

Dr. Landau's Book of Sermons

"JUDAISM—ANCIENT AND MODERN"

IT was indeed a happy thought that prompted the United Hebrew Congregation of Johannesburg to publish a Volume of Sermons by the Chief Rabbi on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. For over thirty years, Dr. Landau has ministered to the Jewish community, in the course of which period he must have delivered hundreds of sermons. And while he has become known through his works as a poet, philosopher, Rabbinic scholar, dramatist and lecturer of no mean distinction, an aspect of his activity—the one chiefly associated with his life's calling—was revealed only sporadically when there would appear at intervals a homiletical discourse from his pen in a local paper or periodical.

In his prefatory note, the Chief Rabbi tells us that though friends repeatedly and insistently requested him to publish his sermons he "hesitated, thinking that the printed word cannot convey the impression once created by the spoken word. It lacks the atmosphere charged with the great solemnity of a vast assembly and the force of the preacher's personal influence." But eventually his friends prevailed. And we should like to add, rightly so. For while there is undoubtedly much truth in that view, the fact remains that no matter how effective the address may have been at the time, there is little abiding value. And moreover, if the sermon contains deep thought that requires concentration and reflection to be thoroughly understood, it is wasted on most people, for the simple reason that before one idea is fully assimilated the preacher has already given them another. Dr. Landau's latest book will therefore be welcomed not only by those who were not privileged to hear them at the time of their delivery—incidentally another argument in favour of the printed sermon—but also by those who were.

The volume consists of some fifty Festival Sermons, (spoken on Pesach, Shevu-

oth, Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur, Sukkoth and Channukah) to which have been added sermons and addresses delivered on special occasions, and mainly devoted to Zionism. A variety of subjects, all of absorbing interest, is dealt with, e.g., Religion and Nationalism, Revelation, Religion and Heresy, Proselytism, Where are the Dead, Satan, Has Religion Failed, Will and Fate, Eretz Israel. Liberal Judaism is frequently mentioned, and forms the theme of at least four sermons—Preservation or Assimilation, The Reform Movement, Tolerance, Modern Judaism—in which the author clearly expresses his views on the movement, and draws attention to certain of its aspects.

Written in the forceful style that we have learned to expect from Dr. Landau, with plentiful allusions to Rabbinic lore and classical literature, ancient and modern, the sermons are "meaty," learned though never dull, and will be read with much profit. A feature, which to many will be pleasing, is the unusual circumstance in a book of this sort that Hebrew quotations are given in the original.

Slowly but surely Jewish life in this sub-continent is abandoning its swaddling-clothes. On all sides there is evidence of this. The latest is the publication of this bulky volume of South African sermons—the first as far as the present reviewer is aware. The Chief Rabbi has thus created sermonic history; this fact alone, apart from the fame of the author and the intrinsic worth of its contents, should commend the book to the Jewish community of South Africa.

A.T.S.

"JUDAISM, ANCIENT AND MODERN."

A Selection of Festival Sermons. By Chief Rabbi J. L. Landau, M.A., Ph.D. Edward Goldston, Ltd. 1936. Obtainable from the S.A. Zionist Federation. Price 10s. 6d.

Rev. H. J. Oleska

A SOUTH AFRICAN BORN MINISTER

There was an interesting arrival in Johannesburg early in the week in the person of Rev. H. J. Oleska, who has just come from London. Rev. Oleska is a South African, born in Bethal, Transvaal, where his father has lived for many years. He went to England as a youth and after finishing his secular education, pursued studies in rabbinics, eventually entering the Ministry. He has returned to South Africa with the intention of making his home in this country, and taking up a ministerial appointment.

Hebrew Speaking Circle

On Saturday last, the 22nd inst., a lecture was delivered at the Hebrew High School, Johannesburg, by Mr. J. Blumenthal, who spoke on "Jewish Institutions in South Africa." The speaker analysed the most important Jewish institutions in this country, and the manner in which they had developed. He complained that the communal spirit was too deeply tinged with materialism. The real spirit was lacking everywhere, except for the sentiment of "Zdaka" which still prevailed.

A lively discussion took place. Rabbi I. M. Gervis was in the chair.

Association of Jewish Groups

LECTURE BY DR. A. SYNGALOWSKI.

The Israel Zangwill Group met on Monday evening last at the residence of Miss Beinashewitz, in Parktown, to listen to an address by Dr. A. Syngalowski, who dealt with many absorbing aspects of Jewish life. He spoke of the dualism of Jewish life, pointing out the great gulf which, among Jews, separates the material and the spiritual, and he offered a thesis that culture was not of the brain alone. Might and mind must unite. The dybbuk of human thought must enter the dead bones of nature and breathe into them the spirit of life. It was in such fashion that culture was created.

Mr. I. Lipworth, in moving a vote of thanks, suggested that there should be a symposium on this theme at the next meeting, and this was agreed to.

PLAZA THEATRE ATTRACTIONS.

"Werewolf of London" is one of the greatest "thrillers" ever to be screened and is the picture showing at the Plaza Theatre over this week-end. "Rose of the Rancho" which is a success to "Rio Rita," is the film for next week and in complete contrast to "Werewolf of London," is a musical picture starring the famous John Boles and Gladys Swarthout, an opera and radio singing star.

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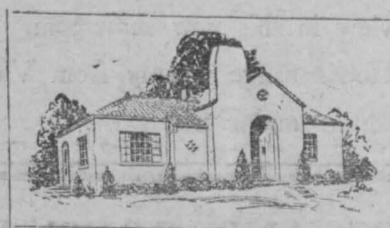
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