

HE ALSO SPOKE AS A JEW - The Life of the Reverend James Parkes  
by Haim Chertok. Foreword by Irving Greenberg.  
Vallentine Mitchell 2006.

As with the cliché about London buses so with biographies of James Parkes: you wait ages for one and then three come along in quick succession! I have not read Rupert Everett's analysis of Parkes' thought but did read Colin Richmond's excellent *Campaigner Against Anti-Semitism* for review here (date).

Now we can add Haim Chertok's biography to the canon and it is a worthy addition indeed, both in terms of the extra material it adduces, largely from personal interviews with friends and acquaintances of Parkes, its judicious and at times extensive quotes of Parkes' words, and in its polite but not uncritical study of the man himself.

Chertok divides his book into 6 parts, reflecting the major stages of James Parkes' life: *The Matter of Guernsey, War and Its Aftermath, On the Continent, The Matter of Barley, Post-War and The Matter of Iwerne Minster*. Through the course of these stages Chertok considers the influences on Parkes of his childhood and upbringing, his military service in the trenches of the First World War, his time in Europe working with the SCM and various student bodies and then the beginning of his extraordinary life's work in defence of Jews and Judaism.

In his foreword, the pre-eminent American orthodox Rabbi and champion of interfaith dialogue, Irving Greenberg, describes Parkes as 'a remarkable human being' but also a 'flawed and paradoxical creature who rose to intellectual greatness as he fought for justice for Jews and Judaism'. The dichotomy between the two is bravely and honourably tackled by Chertok as he expresses opinions on, among other things, Parkes' sexuality, the nature of his relationship with his wife Dorothy, his sublimation of self for a worthy cause and his rage in later life at his own lack of recognition.

Chertok has done great justice to a giant of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whose work, writings and life rank as quite outstanding and who may only now be beginning to get a richly deserved recognition, within the two faiths that he served so laudably, many years after his death.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh