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THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF DEMOCRACY *

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A. The Mainstream of Biblical Emphases

THERE is an old saying that the devil can quote Scriptures for his own purpose. This in an oblique way of stating the truth that the Hebrew Bible is not the work of a political sect or a religious denomination, but the distillation of the experience of a people. Hence between the covers of the Bible we may expect to find every variety of opinion from the most radical to the most conservative on all the basic questions of life and thought. For this reason it has been possible for some unsympathetic students of the Bible to find some passages on the basis of which they have branded it as fundamentally reactionary and unprogressive.

Thus the author of the statement in Proverbs: "My son, fear God and the King, and meddle not with those who seek change," (Pr. 24:21) was certainly not a fellow-traveler of the revolution. The common Biblical phrase by which the king is described as "the anointed of God" (I. Sam. 24:7) has been utilized for centuries as evidence of the divine right of kings. Similarly the existence of Biblical laws regulating slavery were used by apologists until the days of the Civil War in order to justify the institution. Passages of this type led a critic like Leonard Woolf to the statement "Democracy is essentially anti-religious and anti-Christian."

Nonetheless, this conclusion is based upon an inadequate and faulty reading of the text. The Hebrew Bible, like Judaism as a whole, is a mighty river with many currents and eddies beside the main stream, and these variations must be clearly told apart, their relative importance being carefully gauged. He who reads the Bible with understanding and sympathy will recognize that the passages we have cited do not represent the main stream of thought in Biblical religion. The phrase "the anointed of God" was an old idiom by which the Hebrew thinkers of old never justified the doctrine that the king or dictator can do no wrong. On the contrary the Biblical historians and prophets were overwhelmingly convinced that the kings generally do wrong and would be punished for their iniquities.

Similarly, the regulations of slavery in the Bible make it clear, beyond a doubt, that while the Divine Legislator did not abolish slavery as such, His sympathies were against the institution. Thus, according to Exodus 21:1 pp: the service of a

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"Hebrew slave" was limited to a six year period. Recent research interprets the phrase as referring not merely to an Israelite, but to the entire migratory population of the Near-East during the second millenium, who were wont to sell themselves into bondage. Yet even the conversion of slavery into limited bond-service does not tell the full story. The Biblical condemnation of slavery reaches its apogee in the Biblical fugitive slave law. Before the Civil War, Congress adopted a law, compelling all American citizens to restore fugitive slaves fleeing from the South. But thousands of Americans violated the law, in obedience to a greater law of God—"Thou shalt not restore a fugitive slave unto his master," (Deut. 23:16).

Thus, the main current of Biblical thought and Jewish tradition is fundamentally democratic, and what is more, has helped to mould the democratic ideals of western civilization.

At the outset, it is worthy to note that the words "democracy", "politics", and "economics" are all of Greek origin, and an ancient Hebrew would not have understood any of them; yet it is equally remarkable that the basic ideals of our democracy, political, social and economic, are to be derived from the tradition of Israel, rather than from the culture of Hellas. The Greeks may have had the word for it, but the Hebrews had the substance.

B. Israel's Historic Experience a Democratic Factor.

In the Preface to his translation of Scriptures, John Wyclif stated that the Bible believes "in government of the people, by the people and for the people"—a phrase destined to echo down the centuries. So too the Puritan Fathers were standing in the authentic Hebraic tradition when they declared "Rebellion to tyrants means obedience to God". These words incidentally were proposed by Franklin, Adams and Jefferson for the Great Seal of the United States.

The reasons that made the Bible the foundation of the democratic ideal are to be sought in the historic experience of the Jewish people. There were two main factors which moulded the life and psychology of ancient Israel and gave it a unique development that has proved of fundamental significance for the world.

The first of these factors was the period of the bondage in Egypt. Every page of the Bible recalls the period of misery and suffering Israel had undergone. The Hebrew never forgot that his ancestors had been slaves, and he was taught to identify himself, in the Talmudic phrase, with the persecuted rather than the persecutors. In the psychology of the Jew a sense of sympathy with the under-dog became deeply ingrained. This spirit permeates the pages of Scripture.

Thus no less than thirty-six times the principle is laid down: "One law shall there be in thy land for the citizen and the alien within thy borders," — an ideal far from fulfillment in the twentieth century, let it be noted to our shame.

