

## CONFUSION, U.S.A.

Joseph H. Jeppson

"Anarchy, U.S.A." is a film produced and distributed by the John Birch Society.

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The John Birch Society is showing a film around called "Anarchy, U.S.A." I saw it at a meeting of Young Republicans at the College of San Mateo on January 10, 1967.

The point of the film is that there is a substantial connection between Communism and Civil Rights demonstrations. Although Communists may indeed have taken part in such demonstrations, I could find no evidence of it in the film. Nor could I find any information in the film to support its assertion that the Algerian Ben Bella was a Communist. The film said that Castro had once told people that he (Castro) was *not* a Communist, but that later he told them he *was* one. Then Ben Bella is shown saying that he is not a Communist (leaving the viewer to infer that he must be one too). Finally, Martin Luther King is shown shaking hands with Ben Bella, and is quoted as saying that he (King) isn't a Communist either. Richard Nixon is shown with Castro, but there seems to be no indication that Nixon is a Communist, because he never says that he is not.

One picture shows men marching along abreast with Castro, locking arms. The next sequence shows Civil Rights demonstrators marching abreast, with arms locked. I suppose the idea here is that people who lock arms are Communists. The film exposes the viewer to riots in various places in the world, some of which were undoubtedly connected with the activities of Communists; but I could find no rational connection between such riots and Civil Rights demonstrations.

Whoever made the film was probably unaware that the "black belt" in the South is not a phrase of recent origin, but refers to the cotton belt. The "region derives its name from the black soil which is prevalent [there] in contrast to the red clays to the north and south" (Cochran, et al., *Concise Dictionary of American History*, p. 99). The film implies that "black belt" is a name for a new country of Negro Communists — the "black" referring to skin pigmentation. A similar distortion occurs when the film implies that a Castro slogan "Venceremos!" (which probably means "Let's Win") was translated into English by Negro Communists and set to music as "We Shall Overcome." Actually the music is an old *Baptist hymn* called "I'll Overcome."

Two Negroes in the film speak against Civil Rights. They are persons who once embraced Communism, but saw the light and returned to condemn it. One, a little old lady, tells such a pat story that the viewer suspects she might have picked it up at Birch headquarters. The other is a poor fellow with no teeth. He appears so ignorant and imperceptive that one begins to wonder if he was drummed out of the party for giving it a non-progressive image and that was when his feelings were hurt. Anyway, the crucial thing about the two renegades is that their testimonies did not make the crucial connection between Civil Rights movements and Communism, except to say that such demonstrations make Communists happy.

But then, doesn't every sort of disturbance in our society make Communists happy, including conservative opposition to the Civil Rights movement?

The film reiterated again and again a five-point Communist "take-over" system. Then it said at one point that the Communists say things over and over until people believe what is repeated. Well, I didn't believe in the five-point system no matter how many times it was flashed on the screen. The film said that Communists identified virtuous causes with "bad smells," which, in my opinion, was what the film itself did with the Civil Rights movement by identifying it with Communism.

The film spent much time concentrating on mutilated bodies of people killed in Algeria. I suppose the point was to scare viewers into believing that Negro rioters might mutilate their bodies, as part of a world-wide Communist plan to carve up bodies.

The thing that *did* move me in the film was the depiction of Negroes marching and swinging, singing "We Shall Overcome." I felt a real kinship with them and their cause, and I empathized with their ministers who cheered them on to strike out for equality. All of this was very inspirational. But I suspect that it was not this message that the editors of the picture wished to put over.

I rather think they wanted the viewer to see something despicable in something beautiful. They wanted to place a Communist context on even the most praiseworthy aspects of the Civil Rights movement.

The film appealed to people with Negrophobia. It gave them an excuse to claim that their discrimination was not racial, but political. Would you want your daughter to marry a Communist?

