

Book Reviews

The Autobiography of Jesus: As Told to the Centurion Cornelius Nepos IV, A Tale of Everyman

by Norman E. Tutorow (Chadwick House Publishers, 2008). 719 pages.

Reviewed by Martin S. Rozenberg.

This account of the life of Jesus, although clothed in fiction, will nevertheless profit the reader as a reliable account of Jewish history and early Christianity. In the course of dealing with the life of Jesus, the book discusses theology and philosophy and raises crucial religious questions that continue to challenge us, such as why the innocent suffer.

The author begins with a quick survey of Jewish history, starting with Abraham and extending to the rabbinic period of the first century CE. The lion's share of the book, however, is devoted to the life of Jesus and the historical background up to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Masada in 73 CE. In this account Jesus survives his crucifixion as a result of clever manipulation by his friends. We now meet him as a seventy-three-year-old prophet, forty years after his ascribed death by historians around the year 33 CE.

The action takes place in July of 68 CE at Qumran (where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered) where Jesus, a preacher and prophet, lives in an Essene monastery. Jesus is befriended by Cornelius, a retired Roman Centurion, who has immersed himself in the study of Greek philosophy. The two men, drawn to each other, proceed to have a prolonged dialogue over a number of days. Cornelius, an admirer of the Greek philosophers and their thought, expresses the view of the rationalist while Jesus defends the Jewish position of a supernatural God and revelation. Through their at times passionate debates, Tutorow gives voice to the challenging questions and skepticism that we as moderns continue to entertain about religion, and the origin of human life and our universe. The duel of these two antagonists brings us face to face with the complexity of our own ambivalence toward faith and reason.

The author exposes the reader to a critical approach to the Bible, ancient Judaism, and certain tenets of religion in general that remain problematic. Thus, we are urged to look at the Prophets with a more objective and critical eye. The early Prophets evolved from being magicians and wonder workers. The latter or classical Prophets came to see themselves as mere vessels through whom God communicated His word directly and impelled them to relay His moral message to the people. As spokesmen of YAHWEH they considered themselves to be His true prophets, while others who laid claim to prophecy they disparaged as false prophets. But how could we really determine which prophet was true and which false? How do we know that the prophet claiming that God spoke to him really heard God's voice? The answer is that we really don't know. The Bible's attempt in the book of Deuteronomy to provide us with the criteria for distinguishing the true from the false prophets is ambivalent and leaves us in a quandary. Tutorow is on the right track in suggesting that the prophet possessed an element of madness and was not normal given our parameters for normalcy. The prophet Ezekiel, for example, given his grotesque and disturbing visions, has been psychoanalyzed by a number of psychiatrists and has been understood to have been abnormal.

The author also points to inconsistencies in the Prophets' description of the Hebrew God. On the one hand, YAHWEH speaks only to the Israelites and is concerned solely with their welfare. Thus, the Prophets come across as strong nationalists. At the same time, YAHWEH is depicted as also the God of the universe and the nations. This raises the par-

adox of particularism and universalism which becomes problematic for any religious grouping and poses an impediment to the embrace of all humanity. Jews especially today in their practice of Judaism feel themselves challenged by this paradox and are seeking ways to reconcile these opposites.

The conversations between Jesus and the Centurion inevitably lead to the topic of theodicy and how to account for evil. The author thus raises for us the oldest question in religion, posed already in the most ancient cuneiform literature in Babylonia and in the Bible by Job, namely, "why do the innocent suffer?" Jesus' answer is no more satisfying to the Centurion than the contention by Job's friends, that he must have sinned, was acceptable to Job. The question of God's justice, or injustice, remains the greatest crux for religionists and continues to constitute today a major factor for non-belief.

The figure of Jesus is presented as fully human. Jesus makes no claims for himself of divinity but sees himself only as a prophet. His humanity is given added emphasis by a description of his family, the formative years of his youth, and his being married to Mary Magdalene. The miracles traditionally attributed to Jesus are rationalized and poeticized. The emphasis is not on Jesus' divinity but on his ethical and moral teachings. Jesus' evasive answers are not political but apocalyptic.