The same motivation comes into play in some of the most stirring and moving passages of Scripture: "Thou shalt not oppress the stranger, for ye know the soul of the stranger, for ye were the strangers in the land of Egypt." (Ex. 23:9) and even more "Thou shalt love him the foreigner as thyself" (Lev. 19:34). With

Divine nonchalance the Bible forbids the Hebrew to hate even the Egyptian because the Israelite had been a sojourner in his land (Deut. 23:8)! The Sabbath, with its insistence upon rest for free and slave, man and beast, was another example of how this great national memory with which the collective experience of Israel had begun, penetrated the life and institutions of ancient Israel.

A second factor which played an equally decisive role in moulding the thought and idealism of Israel was the nomadic period in Jewish history. According to tradition, the Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness. Modern scholars are disposed to believe that the period lasted much longer. Even after the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan, a considerable portion of the people remained in Eastern Trans-Jordan under nomadic conditions.

Students of American history are indebted to Professor Turner for recognition of the importance of the frontier in the development of American institutions. Similarly, Hebrew life and thought was shaped by the desert, which was both a memory of the past and a reality in the present. Doubtless it was idealized, but it was no less potent on that account.

During this nomadic period of Jewish history, there developed an interesting structure of society common to all peoples in this stage. In many respects, it was crude; in some, it was limited, but in others it possessed the seeds of a fruitful development.

The first characteristic of nomadic peoples is that they are fiercely equalitarian; they have no hierarchy of kings and rulers. Each member of the clan is on a par with his fellows — in a time of crisis, such as war, some leader will emerge because of greater sagacity or courage, but he remains at all times *primus inter pares*. When the crisis has passed and the war is over, he reverts to his previous position in the ranks. There is no hereditary monarchy or nobility to be found in the group. Decisions are reached by the assemblage of all adult males of the tribe. This primitive democratic institution, reminiscent of the New England town-meeting, *mutatis mutandis*, made all decisions of peace and war, executed judgment in civil and criminal matters, adopted laws and regulations, and was the ultimate source of authority. Its Hebrew name *edah* or *kahal*, erroneously translated "congregation" in our Bible versions, should be rendered "commonalty" or assembly".

The second characteristic of the nomadic stage is the fact that there is a virtual communal ownership of property, or at least of wealth-producing property. The flocks, for example, were not the property of an individual but belonged to the tribe as a whole. The rights to pasture lands and to wells were vested in the tribe as a unit, and private property was virtually non-existent.

Lastly, this communal ownership of property and high sense of equality was accompanied by a strong sense of mutual responsibility. The law of the tribe, then as later, is "one for all and all for one." We are familiar with the feuds which Arab tribes may maintain for centuries, begun because of an offense committed against a single member. Tribal morality in ancient times was, to be sure, limited to the members of the tribe alone. Within the tribe, however, there was a high sense of mutual responsibility, which took the form of a passion for fair and equal treatment and brooked no interference from high or low.

Now, these traits of the nomadic society, plus the recollection of the enslavement of Israelites in Egypt, were the historic memories which moulded the life and thought of the Jewish people, the effects of which are writ large in the pages of Scripture.

As a matter of fact, however, these two factors alone never would have sufficed to produce the unique heritage of Israel. All ancient peoples have passed from the nomadic to the agricultural and urban stages, but the ideals of the nomadic period have disappeared, leaving scarcely a trace behind. Normally, too, a nation, like an individual, would strive to forget, rather than emphasize a lowly past, and strive to invent an exalted origin instead. We know that the ancestors of the Nazis were by no means the blonde supermen of Aryan pseudo-science, but were, on the contrary, like all the ancestors of the human race, savages who lived in terror of a fearsome environment. To forget the unpleasant is a deeply rooted human characteristic.

C. The Prophetic Viewpoint on Social Ethics.

That the Jewish people did not forget their bondage in Egypt, and were constantly reminded of the ideals of the desert period was due to the emergence of a group of men without parallel in the history of mankind. It was the Hebrew Prophets who, at every turn, reminded the Jewish people in a more advanced economic and social stage of their development, of the simpler yet nobler ideals that had prevailed in earlier days.

