same for every work in the field of cultural-educational history. It could be useful supplemental reading for courses in social and cultural history, and in beginning courses in the history of education; undergraduate students would learn quite a lot from it. Maybe this is what the author had in mind.

Iowa State University — Louis G. Geiger

LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT: A General Equilibrium History. By Jeffrey G. Williamson. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1974. $19.50.

This book is, the author declares in his preface, "an economist's attempt to make sense out of a critical period in American history, from the Civil War to World War I," through utilization of a general equilibrium analysis derived from neoclassical theory. But the work deals almost exclusively with pre-twentieth century developments. And the average historian will find the text unreadable. Even in the best of circumstances only a fellow econometrician could evaluate the technical side of Williamson's analysis; but he aggravates the situation by not even attempting to put in straightforward language his major conclusions.

So far as this historian—not a cliometrician—can determine, his major conclusions are:

1) that the Civil War retarded economic growth, that the rapid growth of the 1870's and first half of the 1880's represented a "catching up," and that the relatively poor performance of the second half of the 1880's and the 1890's was "inevitable";

2) that despite the farm discontent of the time, the middle western farmer was not suffering from the economic ills pictured by agrarian rhetoric;

3) that transportation improvements did result in significant and important "social savings";

and 4) that immigration did foster industrialization as well as retard real wage improvement, but did not have a very significant effect upon aggregate growth.

If correct, these conclusions should modify the generally accepted views on the period. But the work has such an abstract—as well as abstruse—quality that its findings are not likely to have much impact upon historians' thinking.

University of Nebraska — John Braeman

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE: A Historian Looks at the Ecological Crisis. By Donald W. Whisenhunt. Port Washington, N.Y. Kennikat Press. 1974. $6.95.

This book is not based on research. It would be difficult to say what it is based on. It is always unsophisticated and usually inaccurate. One example speaks for dozens like it. "[Gifford] Pinchot said [the National Forests] were reserved for preservation, not for exploitation for commercial purposes." (p. 26) This would be news to Pinchot. The thesis is jejune: Americans seek simple solutions for complex problems and have to stop it.

Loyola University of Chicago — James Penick, Jr.

american jewry

Joseph L. Blau. JUDAISM IN AMERICA: From Curiosity to Third Faith. Chicago and London. University of Chicago Press. 1976. $8.95.

American Judaism is so difficult and complex a phenomenon that attempts to generalize about it inevitably fail to square with aspects of one's own experience and memory. Jews gathered together from different places in America often spend a good deal of their time comparing notes in surprise; what they had thought was "typical" turns out to have been typical only of *their* background. For non-Jews Jewry must be even more bewildering. I wondered a number of times in reading this book whether Blau wasn't assuming too much for a "lay" reader to follow. Because this is a history of the religion and not of the people (Blau quite properly contrasts it with Nathan Glazer's *American Judaism*), it is thin on the "feel" of the changes which he describes in peoples' lives. A Jew reasonably familiar with the right aspects of Jewish life could certainly read it profitably; to others, it might seem abstract or even pedantic, though in truth it's quite a simple work. Perhaps Blau, in attempting to produce a brief summary, boiled down excessively his earlier work and the contributions of other scholars. Glazer's book could stand on its own; I'm not sure this one can. One almost needs Glazer in order to understand Blau.

Blau attempts basically to bring American Jewish history into congruence with contemporary theories of American experience. Thus he tells us that those who migrated were the least timid, most adventurous and most "modern" or "urbanized" of even the *shtetl* communities; this matches conclusions we have been hearing recently from immigrant and ethnic historians. Similarly, immigrants acutely in

need of identity in the United States banded together first in units from the same locale; the organizations formed served as buffers against other Jews who were as different to them as was the rest of the American population. Comparable things are now said about other immigrants once supposed to be homogeneous. Like the others, Jews later formed more inclusive institutions as their own differences faded.

The book is most useful as an account of leaders and forces which brought about changes in the form of Jewish religious observation. It is very thin on Orthodox aspects of this reform until very recent times, perhaps because data are harder to come by than they are for the movements which led to Reform and Conservative Judaism.

Since, as Blau says, good data on the trends he discusses are almost nonexistent, one wonders on what he bases some of his large-scale conclusions. When he says, for example, "From the mid-1930's to 1948, Zionism was the chief element and living faith of the vast majority of American Jews," one must assume that his source is his own memory. I grew up in a northeastern Jewish congregation in that period, and have no sense at all that this was true. Perhaps it would have seemed so in another congregation, or in the company of religious professionals. It was seldom mentioned in our home, among my friends or my parents', and, among Jewish concerns, certainly seemed to rank below the Holocaust, the High Holy Days, the building fund, the temple's cantor—a great force among the young—and, of course, one's *bar mitzvah*. It became a much more prominent concern among people we knew—and we knew and visited a large number of Jewish relatives and friends, from New York through eastern Massachusetts—*after* 1948. I do not consider our experience "typical," but suspect that Blau's "vast majority" might turn out to consist of Jews in active contact with organizations vigorous in Zionist causes.

Blau says elsewhere of Zionism that it "was something of a revivalistic religion," but fails to define what he means by revivalistic. "Voluntaryism," pluralism and denominationalism Blau sees as the three keys to understanding changes wrought by the American environment upon the different forms of Judaism, and he makes no secret of where his own sympathies lie: he wants a flexible and liberal Judaism. Indeed, Blau editorializes so much on this score that one comes to feel that this is an odd book to come from a university press: it lacks scholarly detachment. Occasional infelicities of style and organization also bothered me. Even authors who write well, as Blau does, need a little more help from their editors than Blau apparently received from Chicago.

SGL

AMERICAN ZIONISM FROM HERZL TO THE HOLOCAUST. By Melvin I. Urofsky. Garden City, N.Y. Anchor Press/Doubleday. 1975. $12.50.

Urofsky's book is not only the fullest and most thoroughly researched account of the history of Zionism in the United States, but has as its most outstanding and valuable feature its success in placing that development within the context of the larger American society.

Zionism made scant progress in this country before World War One. The established, prosperous, assimilation-minded and largely Reform-affiliated German-Jewish community shunned Zionism as threatening to open the door to charges of divided loyalties and to rouse prejudice by setting Jews apart. The more recent Eastern European immigrants were preoccupied with the sheer struggle to survive—and many (a point that Urofsky underrates) put their hope for Jewish salvation in a universalistic socialism. But the war in Europe led many American Jews to embrace the goal of a refuge in Palestine for their less fortunate brethren across the ocean. A new group of leaders—with Louis D. Brandeis, the hero of Urofsky's story, in the forefront—"legitimized Zionism by Americanizing it." ". . . Brandeis' writings and his activities as head of the movement," Urofsky writes,

> clearly reveal that his approach to the Jewish problem remarkably resembled his approach to the secular problems confronting industrial America. Brandeis and the men and women he attracted to the movement had a clear and firm commitment to American ideals and democratic principles. They objected to anti-Semitism not from personal suffering but because it offended their sense of decency. Zionism, which reflected so many of the Progressive ideals, became for many of them a reform movement, akin to women's suffrage or factory legislation.

This Americanization—or perhaps more accurately, this identification of Zionism with progressivism—made the movement a powerful force. Even much of the German-Jewish aristocracy was won over. But though embracing Palestine as a Jewish refuge, the movement, before Hitler, remained ambivalent about the idea of a Jewish state. The Holocaust dramatically changed that—as it did among Americans generally. And American Zionists—which now included the overwhelming majority of American Jews—became firmly committed to the goal of a Jewish state.