In the debates between Cornelius and Jesus on the topics of religion, philosophy, miracles, and Christian doctrine, it is obvious that the author often uses the Centurion's views to pose his own challenges. Tutorow does not keep us guessing as to where he stands. He has conveniently added on a *postlegomenon* (Ch. 80) in which he provides us with an excellent critical and scholarly analysis of the Jesus phenomenon. The investigation of the life of Jesus, the author avers, is complicated by the fact that we are presented with two pictures: Jesus the man and Jesus the god. The evolution from the realm of the human to the realm of the divine was a gradual process. Jesus ultimately evolves from being the Son of God to becoming God the Father. Such a transformation became necessary when early Christianity sought converts in the Greek non-Jewish world outside Judea. To the gentiles, Jesus, as a mere Jewish preacher, was not saleable unless he was to be presented as a god. The new Christian religion, whose founder was Saul of Tarsus, was one that Jesus would not have recognized. To the Jews of the time, the crucifixion of Jesus probably meant no more than the death of another false messiah. Josephus speaks of other miracle workers of that time claiming divine powers (one promised to part the waters of the Jordan).

The elevation of Jesus to being a god himself was promoted by superstitious inventions and revisions about the events surrounding his birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. The author shows little patience for the theological maneuverings that led to the deification of Jesus:

After Jesus became a god, it was superfluous (a euphemism for silly) for him to have a life of devotion; for it is just a bit incongruous to praise oneself, to pray to oneself, to give thanks to oneself, and, during the crucifixion, to berate oneself for deserting oneself! There is something inherently ridiculous as well as incredulous in all this theological ventriloquism." (p. 705)

The forecast in the Old Testament about Jesus' birth is not reliable and the genealogy tracing his lineage to King David is manufactured. The myth of the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection was not believed even by Saul and his early disciples. The oft-cited quote from Isaiah 7:14 supposedly forecasting Jesus' virgin birth, as Tutorow correctly points

out, is a mistranslation or a fraudulent interpretation of the Hebrew *almah* meaning young woman. If the text intended to specify virgin it would have used the Hebrew word *betulah*. The early Church did not share a belief in the Virgin Birth. Thus, Tutorow reminds us that "Saul contradicted the entire fraud when he said that Jesus was born according to the flesh (Romans 1:3)." The belief about virgin birth was common in some of the pagan cults and was incorporated by the early Church to gain converts among the Gentiles. This eventually led to making Mary a perpetual virgin and to the denial that she had other children and produced the false assertion by the early Church that Jesus' siblings were his cousins. We have no historical knowledge of Jesus' childhood and youth. It is reasonable to assume that he grew up in a typical Galilean family that included brothers and sisters. Mary's perpetual virginity and the depiction of her as the mother of a god necessitated the creation of the superstition of her immaculate conception rendering her sinless and prepared the way for Mary eventually to be worshiped as a goddess herself.

According to the Hebrew Bible, the Messiah who would arise in the future to bring salvation to the Jewish people would come from the line of David. To build the case for Jesus being the true Messiah, the early Church proceeded to create a false genealogy that linked Jesus to David. Such lineage has no historical basis and the Synoptic Gospels themselves offer differing accounts of Jesus' ancestry.

The fact that Jesus was married, according to Tutorow, is to be discerned already in the Gospel writings. He finds especially strong confirmation in the Gospel of Mary, discovered in Egypt in 1896, that Mary Magdalene was Jesus' wife. Furthermore, in analyzing the various details in the Gospel's description of the famous wedding at Cana, the author concludes that the bridegroom was Jesus.

This well-written book, though fictional, is highly informative about Jewish history, the Christian and Jewish religion, and significant theological issues. Tutorow succeeds in picturing for us a very human and sympathetic Jesus. The author offers a fierce critique of what has been said and written about Jesus from early times on, and presents him to us in positive colors as a moral teacher of prophetic stature full of compassion for his fellow human beings. Tutorow's Jesus lives within the context of the Jewish community, and though differing with the Jewish establishment, practices Judaism as a Jew.