The Hebrew Prophets of Israel were not nostalgic advocates of a bygone past. Israel had those too in the semi-monastic orders of the Nazarites and the Rechabites. The Prophets operated with the past, creatively; that is to say, they retained those elements of the past that were vital, its sense of equality and justice. They rejected those elements that were of purely external character, and hence of no real consequence, like the long hair and abstinence from wine, characteristic of the Nazarites, or the dwelling in tents practiced by the Rechabites. Above all, they deepened such nomadic ideals as family morality beyond the physical to include love and loyalty and extended the ethics of the tribe to include the nation. For them, the tribes did not exist, only the people of Israel, worshipping one God, and the division of the Two Kingdoms was a major crime nationally and religiously. Nor did their expanding loyalties halt at the frontier. Their patriotism went beyond the nation to include the entire human race. Thus the Prophets were the creators of Jewish nationalism on the one hand, and the concept of world citizenship on the other. All too often, it has not been understood that these two aspects of their thought, far from being contradictory, complement and reinforce each other.

If these three unique factors are understood, we shall be in position to recognize why the Jewish people were able to exert so profound an influence upon the concept of democracy. Obviously it is not the forms of democracy that come into consideration, for the Bible is two thousand years old and more. What the Judea-Christian tradition was able to do was to mould the ideals of men, so that when the objective political and social conditions made political democracy possible, men were able to accommodate it to their world-view, which had grown up almost unconsciously in the centuries.

It is important to remember that the Prophets, as legislators, historians and poets of Israel were not interested in political, social and economic questions, *per se*. Their entire outlook and contribution to democracy stems out of their faith in God as the Creator of the Universe and the Father of Mankind. Since all men are God's children, they had an equal right to share in the blessings of the world, "for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). The equality of men demands justice for all.

Since man is created in God's image, and even the lowliest of men has a spark of the Divine, there is an imperishable spirit in man, who for all his pettiness and weakness "has been made little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:6). The dignity of man demands freedom for all.

Justice and freedom were thus God's will for his children and the inevitable goal of history. For the Prophets, the unbroken succession of events was all a part of a divine process, the Author of which was God, Who was utilizing evil to destroy evil and usher in the good.

D. Aspects of Democracy Revealed in the Bible.

Human history, therefore, was not a tableau but a drama, nothing static, but on the contrary, dynamic. It was filled with change and movement, ultimately to flower in the creation of the Kingdom of God. This vision of the Kingdom of God that the Prophets had before them, supplied them with a standard of judgment by which they could, on the one hand, criticize the weaknesses and sins of their own society, and on the other hand, enumerate the ideals of the just society of the future. A few of the contributions of Biblical Judaism to the development of the democratic concept may now be indicated. Aside from the primitive democratic political institutions already mentioned, there is a strong and unmistakable undercurrent of opposition to monarchical rule in the Bible. When the Israelites asked the Prophet Samuel for a King, they wanted to be "like all the nations", but the Prophet delivered to them an impassioned attack upon royalty, in which he described the price that they would pay for the doubtful luxury of a monarch. (I. Sam. chap. 8). When, nevertheless, the monarchy was instituted because of the need for a strong central government, it should be noted that in Israel, and in Israel alone, there was no such thing as absolutism in government; the monarchy remained strongly limited in its powers. This is clear from the legal restriction upon the king laid down in the Torah (Deut. 17:14-20). Nor was it merely a matter of theory, as the record shows. Perhaps the most "wicked" king of Israel was Ahab, who had married the Phoenician princess Jezebel. Ahab coveted a vineyard adjoining his estate and belonging to a farmer named Naboth. His wife, Jezebel, was accustomed in her home country to regard the king's will as law. If the monarch wanted something, he had merely to take it by force. But even this, Ahab was unable to do. He offered to buy it and the peasant refusing to sell, Ahab sulked like a frustrated boy. Jezebel came to the rescue, but even she had to respect the framework of Justice. She had to concoct a false charge and have Naboth tried on perjured testimony, and only then could the king confiscate the property. The incident of David and Uriah, whose wife the king coveted, aside from its deep human interest, is another illustration of the fact that in ancient Israel there was no

absolute power that the king could invoke. The monarchy in Israel never became absolute as it did virtually everywhere else throughout the world.

