

and later on anti-miscegenation laws. While the differences are evident, Leon is careful to draw attention to more subtle points of convergence that complicate our understanding of this contested past, and remind us of the overarching issues that brought these groups into the same arena.

The subtext behind this contest is less explicit. It appears that while the eugenicists and Catholics squared off over the subjects of eugenics and sterilization, the state loomed large in this wrestling match. Eugenicists often appeared to have the upper hand in working with the state to design eugenic laws, while Catholics, in Leon's account, resented what appeared to be an encroaching state that increasingly intervened in American lives, whether on points of secular marriages, welfare, or moral guidance regarding family life. The underlying wave of secularization brought Catholics together in defense of their place in American society. The state, which is more often an implicit player in this account, created another rallying point for Catholics, who appealed to a particular feature of Americanism that decried the paternalism of a secular state.

By paying close attention to the high-level discussions, the voices and actions of lay people—whether patients or parishioners—are largely absent. The nuances in discourse are very well established, but the local interpretations of that advice as it made its way into civil society are less clear. Did families, for instance, adopt one interpretation universally, or did they select pieces from the eugenicists and Catholics as it suited their individual circumstances?

This book addresses a considerable gap in the literature on eugenics, and provides compelling evidence to support the oft-made claim that Catholics were the primary opponents to eugenics; Leon explains why. She delves into the murky science of heredity that shifted under the weight of religion and failed to prove that disability and feeble-mindedness were indeed threatening, subhuman categories. Catholics, she shows, did not combat this view with religion alone, but engaged in the science of eugenics and joined intellectuals in their pursuit of understanding degeneracy. Only after reasoned consideration did Catholics emerge firmly against the popular wave of support for more interventionist approaches to designing families. This is not, therefore, a simple story of religion triumphing over science, but rather one of reason over unreason, and in this case, conservatism over change.

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE

A CHOSEN CALLING: Jews in Science in the Twentieth Century by Noah J. Efron. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. 149 pages. Hardcover; \$26.95. ISBN: 9781421413815.

Does a religious community's attitude toward science really matter? By illuminating the importance of science and technology for disparate Jewish communities throughout the twentieth century, Noah Efron's *A Chosen Calling: Jews in Science in the Twentieth Century* raises a number of questions that are important for anyone engaged in the science and religion conversation to consider. Why do religious communities adopt certain attitudes toward science? What might those attitudes say about the communities who hold them? How might they influence whether their members pursue scientific professions?

Efron is a historian and philosopher of science at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, a familiar commentator on Israeli politics, and an established science and religion scholar, being particularly known for writing *Judaism and Science: A Historical Introduction* in the Greenwood Guides to Science and Religion and a 2011 *Huffington Post* blog essay on the everyday meeting of science and religion. In short, although Efron is not writing about Christianity and science, he writes from a knowledgeable, unique, and valuable perspective. Those *PSCF* readers who are willing to consider how his approach and ideas might apply to the relationship between Christianity and science both globally and in particular church communities should find much to value in Efron's work.

Published as part of the Medicine, Science and Religion in Historical Context series, edited by Ronald Numbers, *A Chosen Calling* grew out of Efron's 2007 Gustave A. and Mamie W. Efroymson Memorial lectures at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. In this rather slim but well-produced volume, Efron seeks to address the disparate representation of Jews in the sciences in the twentieth century—a topic that has been debated both by ordinary Jews and intellectual luminaries as diverse as Thorstein Veblen, C. P. Snow, Norbert Wiener, Nathaniel Weyl, and George Steiner. Efron largely rejects the hypotheses of these thinkers who variously attributed Jewish success in science to such factors as outsider "skepticism towards received pieties," social structures that genetically favored breeding for scholars, and habits of thought derived from Talmudic disputation that emphasize creative

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interpretation, critique, and “the ordering of all phenomena.” None of these factors, Efron notes, explain why Jews were modestly represented in science prior to the late nineteenth century, or why most eminent Jewish scientists eschewed Talmudic study and rejected traditional Judaism for modern thought.