The search for the historical Jesus has been a long one. It gains momentum with the rise of higher biblical criticism by German scholars in the nineteenth century. The last two decades have witnessed a resurgence of this search with a spate of books and articles on this subject. Scholars have sought to peel away the myths, legends, and superstitions that have enveloped Jesus through the ages in order to allow the true historical Jesus to emerge. The search, however, has proved to be somewhat elusive. The historical Jesus may never be discovered. Tutorow knows this yet believes that through critical analysis, historical investigation, and rationality, we can come closer in gaining a truer picture of who Jesus was than the Jesus presented by the Church. Accordingly, the author strips Jesus of his divinity, yet his humanization of him diminishes neither Jesus nor the importance of his message. By painting Jesus sympathetically as human, Tutorow has kindled within us an attainable hope, namely, that as humans we may not be able to aspire to become gods but it is within the realm of our human spiritual endowment to rise to be godlike. It is this spiritual message that transcends the specifics about the historicity of Jesus and which the book seeks to emphasize.

This volume is a worthy addition to the literature about the figure of Jesus and will reward the reader by the life and personal style in which it is written.

The Hebrew Republic: How Secular Democracy and Global Enterprise Will Bring Israel Peace at Last

By Bernard Avishai (Harcourt, 2008). 290 pages.

Reviewed by Paul Kushner

Bernard Avishai was a professor of business and public policy at Duke University and is currently a contributing editor of the *Harvard Business Review*. This commercial background gives him a unique perspective on Israel's relationship with her Arab neighbors. Avishai is a peace activist who does not come from a Socialist or left-wing milieu.

The book is very well researched. Every page, indeed almost every paragraph, contains significant quotations. Avishai has lived in Israel for extended periods of time and continues to visit the country frequently. He displays a palpable love for the Hebrew language.

The author is greatly troubled by the reality that Israeli Arabs constitute almost twenty percent of the country's population, but continue to suffer serious social and economic discrimination. Arab land has been expropriated by the government and given to Jewish settlements. The Law of Return, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, and other vestiges of Zionism create a legal inequity. It is clear to Avishai that the present State of Israel cannot be a Jewish State and a modern democratic country at the same time. "Israeli elites cannot hope to have an economy like Singapore's and a nationalities war like Serbia's."

This ethnic strife is aggravated by the political power of the Orthodox religious minority. Orthodox rabbis have a monopoly on laws of personal status. There is no civil marriage, no separation of Religion and State, and no secular standard for earning citizenship.

Avishai proposes a drastic solution: instead of a Jewish State there should be a Hebrew Republic. This new Israel would be a true egalitarian democracy. Hebrew language and culture will predominate just as his native Montreal is francophonic but the government does not seek to impose the Roman Catholic faith. In this age of economic globalization, market factors will lead to peace through open borders, a customs union, and eventual membership in the European Union. The Jews of Israel will live in peace and true democracy with their Hebrew-speaking Arab fellow citizens.

I must confess that I read this book twice in a desperate attempt to discover which planet the author inhabits. There is virtually no such pure democracy on Earth. (Iceland may come close but its economy is currently failing and it does not attract immigrants, so we really cannot use it as a paradigm.) A resident of Wyoming or Alaska enjoys much greater representation in the United States Senate than does a resident of New York or California. Were the United States a true democracy, Al Gore might be completing his second term as President. Professor Avishai's home in Wilmot, New Hampshire, is part of a settlement built on land expropriated from the native Abenaki Indians who were either expelled or massacred. Even if the genocide of the Native Americans has preceded some invisible statute of limitations for moral culpability, in my own lifetime I have seen totally innocent Japanese-Americans forced from their homes and confined to internment camps. This racist policy was implemented by such icons of American liberalism as Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Earl Warren. This happened scarcely five years before the Palestinians became refugees. National emergencies often engender the curtailment of civil rights, as evidenced by President Lincoln's suspension of *habeas corpus* during the Civil War.

Professor Avishai's analysis of the entanglements of Religion and State in Israel is entirely valid. Such domination of government by religion is true in many countries. A score of nations have official names such as The Islamic Republic of Mauritania. The Islamic crescent is displayed on their flags. A hundred other nations exhibit the Christian cross on their respective flags. In Avishai's native Quebec, the government extends financial support to parochial schools. In the United Kingdom, the national anthem beseeches Divine protection for the monarch, who is also the head of the Anglican Church. In the United States, we are surrounded by reminders (particularly in late December) that this is a Christian country. Only a few years ago, the U.S. Attorney General said so explicitly.