## TALE OF A TELL

*Ellis Rasmussen*

*The Source.* By James A. Michener. New York: Random House, 1965. ix + 909 pp. \$7.95. Ellis Rasmussen, Assistant Professor of Religious Instruction at Brigham Young University, recently authored a Sunday School manual on the Old Testament.

The title of the book is appropriate: It is the name of a certain fictional mound or tell — layers on layers of rubble left by successive inhabitants who clustered near a typical water-source in Palestine. From it the Semitic people who lived there took the name of *Makor*, meaning a "well-spring" or "source." The tale of the mound's excavation forms the narrative framework of the book. Though the tell and its story are fictional, they typify much that is true. The stratified debris and artifacts discovered at the imaginary mound are typical of real archaeological discoveries in that cradle-land which has been the source of many of our concepts, beliefs, principles, practices — and problems!

The fifteen novelettes about fifteen levels of dwellers at Makor in this rather large volume (909 pages) carry throughout the long spans between cultures one major theme: Judaism, like the layers of strata at Makor, has grown by assimilating both divine and human elements, with periodic accretions and deletions as the times demanded. Delivered now to present Jewry both in the Diaspora and in Israel, this heritage must either be wisely adapted and employed again or ignored at the peril of its heirs.

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The long history of Canaan-Israel-Palestine is well characterized, through necessarily selective, and is generally harmonious with biblical and archaeo-logical information. The reader should know, however, that the author's explanations for certain events are not necessarily the only ones. The identification of the early Hebrews with the Habiru, for example, is not the best attested scientific hypothesis concerning Hebrew beginnings — and certainly is not superior to the biblical explanation.

Moreover, Michener has not restricted himself, as an historian would, to conservative reconstructions of the life-stories of the peoples who laid down the artifacts. Sometimes fictional pseudo-history is used to typify processes by which known historical phenomena have occurred. The impact of Joktan and his clan of Habiru (with their monotheism and their moral ways) possibly resembles the impact of Abraham upon the Amorite people. The intrusion of "the old man and his God" suggests what the intrusion of Jacob and his extended family would have meant to the Canaanites. A minstrel of David's time creates songs like some of the Psalms; the prophetess Gomer utters some prophecies like those of Jeremiah and insists upon some principles of behavior like those of Ezra. All of these differ somewhat from their biblical counterparts, but by reconstructing the various conditions out of which such events could have arisen, Michener helps make the real Bible stories come alive. The engineering of Makor's tunnel to gain access to vital water when under siege plausibly suggests how the siloam tunnel of eighth century Jerusalem (Hezekiah's time) could have been constructed. Or a certain Makor rebel around 167 B.C. illustrates what the father of the famous Maccabees could have been like. The long monologue by a fictitious associate of Herod the Great helps explain the fearful tyranny of that historical terror. And the actions of an actual personage, Josephus, at fictional Makor quite satisfactorily characterizes that enigmatic Jewish "patriot" of Roman times.

These bits and snatches from Jewish history are well selected and well depicted and will be particularly illuminating to non-Jewish readers. Hints as to how the Talmud was compiled will help account for its place in Judaism. The episodes dealing with persecutions by Islam and the Christian Inquisition (although the massacres by Crusaders are somewhat oversimplified) may shed light on some motives and movements of modern Jewry and perhaps even prepare the reader to comprehend the most horrible holocaust of all at Auschwitz. Similarly, the examples of Jewish struggles to live in the Pale and in the Ghetto, the hints about the rise of Zionism, and the excellent characterizations of Israel's present immigrant populace, assembled by Zionism and moved by persecutions, all help to clarify the saga of Jewish survival through the centuries, culminating in the rise of modern Israel.

