

ROBERT CHAZAN, *European Jewry and the First Crusade*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1987. Pp. ix, 380. \$39.95.

In the spring of 1096 reports reached the Jewish communities in the Rhenish towns of Speyer, Worms, and Mainz that armed French and German Christians were on the march. Three Hebrew sources described the riots that ensued: Christians entered the towns and killed several hundred Jews or forcibly converted them; other Jews martyred themselves by killing their families and themselves.

Robert Chazan's book, the culmination of some twenty years of research (p. vii), is a detailed study of those riots. It opens with a succinct introduction to Jewish life in northern Europe from settlement to 1096 (chap. 1). Determining how the three Hebrew sources are related to one another and assessing their historical reliability are taken up next (chap. 2). Two of the three exist in only a single manuscript. They are conveniently referred to as L, the longest one, attributed to an otherwise unknown Solomon bar Samson, and S, the shortest of the three, sometimes called the Mainz Anonymous. The third text, P, contains several liturgical poems with the name-acrostic Eliezer bar Nathan and is ascribed to that twelfth-century Mainz rabbinic authority. It survives in several manuscripts.

These three narratives were published together for the first time, with two others, in a critical edition by A. Neubauer and M. Stern in *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1892) with a complete German translation by S. Baer. After consulting microfilms of the manuscripts, Chazan concludes that their edition "is quite faithful and accurate in its transcription of the Hebrew text" (p. 223).

Chazan reiterates the conclusions of his earlier analyses, where he argued that S is the oldest, L is later but independent of S, and P is derived from L. Hence, when Chazan decided to provide his translations of the most important texts in an appendix to the monograph (p. 307, n. 6), he included only S and L, but not P.

The author considers the three texts to be "relatively reliable" as to their facticity (pp. 3, 46–49), and it is on the basis of these sources that he reconstructs the attacks on various Rhenish Jewish communities and Jewish acts of heroic martyrdom (chap. 3). Throughout, Chazan interprets the Jews' ritual killing of their own families and then themselves as an innovative, intense, and frenzied pattern of behavior that reflected the hysteria of the Crusade mentality of the Christian majority (chap. 4). He refers to this pattern of innovative Jewish martyrdom as a "countercrusade" (pp. 132–33, 193, 324). Equally stimulating is his suggestion that the genre of these narratives is similar to that of the chansons de geste and parallel to Christian Crusade accounts (pp. 150–51; 328, top).

Although memorializations of the events left a lasting mark on northern European Jews (chap. 5), Chazan believes that the negative impact of Crusader ideology on anti-Jewish policies in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was minimal. Thus the local episodes of anti-Jewish hostility in 1096 did not define a turning point in European Jewish history (chap. 6).

Finally, Chazan argues, the events of 1096 demonstrate that "early Ashkenazic [northern European] Jewry was far better integrated into its environment than is generally assumed" (p. 5), not only socially but even spiritually (pp. 4, 133–36, and chap. 7). In view of this, historians of the Christian majority, Chazan urges, ought to take the Jewish minority's culture, as well as its social and economic presence, into account more than they have (pp. 193–94).

Many scholars have dealt with the subjects treated here. The texts are very problematic, and Chazan has not heeded Salo Baron's call over thirty years ago: "a renewed

scrutiny of all the available sources might justify a new truly critical edition of these chronicles" (*A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2nd rev. ed., 4 [1957], 286). It is still a desideratum. Although they are relatively short — L is only twelve and a half folio pages — they are complex. Parallel passages are sometimes found in two or more of the texts, and some contain blank spaces due to omissions or erasures. Ultraviolet inspection might recover some of these, but that requires examining the manuscripts, not just the microfilms.

Not only should the erasures be examined but several scholars' corrections and emendations must also be systematically evaluated. Thus, M. Brann published a detailed review of the Neubauer and Stern edition (*Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 37 [1893], 285–88), in which he noted several errors of transcription and unnecessary emendations. Dozens of additional corrections are in Nathan Porges's lengthy articles (*Revue des études juives* 25 [1892], 181–201; 26 [1893], 183–97). The corrections in these studies have been ignored here.