It may be awkward for an Arab citizen of Israel to sing *Hatikvah* with its references to the Jewish yearning for our ancient homeland. On the other hand, when I attended a public elementary school in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, my music teacher (who was also the president of my mother's Hadassah chapter) led us in singing Christmas carols which were very sectarian hymns of the Church.

The author's prejudices tend to obscure various pertinent facts. There is scant mention of the persecution and expulsion of Jews whose ancestors had lived in Arab countries centuries before the advent of Islam. Avishai makes reference to the Green Line as "the internationally recognized border prior to 1967." The Rhodes armistice agreements specifically state that the standstill cease-fire lines are **not** to be construed as boundaries or permanent border lines.

Avishai refers to Jerusalem as the "administrative and religious hub" of a future Palestinian State. Yet, throughout history, whenever Palestine was ruled by Moslems, Jerusalem was never an administrative capital. Palestine had been ruled from Ramallah, Amman, Damascus, and even Cairo, but never from Jerusalem.

The author makes a few references to Singapore as a place where economic factors preclude ethnic strife. He neglects to mention that Singapore is a draconic military dictatorship. Both the Malays and the Chinese live in constant fear of the government. There was no ethnic strife in Serbia under Tito or in Iraq under Saddam.

While there are many allusions to the Security Wall there are only a few passing hints about the suicide bombings that necessitated the erection of this barrier. Avishai quotes many conversations with Arabs for whom he has obvious empathy. There are no such conversations with Orthodox Jews. Why are the twenty percent of Israel's population who are Orthodox less deserving of the author's attention than the twenty percent of the population who are Arab? Similarly, there is no mention of the aftermath of the withdrawal from Gaza. The Israeli government appeared to have anticipated Avishai's advice. All Jews were removed from the Gaza Strip. The very profitable hothouses were given to the Arab residents of Gaza. This was a perfect opportunity for the Palestinians to show how they can build homes, plant gardens, establish schools and clinics, and demonstrate a desire for peaceful coexistence. Instead, they dismantled the hothouses and turned the entire area into a base for firing deadly rockets into civilian areas in Israel.

Avishai believes that market forces can bring prosperity and that prosperity will, in turn, bring peace. I was in Beirut in 1959. It was a thriving commercial city. The shops lining its broad esplanades displayed the finest luxury goods from all over the world. For the past three decades, Beirut and much of Lebanon have fallen victim to hate and civil war. Osama bin Laden is a scion of one of the wealthiest families in the world. Those who bombed public transport in London came mostly from middle-class, professional families. Wealth does not always bring peace.

Finally, one must realize that a Hebrew Republic will be primarily a republic. A majority vote could democratically replace Hebrew with Arabic and substitute Shaaria for religious neutrality. It would be foolhardy to think that Avishai's Hebrew Republic would justify dismantling the admittedly imperfect Jewish State.

Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean

By Edward Kritzler (Doubleday, 2008). 336 pages.

Reviewed by Harry A. Ezratty

The Spanish historian Salvador de Madariaga once wrote that “the Jews had an important role in the disintegration of the Spanish Empire. . . . The Jews loved Spain, and did not pardon her for tearing them from the land. . . . [T]his made the Jews fanatic enemies of Spain, precisely because they felt so Spanish.”¹ Exiled Spanish and Portuguese Jews (*Sephardim*) attacked the Spanish Empire in many ways. Their wars ranged from economic boycotts organized by the philanthropic multimillionairess Dona Gracia Mendes, to organizations arranging escapes from Iberia for secret Jews relentlessly hounded by the dreaded Inquisition.