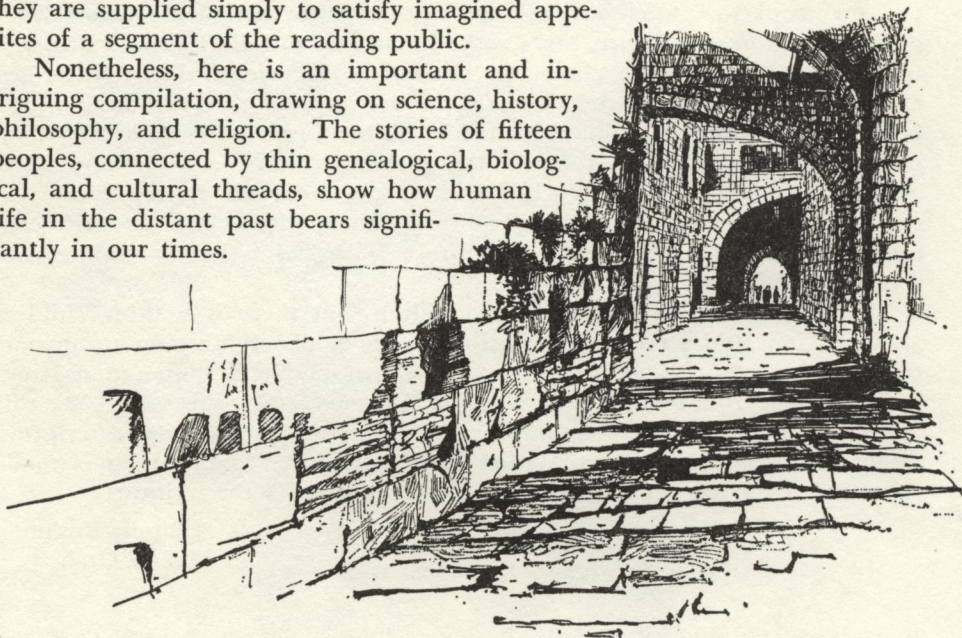
Michener's major characters, a Christian, a Moslem, and a Jew, engage in dialogue about the excavation at Makor and interact with others who are involved: a Jewish-American contributor of funds, hard-headed and practical *Kibbutzniks*, and arrogant *Sabras*. Protagonists of the "two Israels," the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, debate their positions. These encounters dramatize the reasons for the tortured British postures during the Mandate period as well as illuminating problems still plaguing Israel today. Michener merits the commendations he has received from Jewish reviewers who feel that he has done better than most Jewish writers on these same themes.

Mormon readers will be least impressed with his depiction of the rise and

development of the Judaeo-Christian religions. The interactions of various religious systems are rather well presented, and the author perceptively speculates on the origins of certain widespread nature myths, fertility cults, and their propitiatory practices. But Michener's portrayal of the rise of "revealed" religion as seen in the nature and content of the communications of "El" or "El-Shaddai" or "Jahweh" will probably repel those who know of God's revelations to Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and the Prophets. The fictitious dialogues between El and Zadock or between Jahweh and Gomer strike one as petty imitations of the revelations recorded in the Law and the Prophets, the Gospels and Epistles, or the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Perhaps the most objectionable feature to many intelligent readers will be Michener's frequent insertion of sexual-sensual scenes, with descriptions in more than sufficient detail. Some of these may be justified as conceptualizations of the fertility-cult rituals of Canaanite times which so sorely tempted, and often attracted, Israelite votaries. Others seem gratuitous and without significance as characterizations of peoples or times, and one suspects that they are supplied simply to satisfy imagined appetites of a segment of the reading public.

Nonetheless, here is an important and intriguing compilation, drawing on science, history, philosophy, and religion. The stories of fifteen peoples, connected by thin genealogical, biological, and cultural threads, show how human life in the distant past bears significantly in our times.



## SHORT NOTICES

*The Book of Mormon Story.* An Adaptation by Mary Pratt Parrish. Illustrations by Ronald Crosby. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966. 221 pp. \$6.95.

This handsome book was published in time to be placed under many Christmas trees. Hopefully since that time it has been accomplishing its single purpose — "to prepare [the reader] to read, to enjoy and to understand the Book of Mormon." In line with that aim the book has several unique and attractive features: the scriptural language of the original text remains and many scriptures have been left intact; the major characters of each of