For Efron, the central question is not why Jews were disproportionately preeminent in twentieth-century science but rather why there was a sudden upsurge in Jewish enthusiasm for science in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Efron’s answer is that Jews flocked to science because science provided a means for nationally and culturally alienated Jews to contribute to and find a place in the modern world. Aware that such a simple thesis runs the risk of imposing an unjustified metanarrative on the historical record, Efron spends the bulk of the book showing how science provided Jews with an opportunity to find a place in their world under widely differing circumstances—liberal capitalist America, the Soviet Union, and Zionist Palestine, the three great “destinations” pursued by Jews in the twentieth century.

After introducing the importance of science for contemporary American Jews by recounting his experience visiting Kentucky’s Creation Museum with a vanload of rabbinical students and providing a brief introduction to the problem of Jews’ “ridiculously disproportionate” contributions to twentieth-century science, Efron spends each of the book’s three main chapters describing their experience in each “destination.”

Chapter one tells how American Jews held “high the torch of civilization” in twentieth-century America. The meritocracy of science opened a path for Jewish immigrants to contribute to American progress and served as the exemplar of American liberal democracy, the latter in being a sphere where Jews could participate without fear of religious discrimination and an opportunity for Jews to make America more hospitable for Jews by resisting fundamentalist attempts to impose their beliefs onto an ideally nonsectarian American public life. In short, America provided Jews with opportunities both to participate in American society and to reshape it to be even more hospitable for Jews. Chapter two discusses the prominence of Jews in Soviet science due to a combination of anti-Jewish discrimination under the tsars, the appeal and opportunities introduced by the Soviet egalitarian ideal, and the importance of science as a pathway for Jews to contribute to Soviet society. Chapter three discusses the role science and technology played in Zionist enterprise, both as a reflection of the “science equals progress” mindset of the times

and later as a way for Jews to use their modernizing of Palestine to justify their resettlement of the land in a sort of Zionist appropriation of colonialism.

So, in the end, has Efron demonstrated his thesis? Not really. Given that Efron spends the vast bulk of the book’s 104-page argument focusing on the attitudes of Jewish communities and only rarely addresses the reasons why individual Jews pursued scientific eminence, perhaps he never really intended to demonstrate his thesis in any rigorous sense. Efron seems content to lend his thesis credibility by explaining how science was viewed as important and valuable among twentieth-century Jews—a task in which he succeeds admirably.

PSCF’s readers can benefit from Efron’s insights, though they may find that applying them to issues of science and Christian faith is far from simple. Aside from the usual difficulties associated with drawing lessons from history, Efron is not writing for Christians or even a general science and religion audience. Rather, he writes primarily for fellow Jews interested in understanding their communities’ engagement with science. Moreover, since Efron justifiably considers Judaism as a cultural affiliation rather than as a devoutly held belief, the application of his insights to communities that emphasize personal faith commitments is far from clear. What, for example, are we to think about twentieth-century American Jews’ embrace of science and technology, knowing that it also represented an embrace of modernity at the expense of traditional Jewish observances and beliefs? Nevertheless, Efron has given us something valuable—the voice of an experience that, while not our own, is one we can learn from.

It should also be noted that *A Chosen Calling* has merits beyond Efron’s argument itself. Science and religion writers who put forward and critique various origins proposals could benefit from imitating Efron’s humble, gracious, and fluid style, while scholars will appreciate the extensive endnotes and index.

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NEWTON AND THE NETHERLANDS: How Isaac Newton Was Fashioned in the Dutch Republic by Eric Jorink and Ad Maas, eds. Amsterdam: Leiden University Press, 2013. 256 pages, index. Paperback; \$37.00. ISBN: 9789087281373.

A number of recent historical studies have shown that place and locality matter in the reception, discussion, rhetoric, elaboration, and circulation of scien-