Edward Kritzler's new book, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean*, tries to help us understand another arrow aimed by *Sephardim* at Spain's economic heart: piracy. If you expect to read about bloodthirsty, Jewish buccaneers sailing across the balmy islands of the Caribbean archipelago, looting Spanish ships of gold and silver stolen by Conquistadors from the Aztecs, Incas and Mayans of South America, you will be disappointed. Most of the men in this book did not operate in the Caribbean, nor were most pirates. The “pirates” Kritzler describes in his book roamed primarily in the Mediterranean, but in a publicity blurb, it was said that the publisher felt that putting Caribbean in the title would make a more saleable book. Nevertheless, this book illuminates an area hardly known or understood by most Jews and the public at large: Jews sailed against Spanish interests from the 16th to the 19th centuries and have always been seriously involved in maritime pursuits, putting aside the myth that they are a landlocked people. Aside from taking serious liberties with historical facts, and his definition of a pirate, the book does relate some fascinating tales of Jewish mariners who plundered Spain's treasure ships and those belonging to others, for that matter.

Kritzler concentrates on the two best-known Jewish “pirates,” Samuel Palache and Sinan. Both had exiled Sephardic roots and began their careers respectively in the Mediterranean with North African Moors and the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. If Jews think it unusual to see their brothers engaged as sailors, as shipowners, and in other maritime pursuits, then they should rethink their history. From 1500 on, in the Ottoman Empire's port city of Salonica, there was a synagogue known as *Kal de los pescadores* (the Fishermen's Synagogue) in which my ancestors were members.² Jews controlled the port city of Salonica for almost 500 years, supplying every maritime need. Of course they closed the port on *shabbat* and the holy days.³

Even young David Ben-Gurion was impressed with what he saw during a year he spent in Salonica in 1912. Living in the city among its Jews to learn Turkish in order to matriculate at the law school in Constantinople, Ben-Gurion observed sweating dock workers and carters and was encouraged in his idea that Jews could earn their living at hard

work.⁴ A generation later when the British Mandate decided to make Haifa Palestine's major port, England imported the Jewish maritime workers of Salonica to help get the port up and running.⁵ Thus it might be advanced that seafaring has long been a regular profession among *Sephardim*. Indeed, most all the swashbucklers appearing in Kritzler's book are of Spanish and Portuguese descent.

Isaac and Susan Emmanuel (Isaac Emmanuel was the last Orthodox Sephardic rabbi to hold a pulpit on the island of Curacao) detail in their two-volume work, *The History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles*, hundreds of Curacaoan ship owners and captains sailing during the island's colonial period. The overwhelming number were of Spanish and Portuguese heritage.⁶ Doubtless, out of such a large number of seafarers some may have resorted to piracy. In keeping with the theme of revenge, Curacao's ship owners supplied the charismatic *Liberador*, Simon Bolivar, who led the struggle to free South America from the Spanish yoke. Jews on the island opened their homes to him, affording sanctuary when he fled South America after his early political and military reverses.

The men in Kritzler's book were not motivated solely by revenge as implied by de Madariaga. The dust jacket of this book makes it plain that they were interested in treasure, religious freedom and revenge in that order. But why not get rich while exacting revenge? Samuel Palache became wealthy, as did his brother Joseph, in pursuit of Spanish loot. Kritzler calls Palache a rabbi, which he wasn't. He was instrumental, however, in organizing one of Amsterdam's earliest Sephardic congregations.⁷ It is doubtful, nevertheless, that he formally acted as a rabbi, as Kritzler insists. His father was a rabbi in the city of Cordoba and he probably had some early religious training. But why doesn't Kritzler tell us that Palache was a duplicitous rogue? He not only provided Spain, an enemy of the Jews, with information about her enemies, he also supplied her foes with intelligence about Spain. Palache even offered to convert to Catholicism if Spain would permit him to return with his family. The offer was wisely declined by the king of Spain. When in Amsterdam, he was Jewish; when in Spain, he sought Catholicism.

The Moroccan-born Palache was not even a pirate but a privateer. He represented the King of Morocco in the respectable and honorable role as his agent abroad which included appearances at Spain's royal court. Later he obtained letters of marque from the Dutch. At one time letters of marque were regularly issued by legitimate maritime countries. They permitted a ship's captain to act legally as a privateer and to capture vessels and cargo belonging to any belligerent nation. Captured loot was then sold at auction for "prize" money, which was shared by the ship's owner, its officers, crew, and the government issuing the letters.