The heart of a democracy, as our age has discovered to its cost, does not reside in the ballot box. The great dictators of our day have been past masters of the art of the plebiscite and the election booth. The essence of Democracy is two-fold — the power of the majority to execute its will and the right of the minority to maintain and express its point of view in the face of a dominant and hostile majority. It has not been noted adequately what a signal contribution Biblical thought makes to the doctrine of freedom of speech and the right to dissent. The Prophets of Israel were the great dissenters of all time. They were feared and hated and maligned, they were imprisoned and exiled, but they never were silenced. This was true of Amos, whom the priest Amaziah expelled from Bethel, of Isaiah, who opposed the political alliances with Egypt or Assyria, and denounced the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and the consequent impoverishment of the many, of Micah, who castigated the political and religious leadership of his day for its corruption, of Jeremiah, who announced the doom of the state. The twenty-sixth chapter of Jeremiah is particularly instructive for it contains the record of the prophet's trial for treason. During the proceedings, the example of his predecessor Micah is invoked by the defense as proof of the Prophet's right to declare the truth as he sees it without fear or favor.

There were examples of lynch law when a mob would override the law and murder a prophet (Jer. 26:20), but the right of a Prophet of Israel to proclaim the truth was never shaken. The right to dissent is a basic contribution which the world owes these intrepid defenders of the right.

There are other fundamental aspects of democracy that go back to ancient Israel. We Americans are justly proud of the ideal of universal, compulsory education. It is, however, a matter of historical record, that the first system of compulsory education for all the male population was established in ancient Israel two thousand years ago at about the beginning of the common era. Yet long before that period, the emphasis upon education, the bedrock of democracy is to be noted in ancient Israel. The evidence appears quite accidentally, and therefore all the more credibly. In the early period of the Judges, the Bible tells that Gideon decided to take vengeance of the town of Succot. He picked up a boy, who wrote down for him the names of the leading citizens. (Judg. 8:14). In this primitive age, an urchin on the street was able to write, an indication of a relatively high degree of literacy in ancient Israel.

The great affirmation of faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God; the Lord is one. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy heart and with all thy might." The text is followed immediately by the injunction to teach the children. No other commandment has exerted a greater influence on the lives of Jews. To it is to be attributed the democratic character of the Jewish religion, which knows no fixed creed, or infallible authority, and which in the Talmud possesses the world's greatest monument to controversy and independent thought. What came to fruition in the post-Biblical age, has its origin in the Biblical insistence upon freedom resting on a foundation of knowledge, the two indispensable elements of true democracy.

These aspects of democracy, which could be extended in countless directions, do not exhaust the contribution of Judaism to democracy. It is a truism that democracy is at the cross roads. Upon its future hangs the hope of mankind. The problem facing the free nations of the world today is not merely the retention of the external forms of democracy, but rather the deepening of its spirit and the broadening of its character to include other areas beyond that of politics alone. Here the Bible and the vital elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition which derive from it, can offer both direction and inspiration to the modern age. First and foremost is the unfailing insistence upon social justice, which is to be found on virtually every page of the Prophets. This imperative has never been voiced with equal vigor or passion since their day. They opposed the exploitation of the people by the few. They left for us unforgettable pictures of luxury and corruption contrasted by poverty and want. They flayed the corruption in government, the degeneracy of religion and the decay of morality. Most important than all, the Prophets based their cry for justice, not only on the principle of class hatred, raising one group against the other, but rather on their conviction that this was the law of God. The Prophets were aware that an unjust society does violence to the exploiters as well as to the exploited, for they were sensitive to the injury done to the spirit of the former, no less than to the damage wrought upon the body of the latter.

Time and again the Hebrew Prophets emphasized that the great law of the universe was justice. In the words of Isaiah: "The Lord of Hosts is exalted through righteousness." The establishment of justice is a religious obligation because the physical and mental welfare of men is the prerequisite for their spiritual and moral well-being.

