Jews* is mostly organized around the personalities and policies of the hired hands. Rabbis who did not attract members to Sabbath services (or at least audiences to lectures on Sunday mornings) failed the test of the marketplace and put their employment in jeopardy—no matter how learned their sermons, no matter how saintly their characters. Yet arranging this history according to the tenure of the rabbis who served at the pleasure of retailers and real estate developers does make sense, due to the challenge of imagining a more striking group of religious figures than Temple Israel’s.

The synagogue’s first two ordained rabbis, Solomon Schindler (1842–1915) and Charles Fleischer (1871–1942), were both born in Silesia, and both played out the political and ethical implications of classical Reform. Schindler took the Social Gospel a little too seriously; the refusal of the temple to renew his contract in 1894 partly stemmed from his deepening radicalism. Immediately after his dismissal, he wrote a sequel to Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888) and engaged in social work among the poor. His successor Americanized himself so fiercely that he showed up at the Boston Red Sox’s second World Series home game in 1903 (one day after Yom Kippur) and claimed to have made a slip of the tongue in a sermon—instead of advocating an “empire of righteousness,” Fleischer called for an “umpire of righteousness.” He took the humanist implications of Reform past Judaism itself. A charismatic preacher, Fleischer dramatically quit the rabbinate in 1911 to found a nonsectarian church he called the Sunday Commons, then married a Presbyterian attorney and wound up running the editorial page of William Randolph Hearst’s *New York American*.

The next two rabbis proved themselves to be media savvy. Harry Levi (1875–1944) served Temple Israel for nearly three decades and was known as the “radio rabbi”; beginning in 1924, his sermons were broadcast throughout New England. Levi’s successor, Joshua Loth Liebman (1907–48), went national, preaching on both CBS and ABC. Liebman encouraged the synagogue to hire a publicist

to inform the Boston press about the topics of forthcoming sermons and to promote the programs of Temple Israel. With his book *Peace of Mind* (1946), he achieved a feat unprecedented in the history of American publishing: never before had a work by a rabbi rocketed to the top of the best-seller list. The book was translated into ten languages, suggesting that it was not only Americans who felt that they were living in an age of anxiety. When Liebman died of a heart attack at the age of forty-one, the city's public schools were closed, and thousands lined the funeral route along Commonwealth Avenue.

Becoming American Jews quotes from *Peace of Mind* to make clear that serenity of spirit was not the only yearning that its author hoped to tap. "What we [also] need," Liebman wrote, "is a disturbed conscience . . . disturbed about the injustice, the cruelty and the evil in the world" (quoted on p. 94). That emphasis on social ethics became even more pronounced over time. Before coming to Temple Israel, Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn (1910–95) helped write *To Secure These Rights* (1947), a work commissioned by President Truman to combat racial and religious intolerance. Only illness prevented Gittelsohn from marching from Selma to Montgomery in 1965; his associate rabbi, Harvey J. Fields, went instead. The last white president of the NAACP, Kivie Kaplan, belonged to Temple Israel; so did Margot Stern Strom, the founder of Facing History and Ourselves, an educational organization designed to combat bigotry. Though the roll call of rabbis is highly gendered, change came in 1990 with the installation of Elaine S. Zecher (1961–), whom the authors credit with numerous liturgical and programmatic innovations which often highlight a spirituality that breaks with the earlier Reform proclivity for an austere rationalism. In 2004, within two months of the judicial decision to legalize same-sex marriages in Massachusetts, eleven weddings of gay and lesbian couples had been performed at Temple Israel, which has thus continued the Reform mission to realize progressive ideals.

Becoming American Jews is not an explicitly official history (though coauthor Meaghan Dwyer-Ryan has served as archivist of Temple Israel since 2002), and except for the final chapter, the book is delightfully free of the oleaginous profiles that mar other synagogue histories. Cynical readers will have to look elsewhere, however, to confirm their suspicions about our species. The authors do not expose any noteworthy scandals (financial or sexual), and the inevitable institutional conflicts over liturgical changes, dues assessments, and rabbinical powers are treated succinctly and judiciously. Perhaps the

probity that still clings to the reputation of New Englanders rubbed off on the respectable congregants of Temple Israel.

The authors' chief fault is their failure to raise—much less resolve—larger questions. Does it matter that this synagogue is located in Boston, or in New England, or even in the United States? Interaction with the wider community is not highlighted in *Becoming American Jews*, which mentions mayors only when they show up for special ceremonies; and the impact of Schindler and Fleischer, who served on the Boston School Committee, is not elucidated. From the beginning, the men who belonged to Temple Israel tended to work in retailing or, to a lesser extent, in manufacturing and finance. Professionals soon augmented an occupational structure that did not radically differ from well-to-do Reform congregations (and eventually from other Jewish denominations) elsewhere in the nation—or, for that matter, in historic communities such as Berlin's or London's or Alexandria's. Except for the nineteenth-century tendency to hire Irish servants, was there anything peculiar about the Jews of Temple Israel?

Stephen J. Whitfield, *Professor of American Studies at Brandeis University, is the author of IN SEARCH OF AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE (1999).*

The Correspondence of John Cotton Junior. Edited by Sheila McIntyre and Len Travers. (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2009. Pp. 656. \$49.50.)

John Cotton Junior, son of the famous minister of Boston's First Church, was a man of great talent but limited self-control. His passionate nature and rash tongue were responsible for a series of conflicts and scandals that led to his eventual exile from New England. They also produced a substantial correspondence with a wide array of friends and family, among them many of the most prominent figures in seventeenth-century New England. Now for the first time, that correspondence has been collected in one hefty and elegantly produced volume, edited by Sheila McIntyre and Len Travers.

The two editors of the volume are particularly well suited for their task of contextualizing Cotton's correspondence. Travers spent several years working at the Massachusetts Historical Society, which houses many of the letters to and from Cotton, and he edited Cotton's journal of his experiences preaching to the Indians of Mashpee and Martha's Vineyard. Travers's expertise informs the extensive footnotes