Our early American republic issued many letters of marque during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, because it could not compete in numbers and firepower with the vast British navy arrayed against it. Privateering was honorable as long as one kept within the boundaries of only attacking belligerents. A privateer, at his own expense, outfitted his vessel with crew and armor. American Jews were involved in privateering during America's first two wars. Most notable among them was Georgia's Mordechai Sheftall, the highest-ranking Jewish officer in the Continental Army, and John Ordronaux, a Frenchman educated at Bordeaux's naval academy, who sailed out of Baltimore during the War of 1812.⁸

Even the English, with well-developed maritime law, treated privateers as hostile enemy combatants, since under the rules of naval warfare, they were not pirates. When

captured, if a privateer could not show proper documentation, captain and crew were treated as pirates and on occasion were sent to the gallows.⁹ Being a privateer didn't necessarily mean you sailed with your crew. Some, like Sheftall, only had a financial interest in the enterprise. Others like Ordranax sailed with his ship and crew, fighting life-and-death battles at sea.

I'm not certain Kritzler's other notable "pirate," Sinan, can be so labeled. Sinan was a Turkish Jew whose exiled family fled Spain for the Ottoman Empire. The exploits attributed to Sinan in this book were executed in his role as head of a Turkish fleet at war with Spain. He was second in command to the famous Turkish commander, Barbarossa. In 1534, Sinan was a naval warrior who earned the Ottoman military title Captain-Pasha. He led a large Turkish armada against the Spanish forces occupying Tunis, defeating them. In this respect Sinan must have savored revenge against the Spaniards who had expelled his family from Iberia. Nothing in this book, however, documents Sinan acting as a pirate, except that Kritzler says he was known as "the Jewish pirate," which I suspect may have been used in a derogatory way. After all, it has never been flattering to call anyone a pirate.

Kritzler spends much time on Columbus, his relationship to Jews and the alleged concealment of his Judaism. It is a controversy which has raged for decades. Columbus always held his genealogical cards very close to his chest. As a result, no responsible historian has been able to uncontroversibly determine if he was Jewish, and some raise doubts if he was actually a Genovese. The debate continues and may never end. The author takes some unwarranted liberties with Columbus and history in this book that require discussion, else an unsuspecting reader accept them as fact.

The Santangel family and other converted Jews who acted as court advisors to Ferdinand and Isabella are depicted as urging the monarchs to accept Columbus's plan for the exploration of a new route to Asia. That is true. However, Kritzler urges us to believe that what was secretly behind their proposal was a plan to find new land as a solution to the expulsion and resettlement of exiled Spanish Jews. "Perhaps . . . Columbus would discover a new land somewhere," Kritzler writes. He also advances that the plotting courtiers worked in concert with the explorer to solve the problem of where all these exiles could finally be settled. It is an old undocumented argument raised by those who argue that Columbus was Jewish and his plan for discovery was actually a colonization scheme hatched in conjunction with the converted royal courtiers.

The argument must fail. In the first place, the settlement problem was immediate. Columbus sailed on the same day the last remnants of exiles left the port of Palos. Neither the courtiers nor the exiles could wait for the discovery of an unknown and possible new territory. Secondly, the Crown not only expelled all of its Jews from Spain but from its possessions in Sicily and elsewhere. Ferdinand and Isabella wanted to rid themselves of all Jews in their realm. Later, a royal edict was published banning not only Jews from their new colonies, but also converted Jews "unto the third generation."¹⁰ Such actions by the Crown most certainly would have been anticipated by the astute courtiers who were sophisticated and so close to Ferdinand and Isabella that they had to have known what they were thinking: that the Crown even wanted their new lands free of Jews.

Then on the very next page, Kritzler, who now accepts as hard fact that Columbus and the Jewish courtiers jointly plotted to find a new land for the exiles, makes the following unsubstantiated statement: "*He (Columbus) never reached Asia, and didn't live long enough to fulfill his pledge to Santangel and the court Jews to provide a homeland for con-*

verted Jews.” What pledge? In this heavily documented book Kritzler offers no authority for these allegations. Nowhere in the many serious and scholarly volumes and biographies written about Columbus is there any proof of this statement. Supposition, yes; fact, no. Looking at Columbus’s writings, he always advises the Crown he wants to use the profits from his voyages to restore Christianity to the holy city of Jerusalem and to convert any idolaters he might encounter. He constantly supplicates Christ and pays homage to him as his Lord.¹¹ It could have been a ruse to lead Inquisitors off his path, as some have advanced, but those are the writings we have from the man himself, and scholars in absence of other hard facts have to accept them, like it or not.