E. The Torah as a Safeguard for Social Democracy.

Yet the great and glowing utterances of the Prophets, are, strange as it may seem, regarded in Judaism as secondary to the Law, to the Five Books of Moses. In this respect, Judaism has manifested penetrating judgment. For greater than the enunciation of abstract ideals, is the effort to realize them in life. This the Torah sought to do through the first system of social legislation of which we have record. Consider, for example, the status of labor. Throughout the ancient world, virtually all laborers, barring a few craftsmen and day-workers, were slaves. It required a bloody Civil War as little as eighty years ago to free America from the curse of human bondage. In ancient times, slavery was regarded as the permanent bed-rock of the economic system. Thus Plato, in his "Republic", in which he looks forward to the ideal future of society, regarded both slavery and war as inevitable and includes both a slave class and army which would keep the "barbarians" perpetually at bay. So too, Aristotle, has a reasoned defense of slavery. Because he believes that the fullest development of man requires leisure, Aristotle justifies the slavery of the many, to provide the leisure for the few. The enslavement of the greater portion of the Greek people was the unsavory basis of the brilliant society of the "Golden Age" of Greek culture.

The approach of the Bible to the problem of slavery was poles apart. Moses would probably have agreed with Aristotle that leisure is important to the full un-

folding of the human personality. On this promise Aristotle condoned slavery, but Moses established the Sabbath. Through this institution, which Sir William Osler called the greatest Jewish contribution to civilization, every human being, whatever his rank and society, might have one day in seven when he would be free from the exigencies of toil and thus be able to fulfill his higher nature.

We have seen how the entire institution of Hebrew slavery was virtually abolished in Israel by limiting service to a six year period. There were countless other safeguards for the safety and human dignity of the slave, culminating in the Fugitive Slave Law, which forbade the Israelites to restore a slave that had escaped. Thus, the Bible made its contribution to the doctrine that all men have an inalienable right to freedom.

As in so many other instances, this attitude was carried further and deepens in post-Biblical Judaism. According to the Bible, if the slave, at the end of the six-year period, refuses to go free, he was brought to the gate of the city and there his ear was bored through. The great sage, Jonahan ben Zakkai, who lived in the first century of the Common Era, explains this peculiar form of branding the following terms: According to Jewish traditions, all the unborn generations of Israel stood at the foot of Sinai and took a vow of allegiance to the Torah. Hence, this slave too, was a party to the pact and his ears had heard God proclaim: "Unto Me shall the children of Israel be slaves, not slaves unto slaves." Since, in spite of Divine proclamation, he is prepared to accept human bondage, he deserves to have his ear bored through as a punishment.

The attitude toward property is equally interesting. The Bible does not advocate the abolition of private property, but it recognizes that wealth is not the possession of the individual, but rather a trust bestowed by God, who is the true owner. To translate this attitude into life, specific forms of legislation came into being. In order to overcome the dangers of monopoly, the Bible establishes the institution of the Sabbatical year of release. Every seventh year all debts were deemed cancelled, thus preventing the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few (Deut. 15:1 ff.)

The Bible goes even further in establishing the far-reaching provision for the Jubilee Year. Every fifty years, all property which had been sold during the intervening period, reverted to its original owner, who had doubtless been compelled to part with his land because of ill-health or other reverses.

In order to justify this remarkable law, the Bible lays down a doctrine of far-reaching implications even today. "The earth shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine and ye are strangers and sojourners with Me" (Lev. 25:23). The land, therefore, remains the property of God.

This principle is emphasized in the related provision that the earth must be left fallow on the seventh year (Lev. 25:1 ff). This was more than a means of replenishing the vigor of the soil, a purpose achieved today by the rotation of crops and the adding of nitrates. The seventh year was "a Sabbath unto the Lord", when the farmer might not harvest whatever grew, but leave it for the poor. By "the year of Sabbath", the true owner of the soil, who was God, was periodically asserting His title.

These ancient ideals have come back to life in Jewish Palestine. The Jewish National Fund is the land-purchasing agency of the Jewish people. It purchases, at inflated prices, incidentally, every inch of land the Jewish settlements occupy and then offers the Arabs, who sell the land voluntarily, other land elsewhere, if they wish to remain on the soil.

The J.N.F. then leases the land on forty-nine year terms to settlers, who must work the land themselves and cannot sub-let it to others. Not only is exploitation thus prevented, but speculation is ruled out, since the land remains the inalienable property of the Jewish people. Hundreds of settlements have been established on J.N.F. land, in which the principle of free, voluntary cooperation have replaced the competitive drive of our economic order. Thus the ancient Biblical ideals of social justice are being realized in the reestablishment of the life of the Jewish people in its homeland.

