



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
155

Box
55

Folder
464

The decline of the individual, 1934.

415
THE DECLINE OF THE INDIVIDUAL
What is Happening to the Individual in this Age of Machines and
Dictators?

By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple
On
Sunday morning, November 28, 1934.

Historically, my friends, man begins his career as an indistinguishable member of a group of a tribe which is very strongly coordinated, which is very closely knit together. The individual counts for very little in that system of human organization. It is only after mankind develops and enters the higher ranges of civilization that the individual man becomes differentiated on the basis of his rights, that the individual man gains^a certain amount of freedom of thought and action.

It may therefore be said that the trend of civilization is in the direction of greater and greater individualization of the members of society. At times this tendency, so-called human tendency runs to an extreme. Especially in eras of decadence we find that the group as a whole is frequently victimized by excessive individualism, by a sort of anarchism. The individual becomes entirely an end in itself. That, of course, marks the decadence of social organization. And so the pendulum frequently swings in human history between excessive individualism and excessive group control and the golden mean where individualism and group responsibility meet are really very seldom reached.

In the 19th century the individual enjoyed a golden period of freedom and the 19th century marked the development industrialism, of private capitalism and the beginning of the rapid development of what we call our machine age. The private capitalist, the intrepren^eur, the industrialist, wanted the very least state of government interference in his economic enterprises. He wanted freedom of action. And so, in the 19th century the State was gradually pushed into the background as a dominant factor in the control of an individual's life. The State was more and more restricted to its political sphere. Man developed a whole set of democratic institutions,

of constitutional rights which protected the individual against the encroachment of the State upon his inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The individual, by means of these charters of rights, of these democratic institutions could check the aggression of the State. But they could not go on without it sooner or later becoming apparent that these rights which the individual possessed were frequently exploited -- free competition, for example, in business. But it also meant, in many instances, the survival of the unscrupulous. The weaker was victimized by the stronger and to the extent that society was forced to step in to correct these abuses.

In the 19th century a movement to strengthen the social gospel, to emphasize the rights of community as a whole as against the unrestricted rights of the individual was stressed. It became apparent that while the individual possessed certain rights, yet in almost every instance a small minority gained control of government and exploited it. And so there developed during the last century a movement to increase State power, to delimit to a degree the unconfined privileges of the individual.

There was another factor which tended to sharply delimit the rights of the individual -- the complication of our industrial life brought about by the development of the machine, the large scale manufacturing units, industrial units and production units in which the individual was merely a cog in a wheel -- not only the laborer, but the business man and the manufacturer as well.

He had become inevitably, and very often not as a matter of choice, a member of an organization whose policies he frequently had absolutely no control over. He was part of a huge impersonal majority organization.

In many instances the individual could not compete with a huge corporate organization, and of course the laborer could not. It was no longer a case where an individual workingman bartered with an individual employer. The individual became insignificant and less important as an individual.

The machine brought about a division of labor. In the olden days a man did a complete piece of work. Today the workingman does a section, a fraction of an item. In other words, his own part in a production unit is dependent upon other people. He doesn't complete a job. To that extent, too, the individual has declined.

And then came something more. Recently, in our own age, the unrestricted competition in business broke down. We saw it break down in the last depression. Industry and business as well as labor had to run to the governments of the world for aid and succor. The unemployed workingman had to turn to his government for relief to keep both body and soul together. Banks, railroads, and huge corporations and even small business had to turn to the government to salvage them and to keep them from utter collapse... (from minimum government control to a maximum government control).

In fact government, today, is more and more concerned with economics than with political matters. Don't you see that when government steps in it begins to take control? Government steps in at first tentatively and then ultimately permanently, and as government takes control, the rights of the individual as a business man or a laboring man are ultimately sharply confined and sharply circumscribed. The initiative, to a large extent, is carried over to the group and is no longer in the control of the individual. That is why you have dictatorships today.

Whether in Russia, Italy, Germany or in other parts of the world, people have turned to government to help them in their economic life and government is therefore stepping in everywhere and assuming control of the rights of the individual. That is Communism, Naziism, Fascism. And regardless of their objectives, they have this one thing in common.

They all insist upon a maximum State control and a minimum of individual rights. They all have destroyed constitutional rights. They all have taken away the charter of human liberties from the individual. They all scoff at democracy and liberty. This is all a product of the 19th century industrialism. They all want to develop an authority of the State at the expense of the individual. Mussolini, quite frankly said: "Here as in Russia, we are endeavoring to develop a maximum State control and we intend to do that at the expense of the individual." Therefore, the individual has greatly declined.

There are spiritual advantages under collectivism. Every great religion has preached charity, cooperative commonwealths. Every great historic religion has taught man to look for the significance of his own life in the service of the group, by linking our destinies with some social ideal, with some community enterprise. In fact a religion like Christianity in its early days was avowedly communistic in design and structure and all the monastic orders which have developed out of that religion are collectivist groups, communistic groups, if you will, derived from this great social postulate of this religion.