Another scholar, also not mentioned, studied the way the three texts are related. Isaiah Sonne (*Revue des études juives* 96 [1933], 123–24) concluded that the editor of L made use of P and S. He observed that when the blocks of text common to L and P refer to Christianity, the term *tsahan* ("stench") is used; when blocks common to L and S appear, the term *tinnuf* ("filth") is found, and when blocks parallel to all three texts occur, both terms appear. Chazan's contrary view that P is derived from L and that S and L are older does not account for Sonne's evidence, which is not discussed. And since P is just as important as L and S, a translation of it should have been included in a book basing itself on these three short texts.

Chazan's English translation may be compared with Shlomo Eidelberg's (*The Jews and the Crusaders*, 1977) and the first, but unpublished, annotated English translation by C. Irving Dwork (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1941). Those translations and Baer's relied on the Neubauer and Stern edition, but, whereas Baer and Dwork replaced the nasty anti-Christian polemical expressions of the Hebrew with euphemisms about Christianity, Eidelberg translated them literally. Chazan also includes most of the anti-Christian remarks but also leaves several words or phrases open as untranslatable. He also omits the end of L. His translation does make some improvements on Eidelberg's, such as noticing that S is truncated at the end (a fact Porges pointed out in his review).

Before a reasonably accurate translation can be made, we first need a new critical edition of the Hebrew texts that is based on a thorough consideration of the manuscripts themselves, all previous scholarly literature on them, and a careful appreciation for the characteristic features of Ashkenazic Hebrew. The Latin sources should also be translated and appended.

Chazan's study also obscures the genre of these texts. Often called local Jewish chronicles or hagiographies, these texts are not documentary records to which theological comments or poems have been added. They are highly edited, rhetorically colored, and liturgically motivated literary reworkings of circular letters and oral reports, written for definite purposes. The narrators were concerned with praising and exonerating local pious Jew who felt compelled to kill their own families and then commit suicide. To make their case, they insisted on using a Temple typology: Jews are pictured as pure sacrifices who may not be touched by polluting, impure Christians. The martyrs acted justifiably as both Temple priests and as holy sacrifices. The narrators quantified only the martyrs and ignored or downplayed the Jews who did convert, as Baron noted.

That these sources are literary texts, even though of a special type, is also clear

from their obvious differences of style. In L, lengthy prayers frame the accounts of attacks on several towns, their Jews' defensive political reactions, and subsequent acts of martyrdom. In P, very brief descriptions of a limited number of episodes introduce liturgical poems. And in S, an attention to the Christian townsmen and other human factors also serves to interpret the events portrayed.

In light of these features of the sources, it is not possible to distinguish, as Chazan wishes to, between so-called factual "patterns of Christian and Jewish behavior" and interpretative "questions of motivation" (p. 47). The entire text is an interpretative whole in which some details have been included or heightened, others omitted or de-emphasized, as is characteristic of many genres of medieval Latin historiography. Although general corroboration exists in the contemporary Latin and later Hebrew sources that riots occurred and that some Jews killed their families and themselves, it is lacking for most of the very detail that is characteristic of the narratives. Variety of detail in the sources (pp. 4, 44–48, 309) does not prove that the detail is in the events themselves and not in the narrators' minds. Chazan's argument is circular, and his insistence on looking for detailed "facts" in these sources is futile.

His further conclusion that 1096 was not a demographic, political, economic, or intellectual turning point, leading to a general decline in medieval Jewish history (pp. 197–210), is not new but states explicitly and in more detail Salo Baron's suggestions made along these lines (op. cit., pp. 89–106, and Chazan, p. 334, n. 12). The most important recent modification of Baron's assessment of 1096 is Avraham Grossman's evidence that 1096 did have a decisive impact on the decline of German rabbinic culture and the ascent of the schools in Champagne (*The Early Sages of Ashkenaz* [in Hebrew], 1981, for example, p. 438). In the English summary of his book (*Immanuel* 15 [1982–83], 73–81) Grossman concludes: "However, today it is possible to state definitively that [1096] was a very significant crisis. . . . a significant break occurred in the development of rabbinical literature, so that it is no coincidence that after 1096 the spiritual center of Ashkenazic Jewry passed to northern France" (p. 81; cf. Chazan, pp. 204–5; 335, nn. 15 and 20). Moreover, when a later German rabbi, Eleazar of Worms, recorded a family tradition about the founding of Mainz, he looked back at 1096 as a traumatic turning point in local memory (Chazan, p. 207). These facts cannot be minimized or dismissed.

Then again, Chazan's interpretation that the Jews of Ashkenaz were more integrated into Latin Christian culture than "generally assumed" (pp. 5, 193–94, 324) is not new either. Aspects of cultural integration have been pointed out and amply documented, for example, for Christian folklore and customs by Moritz Güdemann (*Geschichte des Erziehungswesens* . . . [Vienna, 1880–88]). Moreover, Y. F. Baer, Monford Harris, Jacob Katz, and Ephraim Urbach (pace Chazan, p. 194), among others, have pointed to close Christian parallels or even influences on Ashkenazic religious life. This has been the scholarly consensus for several decades. What is not clear is what one should make of certain contemporary similarities between aspects of Jewish and Christian culture; these require a detailed study.

To be sure, by pressing these broader historiographical issues, Chazan has raised the important question of the usefulness of a comparative Jewish-Christian perspective for general medievalists as well as for Judaica specialists who study Latin Christendom. It is, in effect, a challenge which echoes Gavin Langmuir's earlier call (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 [1966], 343–64) for medievalists to take account of the Jews when writing medieval European history.

To general European medievalists, one might put the question this way: Should comparison be limited to earlier and contemporary Christian developments? Or, does

not the case study of the Jews, the enclave civilization within Latin Christian civilization, offer a useful point of comparison for testing analyses of trends affecting the Christian majority?

To specialists in medieval European Jewish history, one might ask, conversely: Does comparative history always have to be limited to Christian parallels and influences? Or, do not earlier and contemporary Jewish developments also provide useful comparative frameworks? A reconsideration of these questions by scholars of the Christian majority and of the Jewish minority might lead in exciting new directions.

This book, however, neither provides the needed critical edition of the Hebrew texts — and a reliable new translation — nor does it really advance our understanding of their historical significance. Unfortunately, an opportunity to integrate and supersede a hundred years of research on the 1096 riots has not been realized.

IVAN G. MARCUS, Jewish Theological Seminary of America

MICHAEL D. CHERNISS, *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry*. Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, 1987. Pp. x, 271.

Readers familiar with apocalyptic literature and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* may initially be puzzled by the title of Professor Cherniss's book, *Boethian Apocalypse*. In anticipation of this response Cherniss supports his use of the term "apocalypse" to refer to the *Consolation* by citing earlier scholars, F. Klingner, E. K. Rand, and F. J. E. Raby, quoting Raby's statement that Boethius had created a new kind of apocalypse, a "revelation of reason and not of esoteric teaching" (p. 11). In distinguishing the Boethian model from earlier apocalypses Cherniss stresses its "rational" method, "secular" nature, and "practical" purpose (pp. 14, 15, 17, 18). He singles out as the distinctive features of the Boethian apocalypse a dream narrator, an opening complaint, a vision, an authority figure, a dialogue, and an ensuing consolation, revelation, or "learning process" (p. 17). Having established the framework or unifying concept, Cherniss proceeds to single out for detailed analysis eight works ranging from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries which, despite differences in form, structure, purpose, tone, or attitude, follow the Boethian prototype.

In discussing the *De planctu naturae* of Alanus de Insulis, Cherniss points to the shift in focus from the central relationship of the narrator and the authority figure to the authority figure herself. The goddess Nature and her complaint against man for deviating from her laws constitute a significant departure. The *De planctu*, having been adapted from the Boethian model to its author's purpose, itself became the seminal influence on the next three poems discussed, in each of which human sexuality is the central concern. The *Roman de la Rose*, as Cherniss points out, with its rambling, encyclopedic structure, satirical tone, numerous figures, and complex relationships, is a marked variation on, as well as extension of, the *De planctu*. Especially noteworthy in the *Roman* is the shift in focus from the authority figure to the dreamer, Amant.

Cherniss next discusses two Middle English vision poems, the *Confessio Amantis* and the *Parliament of Fowls*, both of which are more closely related to the Boethian extension than to the prototype. In his analysis of the *Confessio* Cherniss points out a number of generic connections between the vast allegories of Gower and Jean de Meun, including the central importance in each of the dreamer lover, Amant/Amans. Turning to the *Parliament of Fowls*, Cherniss rightly observes that the centrality of the goddess Nature links Chaucer's poem with the *De planctu*. This chapter contains much valuable material, but it is marred by an overzealous effort to establish Boethian connections. For instance, the comparison of the first two stanzas of the *Parliament*