The social legislation of ancient Israel was concerned with poverty, which, as the Bible warned us, we always have with us. Welfare legislation is part of any just and forward-looking society. The Bible lays down the duty of help to the indigent, not as an act of benevolence, or condescending grace, out of the goodness of the heart. The Hebrew word for "charity" is *Zedakah*, which means "righteousness". Helping the unfortunate is simply an obligation which falls upon us, and is a direct consequence of the recognition that our more fortunate position does not give us absolute ownership, only a trusteeship over our possessions, which we must share with our fellow-men. No religion has created a richer system of philanthropy through the ages than Judaism. Biblical law, however, did not content itself with urging the practice of charity. It established a system of poor relief through taxation. A farmer was commanded to leave unharvested a corner of his field which belonged to the poor, as did sheaves that were forgotten on the land. As we have noted, on the seventh year, when crops were not sown, whatever grew on the land also belonged to the poor as of right and not as of charity.

An exaggeration often highlights a truth. The Talmud tells that in a certain town, the charity overseers were approached by a man who asked for help, and some money was given him. A day or two later, the Charity overseers decided to visit their ward. To their indignation they found him seated at a table, eating a fowl and washing it down with wine. They were scandalized by his squandering the money he had received; but the beggar was not the slightest bit embarrassed. When they remonstrated with him he calmly pointed his finger to heaven and said: "Am I eating what belongs to you? I am eating what belongs to Him", and he went on eating.

These and other aspects of the social legislation of ancient Israel are of more than historical interest. In extending the frontiers of democracy to the social and economic sphere, our age may draw inspiration from the prophetic ideals and guidance from Pentateuchal legislation, which attempted on the one hand to minimize poverty and prevent it, and on the other, to relieve those who fell into need.

F. *Democracy in World-wide Perspective.*

If democracy is to survive in the twentieth century, it must go beyond the borders of one land or region. It must become world-wide. That great truth was also recognized by the ancient Prophets. Not only were they the first to set forth the ideal of world peace, but they also indicated the techniques for achieving it — a contribution which has been overlooked, in spite of, or perhaps because of the familiarity of the passages in Isaiah and Micah. The great obstacle to world peace today lies in exaggerated nationalism. This tendency has reached the peak of degradation and the apex of power in Fascism and Nazism and plunged the world into the most horrible blood-bath in history. The post-war world has by no means escaped the threat of aggressive nationalism. Revolted by this spectacle, many idealistic and sensitive men have tried to find refuge in a kind of cosmopolitanism which will wipe out national differences. They often advocate all men speaking one language (usually their own), one system of government, one world state, and one religion, if any. In spite of its superficial appeal, such a program is both impossible of realization and unworthy of achievement. Such internationalism is not practical because the entire history of the human race shows an ever greater group differentiation among men. At the end of the first World War, the Versailles Treaty created a dozen new nationalities in Europe. The Soviet Union has stimulated scores of peoples within its borders to national self-awareness. Throughout the Orient today, the emergence of nationalism is taking place among the Colonial peoples. Therefore, there is no evidence in the world that nationalism is growing weaker, and the goal of eliminating it, therefore, must be regarded as an illusion that would be dangerous.

Even if it could take place, it would be a grave set-back for human culture. Lincoln once said: "God must love the poor; he made so many of them." Similarly, God must love variety, because new species are always emerging. If there is anything that nature seems to obhor, besides a vacuum, it is monotony in type variations, tradition and culture. How colorless human culture would be without Hebrew Prophecy, Greek and English drama, Italian music, German poetry. All these elements of world culture fulfill the dictum of Santayana, "A man must stand with his feet firmly planted in his own country, but his eyes must survey the world."

This is the tragic dilemma to be resolved? On the one hand, aggressive nationalism may well destroy the human race. On the other hand, it shows no sign of abating in intensity, and if it did, the human race would pay for its physical safety by spiritual drabness and monotony.

The Prophets of Israel point to a way out. They looked forward, not to the elimination of nations, but to the moralization of their relationships. In the famous Vision of Peace in Isaiah, ch. 2 and Micah ch. 4, where the hope is held out that men would beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, it has not been noted that the words "peoples" and "nations" occur six times in four verses. It is the nations that "shall go and say: 'Come, let us ascend to the mountains of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of the Lord from Judaism.'"