We have in our own Judaism numerous legislation touching on land tenure and sale, legislation concerning the Jubilee year, /to keep the individual

from being victimized and in the same way to keep the group from being exploited by the powerful individual. There is much to be said for the collective life.

The danger lies, of course, in the excessive zeal on the part of the State in its over-reaching which leads to a complete subjugation of the individual, like all forms of excess. And our experience in the last fifteen years have clearly given men ample ground to feel what will happen to the individual if the society and the State continue to make encroachments upon the freedom and control of the individual.

Of this you may say that this is only a passing phase. This is only temporary, that it is necessary at this moment to have State dictatorship so that the greatest good may ultimately come to the greatest number of people....

Dictatorship has to feed upon itself to survive. It has to increase its power all the time. It never steps out of the way to make room for democracy. While it is in power, regardless of its ultimate objectives, it ruins individualism. All thought is regimented. Education becomes a matter of propaganda. Every writer becomes a functionary of State. Even religion, as in the case of Germany, is made a prime agency for the pretensions and the dogmas of the State. One of the leaders of the Berlin section of the German Christians, Dr. Krause, declared that the Nazi State imposes the totality of God." If, so, there is nothing more to be said. Then every church, every pulpit of the State must be an adjunct for the Nazi State and every opposing view becomes profane and sacreligious. The right of the individual to quest for himself, which we have always regarded as sacred, as the most essential defense of human

progress, the rights of the individual to seek, to exploit, to quest in the realms of thought -- that right the State does not and cannot claim.

This new State absolutism is unfortunately growing all over the world. It is more dangerous than the old churches of the middle ages. Even then there was another power which sort of balanced the authority of the State. The church frequently challenged the State. They checked and counter-checked themselves. But today, the power of the church in these absolutist governments have been reduced to a minimum and against the power of the State, the individual has no recourse. The individual has declined and is declining definitely.

And then, too, this newer nationalism ^{which} has swept over the world has helped to make the individual, the workman small. There is a nationalism which is beautiful, which is quite as human and as instinctive as one's love of home, one's love of father and mother, one's love of one's own fireside. That kind of nationalism doesn't require any propaganda. But this newer nationalism, it makes a mockery of this instinctive true love of country. This newer type which is now riding the Western world is a sort of nationalism which puts the individual under the option of those who control the policies of the governments. And usually governments are being controlled by a cabal of industrialists, of financiers, bankers and munition makers. This newer kind of nationalism which is being pledged has an option upon the lives and fortunes of every member of a nation.

On the basis of the mandates of this newer nationalism, the individual is bound hand and foot and delivered over to the drill sergeant. This

disgraceful strategy is today victimizing the whole youth of the world. Instead of young people here and elsewhere being impressed with the idea of human solidarity, of inter-dependence of all nations, he is being taught first of all that he is an Italian, a Frenchman, a Russian, a German and secondly that he is a member of a human system of humanity. Modern nationalism is ghettotizing the individual. Instead of the individual becoming cosmopolitanized he is becoming provincialized. And so the individual is declining into a narrowly ghettotized provincial.

The idea that a man could at one and the same time be a citizen of the whole world and of his country -- that today is the blackest heresy. One dare not repeat it.

A man is being made still further small by this newer racialism which is captivating the imagination of so many groups in the world today. Racialism sets up a new criterion, a new prerequisite for human equality. A man's claim to recognition can no longer be made on the basis of his worth, his character, his achievements, upon his own initiative. His claim to recognition must now be based on hereditary fatalism, over which no man has any control. Man is made small in such a world, and helpless.

Lastly, one other thing which has contributed to the decline of the individual -- that has been science itself. In the 19th century when science made rapid strides, the idea was prevalent that science would make all men happy and prosperous, that it would bring about Kingdom Come. So there is a prevalent optimism in the world today based on scientific progress. In our own day science has led to disillusionment. In the first place science has not brought about the Kingdom Come. It has led some people to a fatalistic view of life, to the contradiction that man has any

significance in the universe, that there is any relation at all between human striving and the purpose of life. Man has been made small and insignificant in this material conception of the world which they believe science has made necessary.

First they lost faith in faith. Then they began to lose faith in intellectualism and faith in the whole worth of human life. And when you read "The Modern Temples" by Joseph Ward Krutch, you will find that the last stages of this line of reasoning which so many of this generation have been subjected to leads from the materialistic philosophy to cynicism and to ultimate pessimism and defeatism. His book is a sort of lament on human destiny. "Ours is a lost cause and there is no place for us in the material world."

What is the answer to all this? Why it seems to me that the answer to this problem of the decline of the individual in the modern world lies simply in a strong and courageous reassertion on the part of the individual who believes in individualism, of the great dogmas which have sustained life in the past and which alone can sustain life in the future. Such men who believe the danger lies in State control of human affairs, must insist on their human rights. Areas exempt from State control today must insist that the individual is first and foremost a man, that he has relationships and other obligations to other men other than those to his country. There is his own world. There is his own inner microcosm. All those, the State has no right to. The individual must not permit himself to be hoodwinked and beguiled by the State. The State comes to the man, denies him his right of free speech, his liberty, with promises of achieving Kingdom Come within a few short years. That is what

Hitler, Mussolini and Lenin said. Sacrifice democracy, sacrifice liberty, and we will give you your heart's desire in no time. The wise individual will not permit himself to be beguiled by such propaganda.