Finally, Kritzler discusses Columbus’s relation to the island of Jamaica. Here he properly details a Columbus enigma.

After his first voyage to the New World, it became clear that Columbus was a clumsy administrator. In 1500, at the end of his third voyage of exploration, he was returned to Spain from Santo Domingo, wrapped in chains, because of complaints made by colonists. Neither he nor his brothers, Diego and Bartolomeo, were able to control them. When Columbus appeared before the King and Queen bent under the weight of his shackles, whatever anger they may have felt toward him dissolved.¹² They did, however, renege on their original agreement to make him governor of all the new lands he would discover. He managed to hold on to the hereditary title of Admiral of the Ocean Seas, which exists to this day and to the hereditary ownership of the island of Jamaica. He was also admonished by the royals to never again set foot in the colony of Santo Domingo. It was a hard blow, since it was he who had discovered Santo Domingo on his first voyage. The colony had become the jewel of all the Crown’s possessions in the West Indies despite his poor administration.

On his fourth and final voyage, in 1503, Columbus was shipwrecked on a beach in Jamaica. He sent a crew member by canoe to Santo Domingo for help. The colony’s governor hesitated to offer any, and the admiral was marooned for over a year. It was on this island that Columbus managed to gain his hereditary fiefdom. He extracted another remarkable concession which would be honored by the Crown. The Inquisition would not be allowed to establish itself on the island or any other territory controlled by Columbus. His granddaughter, Isabella Colon, inherited Jamaica when her brother Luis died. She married the Portuguese Count de Galvez, a member of the royal house of Braganza. Thus Jamaica became a Spanish fief controlled by a Portuguese noble, since under feudal law a husband controlled his wife’s property. Portuguese crypto-Jews petitioned the family for permission to settle on the island. It should have been illegal under the royal edict preventing converted Jews up to the third generation from settling on Spanish islands. But there were no Inquisitors in Jamaica to root them out. The Braganza-Colon family welcomed the newcomers, who prospered. A definite social demarcation arose between the original Spanish settlers and the Portuguese newcomers, who everyone knew were secret Jews.¹³

Questions which have never been answered are: why did Columbus, outwardly a faithful and practicing Catholic, insist on this exemption? And why did the Crown, which had expelled all Jews from its territories, exported the Inquisition to the New World and decreed that no converted Jews “unto the third generation,” should settle in the West Indies, agree to this arrangement and keep their word? Unfortunately, these questions go unanswered. They hang, tantalizing historians like the prize on a brass ring just out of reach.

Columbus might have been carving out a sanctuary for Jews. But that's a guess. The Crown, solicitous of Columbus and thankful for his services to them, may have turned the proverbial blind eye. That is also supposition without any facts to back it up. There is, however, precedent for such royal treatment. Court advisor Rabbi Abraham Senior was treated gently in order to keep him in Spain. It was he who, decades earlier, with a small group arranged for the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, which would finally end in disaster for Spain's Jews. Eventually Senior had to convert and assume the family name Coronel. Generations later his descendants returned to Judaism.¹⁴

Kritzler points out that a Sephardic mariner acted as a pilot for English warships as they invaded Jamaica and conquered the Spaniards in 1655. The English expelled all of the island's Spanish citizens but extended a welcoming hand to the Portuguese, who threw off their Christian masks and resumed their ancient faith. What is not commonly known is that Judaism then became the oldest monotheistic religion under the now British rule. The Spanish had left, and with them Catholicism. The new conquerors had yet to establish their Anglican Church.¹⁵

Eventually Jamaica and its fabled city of Port Royal became a haven for pirates who sailed openly into its welcoming harbor. Kritzler describes the illicit trade in which Jews were an important factor in a lively and interesting manner. It was a wide-open place where freebooters brought their illegal spoils to disappear among the legitimate goods and wares of the city. Sailors spent their prize money on liquor, women and gambling. In 1692 it all came to an end. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, Port Royal disappeared in a natural disaster: an earthquake. The city collapsed and sank, disappearing into the sea. There was a synagogue in Port Royal which tumbled into a pile of bricks in the presence of a Christian minister, who described its destruction in a letter to a friend.¹⁶