For the Prophets, national loyalty would endure, but with it would come the recognition of the moral law, rooted in God, beyond what men are pleased to call "national sovereignty". A little-known passage in the Book of Isaiah illustrates the grandeur of the prophetic conception of history and their lively sense of the value of national loyalties. The Prophet Isaiah lived at a time when his little country was being ground between two millstones, the Assyrian Empire in the east and Egypt in the west, wrestling for world supremacy. Yet the Prophet, who loved his people passionately, was able to rise to the plane of vision and look forward to the future day. On that day there would be a highway linking Egypt and Assyria in a bond of peaceful intercourse, both dedicated to the service of the Living God, with Israel the third member in the family of nations. On that day God would bless the people saying, "Blessed is my people, Egypt, and the work of My hands, Assyria, and Mine inheritance, Israel" (Isa. 19:23-25).

The Prophets looked forward to the day when, purged of its militarism and greed, nationalism would become an enriching factor in human life. In this direction, as in so many others, the Prophets indicate the path which mankind must follow, if it is to conserve the values of the past and build an even more glorious future.

G. The Bible and the New State of Israel

This brief survey has attempted, all too inadequately, to present some of the Biblical contributions toward democracy. Whatever lives, grows, and political democracy, the Prophets would have insisted, must expand to include social justice. So too, they were keenly aware that there can be no freedom in one corner of the world unless it prevail everywhere.

One aspect, the historic contribution of the Bible to the democracy remains to be noted. These ideals did not originate in a vacuum. They were not the lucubrations of philosophers in an ivory tower or the dreams of poets. "All the prophets prophesied either in Eretz Yisrael or for its sake." These Hebraic ideals emerged out of the problems and struggles of national life upon the national soil. Palestine was the solid reality underlying the search for principles and solutions.

What was true of the Biblical contribution to democracy in the past applies to the expanding frontiers of democracy in the future, without which it cannot survive. Here, also, mere abstract formulations will lack the power to fire men's hearts and inspire them to action. The Biblical quest for social justice within the framework of freedom and voluntary cooperation is today the heartbeat in the life of the Yishuv in Palestine. In Bialik's fine utterance, there can be no more heaven above our heads than we have ground beneath our feet. The firm establishment of the State of Israel will represent the fulfillment of the unconquerable hope and desperate need of the Jewish people for security and honor. But it will be even more. It may well prove an indispensable prelude to the triumph of the ideals of democracy the world over.

For beyond all else, the most precious gift of the Prophets for our frightened and confused age lies in their unconquerable faith in the future of mankind. To modify slightly the words of Lincoln, in whom the spirit of the Bible lived anew, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. The world cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect that it will cease to be divided."



A HISTORY OF CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

IV. *Schechter's Selected Emphases*

By HERBERT PARZEN

However the principal effort of the Seminary was directed towards influencing the mass of immigrants from Eastern Europe whose members were continuously growing and, physically at least, had already become the preponderant portion of American Jewry. It must be recalled that, in my opinion, one of the primary motives in the reorganization of the Seminary was the creation of an agency to bring to bear American or Western influences on the life of the newcomers. From its standpoint these people presented a singular problem. It had little to do with theology, or religion for that matter; it was concerned with aesthetics, with language, with methods of study. The Seminary hoped to bring to their attention its methodology and technique in the form of thoroughness and attention to detail in study and research. It wished to influence them immediately and directly. In a word, it sought to dissolve the parochialism which encrusted their cultural patterns; it sought to hasten the shedding of the ghetto character and substitute broader vistas of learning and life.

I think that it is worth while even today, to see the picture of the immigrant community as Dr. Schechter painted it in his Inaugral Address: "Each train of arriving immigrants has brought its own idiosyncracies and peculiarities, its own ritual and ceremonies, and its own dogmas and dogmatisms, all of which are struggling for existence and perpetuation, thus converting the New World into a multitude of Old Worlds . . . New York alone could furnish us with an epitome of all the Judaisms or 'Richtungen', scattered all over the world, ranging from the precisionism and mysticism of the Far East to the advanced radicalism of the Far West, in addition to the shadowy no-Judaisms hovering on the borderland."⁷¹

The Seminary, in the words of its revered builder, "in the midst of these Judaisms and no-Judaisms", was intended to serve as "a theological centre which should be all things to all men, reconciling all parties, and appealing to all sections of the community . . . this school should never become partisan ground or a hotbed of

⁷¹ Ibid p.10.