

political walls of our ghetto began to crack and crumble, our theology did too." In the early fifties he discovered a new ghetto. In the lofts of the Lower East Side he listened with rapt attention to the sacred stories. "The disputes of the European Left became personal and emotional to me. To this day if I come across the name of some forgotten revolutionary . . . it is like reading about a dead friend." Or, yet more revealingly, "As Max [Shachtman] recited their names . . . it was like hearing the roll call of revolutionary martyrs who were bone of our

bone, flesh of our flesh." The *communio sanctorum*. Take eat, this is my body.

To paraphrase Harrington, "The socialist system was the philosophical analogue of the daily experience of a closed, socialist world." The Catholic ghetto is finished, and with it his Catholicism. Bohemia and the beloved community are no more, and Christian pauses on his pilgrim way, surrounded by the fragments of one man's century. When he picks up, and what he picks up, and where he goes with it should be well worth our continued attention.

## The Jews in the Roman World by Michael Grant

(Scribner's; 347 pp.; \$10.00)

### Robert Wilken

The modern divisions of knowledge into disciplines has more to do with historical and cultural idiosyncracies than with the data of human experience. With the passage of time, however, these divisions have become institutionalized in the modern university, inevitably assuming a magisterial role in shaping the way we think about ourselves, our past and the world we inhabit. We could look at things differently.

Nowhere is this more true than in the study of antiquity. Here cultural, religious and aesthetic values still determine what books should be read, what problems are worth examining and what societies, events, persons and ideas should be taught. The Hellenistic age still commands far less attention, except among specialists, than does the classical period. Greek poetry is considered far more important than Greek religion. Indeed the study of ancient religion, whether it be the religion of Greece or Rome, or that of Judaism or Christianity, has been systematically excluded from most courses in ancient history or literature. If one wishes to study religion in antiquity one must go somewhere else than to a department of history or classics.

In recent years some Roman historians (e.g., Fergus Millar, Peter

Brown) have exhibited an interest in incorporating Christianity more fully into the study of Roman history. But the study of ancient Judaism has been almost wholly the province of Jewish historians, Christian scholars interested in the background of the New Testament, or solitary figures in the history of religions, such as Erwin Goodenough. As a result, the study of ancient Judaism has been even more fragmented and more shaped by the unique presuppositions of the "disciplines" which study it than other areas of ancient religion.

Michael Grant's book on the Jews in the Roman world aims to correct the situation by bringing Jewish history into the horizon of the Roman historian:

"We derive our civilization, it has often been said, from Athens, Rome and Jerusalem. While the stark simplicity of this assertion has been somewhat eroded in our own times by the recognition of Byzantium's intermediary role, and by the claims of the Germanic and Celtic north, yet the old saying still contains a great deal of truth. However, it is only rarely that students of history pursue its implications and objectively attempt to consider the three cultures side by side with one an-

other. For most of us, apart from specialists, are conditioned to regarding Athens (or, for the purposes of the present study, let us rather say its successor Alexandria) and Rome as secular subjects, but Jerusalem as a different sort of subject altogether, a religious concept and theme which cannot be regarded as history in quite the same way."

"Religion is an immensely significant part of secular history; whether God-given or delusive, its beliefs and cults have guided people more powerfully than any other force."

Grant's book, then, is something of a novum. There have, of course, been works on Judaism in the Roman Empire, as, for example, Jean Juster's *Les Juifs dans l'Empire Romain*. But Juster's work is sixty years old, has never been translated and is more of an encyclopedia than a narrative history. With some notable exceptions (Avi Yonah for one), the works of Jewish historians have been chiefly interested in the internal developments within Judaism. Grant's theme is the place of the Jews in the Roman world and the relations between Jews and Romans from their first contacts with the Jewish State during the Republic until the later Roman Empire, or, more accurately, until its Christianization in the fourth and fifth centuries.

How important this theme is for Roman history can be seen in a few statistics. Population figures from antiquity are notoriously imprecise and susceptible to variance, depending on who is judging and by what criteria, but there is general agree-

ment that there were approximately seven million Jews (give or take a million) in the Roman Empire during the first century of the Common Era, that is, before the devastation of Jerusalem and the Bar Kochba revolt. In a population of some fifty-sixty million across the Empire the Jews comprised some 6 to 9 per cent. Of these perhaps over two million lived in Palestine, and the remainder (i.e., the majority) in the large cities, especially Antioch, Alexandria, the cities of eastern Asia Minor and Rome. In Egypt alone there may have been a million Jews, concentrated in Alexandria, and in some of the eastern provinces (i.e., Syria) the Jews comprised 20 per cent of the population. By any standard the Jews were a significant part of the Roman world.

To the Romans the Jews were a people apart, observing a "novel religion" and holding "all things profane that we hold sacred and regarding as permissible what seems to us immoral." Rome's most notable writers—Cicero, Seneca, Juvenal, Tacitus—all ridicule Jewish customs and beliefs. They thought circumcision barbarous, the keeping of the Sabbath a sign of sloth, the refusal to eat certain foods superstitious and the belief in one God irreligious and vulgar. Even after several hundred years of contact between Romans and Jews, Roman attitudes did not change significantly. About 200 c.e. a philosopher at the court of Emperor Septimius Severus said the Jews are "separated from ourselves by a greater gulf than divides us from Susa [in Persia] or Bactria [in Afghanistan] or the more distant Indies."

