

part of a strong family tradition” and “much more of an inherent trait.” Or, as he later told Mickey Herskowitz: “To talk about a Bush dynasty would be an act of conceit.”

A Houston-based sportswriter and celebrity ghostwriter and biographer, Herskowitz has written a useful overview of America’s premier political family. Though not a traditional chronological biography, it focuses principally on Senator Prescott Bush (1895–1972)—father of the first President Bush and grandfather of the current one. Herskowitz credits Prescott Bush with instilling the family’s sense of noblesse oblige, “persons of privilege behaving nobly, serving unselfishly for the greater good of humanity.” Venerated by his descendants, Prescott is Herskowitz’s “founding father.”

Prescott developed properties before attaining prominence with what became the Wall Street investment banking firm of Brown Brothers Harriman. A further financial lift came from his 1921 marriage to Dorothy Walker, heir to a midwestern business later known for its flagship holding, the G.H. Walker Investment Company of St. Louis. While working and raising five children, Prescott served for decades in the town government of Greenwich, Connecticut, a training ground for his subsequent legislative career.

He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1950, but tried again two years later and was elected to serve out the balance of a deceased incumbent’s term. In Washington he proved to be a quintessential northeastern, internationalist, moderate Republican. He embraced civil rights, abhorred Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, and even, according to the author, quietly opposed a second term for Richard Nixon as Dwight Eisenhower’s vice president. Such positions put him at odds with party conservatives, and some Republican leaders opposed his bid for reelection in 1956. (His son’s presidency after 1990 provoked similar misgivings in the party, a lesson not lost on the current president.) Nonetheless, Senator Bush won reelection, served for six more years, and retired.

Herskowitz describes Prescott as central to the family’s political rise. Certainly the family’s endorsement of the book is unambiguous—the former president supplied a foreword and agreed to help promote it. The research, however, is thin, relying heavily on interviews with Bush family and friends and on a long oral his-

tory left by Prescott in 1966. For example, more intense work might have kept Herskowitz from saying merely that George H. W. Bush “gladly accepted” President Nixon’s offer of the United Nations ambassadorship in 1971. As now-public documents make clear, Bush lobbied for that appointment—Nixon had intended to make him just another White House assistant.

Though Herskowitz’s tribute to those dedicated to “duty, honor, country” pretty much confines itself to the official story, it constitutes a worthwhile guide to the world that helped create our 41st and 43rd presidents.

—HERBERT S. PARMET

PAKISTAN:

Eye of the Storm.

By Owen Bennett Jones. Yale Univ. Press. 328 pp. \$29.95

Pakistan matters, perhaps more than ever. Events have given a new urgency to a book such as this, which seeks to explain Pakistan to the general reader. Owen Bennett Jones, a BBC correspondent posted in Pakistan between 1998 and 2001, examines the nation’s tormented past and equally troubled present not in chronological fashion but through thematic chapters on Pakistani nationalism, the 1971 schism that broke the country in two and resulted in the creation of Bangladesh, the Kashmir quandary, the army, the Bomb, and the ever-present struggle between Pakistan’s civilians and military.

By carrying his account into early 2002, Bennett Jones makes the narrative relevant to today’s headlines, yet in some respects his story is already dated. Witness his opening sentence: “Pakistan is an easy place for a journalist to work.” Poor Daniel Pearl found otherwise. Or his statement that there is no evidence that Pakistan has shared nuclear secrets with North Korea. Alas, credible press reports in fall 2002 suggested that Pakistan, in exchange for Nodong missile transfers, substantially helped Pyongyang with its enriched uranium weapons program.

The storm in the book’s subtitle is not simply the one that has occurred since 9/11; Pakistan has always been turbulent. The 1947 partition of British India led to the massacre of at least a million people and triggered one of history’s largest mass migrations. The agony that accom-

panied Pakistan's birth has been followed by three or, depending on who's counting, four wars with India. No elected Pakistani government has ever completed its term of office, and no military dictator has left on his own terms. Sectarian violence, armed insurrection, ethnic and tribal animosities, secessionist movements, private armies, and a tough neighborhood have combined to fuel a profound sense of insecurity among Pakistanis.

Yet Pakistan is not a nuclear-armed rogue state, or a nation of Islamic extremists determined to destroy Western civilization. Most Pakistanis, Bennett Jones writes, have little sympathy for radical mullahs and want their country to be a moderate, tolerant, progressive state.

And what of Pervez Musharraf, the country's current military strongman? Is he a stout U.S. ally in the war against terrorism, a usurper of democracy, a liberal reformer and anticorruption crusader? Bennett Jones is not unsympathetic to the general. Musharraf, he writes, seeks to minimize the role of religion in state affairs. He is remarkably tolerant of a free and frequently adversarial press. He has a vision of a modern, liberal Pakistan.

But can he build that Pakistan? Here Bennett Jones is less sanguine. As he ruefully notes, Pakistani leaders have always been

better at declaring policies than implementing them. Two electoral events in 2002—in April, a phony referendum granting Musharraf another five years in office; in October, a rigged parliamentary vote—undercut the general's legitimacy. He has not shown a willingness to promote genuine reform if it incurs substantial political costs. The extent of his control over the country's powerful military intelligence agency is unclear. And most fundamentally, Musharraf fails to understand that the army isn't the solution to Pakistan's problem, it's part of the problem.

The West, Bennett Jones contends, has an interest in seeing Musharraf succeed. The notion of Islamic radicals with their hands on Pakistan's nuclear button is unsettling to say the least. Twice in the past 18 months, India and Pakistan have edged perilously close to war, and many experts predict new tensions as the snows melt this spring, opening the mountain passes for Pakistani infiltration into Indian-controlled Kashmir. A full-fledged war on the subcontinent could have catastrophic consequences.

The world has a stake in what happens in Pakistan. How great a stake, this book makes compellingly clear.

—ROBERT M. HATHAWAY

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

H. L. MENCKEN ON RELIGION.

Edited by S. T. Joshi. Prometheus.

330 pp. \$29

H. L. Mencken (1880–1956) was a bigoted, misanthropic elitist who ought to be sorely missed. To today's skeptics, his merciless assaults on religious belief stand as inspiration and reproach. He eschewed judiciousness. Belief in God's goodness was "evidence of an arrested intellectual development," he wrote. Creationists were simply "clodhoppers" (as were most "average" people). Evangelical churches were more interested in "getting bodies in jail" than in "saving souls." And the fundamentalist "prays as more worldly Puritans complain to the police." Of course, none of these statements was entirely true (How could Mencken have known what fundamentalists held in

their hearts when they prayed?), but his unqualified, uncensored disdain underscored the stupidity and meanness that sometimes infect popular religious movements, especially those that seek to turn sectarian preferences into law.

In *H. L. Mencken on Religion*, freelance writer S. T. Joshi has gathered an invigorating collection of magazine and newspaper columns by this gifted and incorrigible critic. They include a recounting of Mencken's own childhood brushes with religion, accounts of revival meetings, reports on the Scopes trial, and sallies against Christian Science, spiritualism, fundamentalism, Prohibition, and proselytizing (by atheists or believers), as well as his defenses of science, which often took the form of offenses against reli-