There are two notable Jewish pirates whom Kritzler might have added to his book. The first, Isaac Rodriguez Marques, a ship's captain and owner of three vessels, dropped anchor in New York Harbor in 1695, making the city his new home. It appears he might have engaged in piracy. Apparently unhappy at seeing many of his swashbuckling colleagues hanging from the gallows, Marques decided to reform. In 1697 he purchased an honorable reputation as a New York City freeman at the cost of five pounds. With his ships legally roaming the Atlantic, Africa's Gold Coast and the West Indies, the urbane Marques added to his already fat fortune, bought a mansion on Pearl Street, and was considered by some to be New York's wealthiest citizen. He is fascinating in his own right, but we should also remember him as a grandfather, several times removed, of the legendary financier and "advisor to presidents," Bernard Baruch.¹⁷

Then there is Subatol Deul, the "Corsair of Guayacan." Deul operated out of the Pacific port of Guayacan on the Chilean coast. He was a member of the famous and deadly buccaneer group known as the "Brotherhood of the Black Flag." Deul captured lots of Spanish gold from a refining foundry, which he was later thought to have buried. The Spaniards finally caught up with the Brotherhood, dispersed them, killing many. Deul escaped and settled in with natives, marrying the daughter of one of their chiefs. In 1926, a local farmer aware of the Guayacan pirates, sought to recover their buried treasure. With respect to gold he came up empty. He discovered another treasure in the form of an earthen jug containing documents in Deul's hand, written in Hebrew and Spanish. None of the Brotherhood members were Spanish, so it has been assumed that Deul was a Spanish Jew.¹⁸

The author chose an interesting theme, which, if carried off, could have made an important contribution to a little-known area of Jewish history. Unfortunately, he doesn't deliver. From a misleading title, to the lack of genuine pirates in his narrative, and failure to provide careful research, *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean* is a disappointment.

¹ Madariaga, Salvador de, *Ciclo Hispanico*, Buenos Aires, 1958.

² Molho, Michael, *Les Juifs de Salonique à la Fin du XVIe Siècle*, Clermont, France, 1991.

³ Mazower, Michael, *Salonica, City of Ghosts*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 2005.

⁴ Bar-Zohar, Michael, *Ben-Gurion, A Biography*, Adama Books, New York, 1977.

⁵ *Op cit.* Mazower, Michael.

⁶ American Jewish Archives, Waltham, Massachusetts, 1962.

⁷ Bodian, Miriam, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, Indiana Univ. Press, Indianapolis, 1998.

⁸ Ezratty, Harry A., *They Led the Way*, Omni Arts, Baltimore, 1999.

⁹ Toll, Ian W., *Six Frigates*, W.W. Norton & Co. New York, 2002. *See also*, Patton, Robert H., *Pirate Patriots*, Random House, New York, 2008. Patton also succumbs to the lure of putting pirates into his title. That said, this book is an excellent and well-documented history devoted to privateering during the Revolutionary War.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Amler, June F., *Christopher Columbus's Jewish Roots*, Jason Aronson, New Jersey, 1991. In her book with this intriguing title, one might infer the author makes a case for Columbus's Jewishness. Not so. She stops short of that hypothesis, pointing out his close connections with Spanish and Portuguese Jews and his dependence upon their technological, political and financial aid. Amler does question, as have other scholars, whether Columbus may have been close-mouthed for good reason: he may have had Jewish ancestry in generations past and as a good Christian wished to conceal this for the effect it might have had at court and perhaps even keeping him out of the clutches of the Inquisition.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Wilford, John N., *The Mysterious History of Christopher Columbus*, Vintage Books, New York 1991.

¹⁴ Arbell, Mordechai, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean*, Gefen House, Jerusalem, 2002.

¹⁵ Ezratty, Harry A., *500 Years in the Jewish Caribbean: The Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the West Indies*, Omni Arts, Baltimore, (2d ed.) 2002.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Coit, Margaret L., *Mr. Baruch*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1957.

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