Yet the Romans had extensive political dealings with the Jewish State before it became part of the Empire; they made favorable treaties with them and protected their rights in the cities where Jews lived. Palestine was, of course, a key area geographically in the Empire because it served as a buffer against the power of the Parthian Empire to the east. As much as the Romans tried, however, they could not govern Palestine successfully. Either they misunderstood

Jewish religious practices and offended the populace, or they placed as governor a lesser official without the stature or experience to control the situation, or sometimes a messianic figure or zealot would incite the people over a seemingly unimportant matter.

Nevertheless, even after the bitter conflicts which led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 c.e. and the wars in the first half of the second century, the Romans did not proscribe Judaism. They allowed the Jews wide room to practice their religion, and Jews were able to establish an organizational structure to meet the problems created by the destruction of the temple. They were not forced to worship the emperor. Though they were taxed heavily, and though Palestinian Jews lived in poverty, they had freedom to chart their own course. It is only when the rulers of the Empire became Christian and were advised by bishops that the Jews were forbidden to build synagogues, proselytization was prohibited, and they were segregated by law from the rest of society.

Grant is best when dealing with political history (especially the intricacies of Palestinian and Roman politics) and the continuous shifting of political boundary lines and authority in Palestine in the first century. His assessment of the differing perspectives formed by geography, education, political status and family ties is sensitive and detailed. He has a keen eye for numismatic evidence. (Legends on coins stamped by revolutionaries during the second revolt [132-135 c.e.], for example, changed as the revolution faltered.) He is less successful in dealing with cultural and religious history, despite his claim to consider cultures side by side. Grant is aware that the history of Judaism during this period is not solely, and perhaps not even primarily, a story of political intrigue and disastrous wars. But there is more here of Herod and Agrippa and Bar Kochba than there is of Jochanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Akiba. Interestingly, there is more of Paul and early Christianity than one might expect. Although Grant is

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surely correct in including the early Christian movement as part of Jewish history, I think he overdoes it.

The plot centers on Palestine, as well it should. One cannot but wonder, however, whether the ebb and flow of events in Palestine was felt with equal intensity by the Jewish communities in the great cities throughout the Empire. The question is unanswerable because of the paucity of literary evidence (after Philo) from the diaspora. Nonetheless, a fuller and more nuanced picture of diaspora Judaism would have been possible. What really happened to diaspora Judaism after the defeat of Bar Kochba in 135 C.E.? Unintentionally (it seems), Grant gives the impression that after 135 C.E. Judaism is winding down. He mentions some cases where the Jews increased in numbers and influence, but his remarks are sketchy and superficial. Consequently we get no assessment of the place of the Jews in the Roman world after 135 C.E. except as an interlude before the triumph of Christianity.

Which raises another point. Grant overestimates the significance of Christianity and ignores the rich material from Christian sources on Judaism during this period. By the end of the second century, he says, the Christians had begun to outnumber the Jews. This is most unlikely. In Grant's account Christianity outdistances Judaism at too early a date, and the several centuries of conflict and rivalry between Christians and Jews before (and after) Theodosius I are overlooked.

Toward the end Grant raises the question: Why did Christianity, rather than the Judaism from which it originated, become the successor to the pagans and the dominant faith in the Western world? While no doubt an important question, it is hardly appropriate to this book. The book has not prepared the way for an answer. There is little or no consideration of the religious complexity of the Roman Empire and no attempt to provide the resources out of which the matter could be discussed. A more appropriate question might have been: How did

Judaism, after the catastrophic experience in the first and second centuries, manage to survive as a people and a religious movement and establish a new *modus vivendi* with Rome? How, under such adverse circumstances, were the Jewish people able to find new hope and to redirect their piety and practice

around new religious symbols? Grant does remind us that Israel lived on in spite of adversity, that she lives today, and, with the reestablishment of the State of Israel, the "tribulations described in the foregoing pages have at long last received at least a measure of recompense."

## The Real World of 1984: A Look at the Foreseeable Future by Richard N. Farmer

(David McKay; 210 pp.; \$6.95)

## The Coming Dark Age: What Will Happen When Modern Technology Breaks Down? by Roberto Vacca

(Doubleday; 219 pp.; \$6.95)

### Richard Luecke

Strikingly different technological futures are here projected by an American professor of international business who has had management experience in the Middle East and has a penchant for tinkering with vintage autos, and by an Italian systems expert who has aggrieved misgivings about the competence and dedication of his colleagues throughout most of the industrialized world. The writers are remarkably alike, however, in not really expecting any decisive political or cultural intrusions, for better or for worse, on the techno-futures they project.

One is reminded of Henry Brooks Adams's prediction in his autobiography of 1907 that industrial energy would become godlike by comparison with any former creature of nature and that its human agents would become "as dumb as their dynamos." Nationalization or socialization would not alter the basic realities: politics would become increasingly "a struggle not of men but of forces."

That sober prophecy is not so much repeated as exemplified in the

books before us. Both view politics as mostly impotent in bringing or avoiding their futures. The scenarios they describe, even though different, can serve to qualify one's understanding of present issues bearing on development. But one discerns only indirectly what sort of societal activity might help us avoid the perils which threaten Mr. Farmer's tolerable future or might help us achieve some tolerable alternative to Mr. Vacca's perilous future.

Richard Farmer traces an expansion of concrete human choices replacing the overruling necessities which circumscribed the life of the Indiana sod farmer and Chicago industrial worker of 1884. He underscores the unprecedented options (vocations, avocations, locations, personal contacts, family relations) of the metropolitan dweller of 1974. Add TV telephones, cable and the home communications console of 1984, and we may begin to get nervous about all the choices. But the prospect is not that of Orwell's 1984 nor that of the urban planners of the 1960's. Actually, suburban