Liberalism, my friends, is more concerned with methods than with ends. That is an important thing to bear in mind. It is how we attain our program. That is quite as important as the goal, the paradise, the utopia. We have never realized perfection, never within the life of a man. What man does experience is the mechanics, the methods, the means to approximating that ideal. If the methods are those of fairness, democracy, peace, freedom, if they make for happiness in human life, the goal may someday be approximated. But if the means are those of suppression, brutality, bloodshed and intolerance, then the goal will never be reached. The individual must fight desperately in this age for his rights. We must reassert the great dogma of the 19th century, of the 18th century -- that a man is a citizen of the world and we must not permit this ingrown racialism to become the cursed heritage of our people.

And as far as science making the individual small is concerned, there is only one answer to that, my friends. We must simply set about substituting for the habit unfaith, the habit of faith. It is only a matter of the lenses which you put over your eyes. If you put on dark lenses the world which you will see will be dark and oppressive and your energies will be stultified and you will be on your way to death and decline and hopelessness.

If, on the other hand, you put on lenses which are clear, you will see joy, and happiness and hope in the world and you will be on the way to life, in the intellectual world as well as in the normal world.

We must teach these postulates, these unquestioning dogmas to our children, that there is a purpose in the world, that the life of the human individual is important , that his personality is significant. "A man was created in the image of God." That is a postulate, a dogma in the very beginning of our sacred literature. These are the dogmas which we must rediscover in the future and where science can help us not at all. It can neither confirm or contradict. It is our will which can make us significant, and important and noble in the world.



The Hell-Brew in Germany

Flaming Words on a Flaming Theme

by G. K. CHESTERTON

Abridged from the HERALD-TRIBUNE MAGAZINE (N.Y.)

As a man may say, as a scientific fact, that there is in northern China a well of petroleum, we say that there is in northern Europe a fountain of poison.

It is a fact and it continues to flow. It is rather obviously nonsense to call it Germany. It is not really satisfactory even to call it Prussia. It is much more satisfactory simply to call it Pride.

It is a thing of the spirit. It is not a nation; it is a heresy. It is an ideal outside the European ideal; outside what most of us would call the normal human ideal. It is something alien to Europe which Europe cannot digest and did not destroy.

It is difficult to find a word for it, for all the right words were used in the wrong way by the mere propaganda of the war. Any rich newspaper proprietor could describe the Prussians as barbarians; but it was not enlightening, because he was a barbarian himself and a bounder as well.

The nearest definition I know is this: The civilized man is one who recognizes the strange and irritating fact that something exists besides

himself. What Jefferson called with his fine restraint "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind;" what any Christian will call the conscience of man as a witness to the justice of God—that, in one form or another, does everywhere affect civilized people. An agnostic may hesitate about giving it the name of God. An American may hesitate about giving it the name of the League of Nations. But, in one way or another, that is the test: That the man does not think his dignity lowered by admitting a general law, though it may go against him.

Now we thought and think and are now a thousand times confirmed in thinking that there does really lie to the northeast between us and the Christian state of Poland a real independent source or spring of the opposite spirit. It is not only something that praises itself; it is something that needs no praise except its own.

A Frenchman is proud of France. But a Prussian is not proud of Prussia; he is simply proud because he is a Prussian. He is not proud, like a French crusader, of what his country has done for Christendom.

He is not proud, like a French revolutionist, of what his country has done for humanity. He is simply proud of himself and his sort, and would be equally proud of their wrecking Christendom or enslaving

humanity.

This is the problem of Prussia: that something unbaptized and barbaric remains among the nations. That is the problem of the last loud and hysterical outbreak in Germany.



General Johnson's Cuss Words

Abridged from the NEW REPUBLIC

ONE trouble about the General is that he not only talks too much, but what he says is neither balanced nor wise.

It is partly due to the psychological make-up of the man and partly to the highly organized ballyhoo upon which the N.R.A. has so largely and obviously depended. Perhaps it was necessary, but, in the judgment of most men here, it has been considerably overdone.

To some extent the resentment against the N.R.A. is due to the

belligerency of its director.

A realization of this, one would have thought, might have led him to allay the resentment by a more conciliatory and reasonable method of address. Such was the advice given the General by some of his closest personal friends. So far from taking this advice, the General has continued even more belligerently than before. The net result, I am reliably informed, is that Mr. Johnson has only succeeded in intensifying the personal hostility toward himself.



THE DECLINE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

To the Oberlin Public Affairs Society
October 3, 1934

The problem of the one and the many, of the individual and society, is one of the most fundamental and continuing problems in human thought. How to insure the fullest expression of the individual without disrupting society, and how to co-ordinate personal freedom with group responsibility,---that has been the major problem of sociology. The pendulum has, throughout the ages, swung between the extremes of unlimited individualism and absolute social control, between the exaltation of the individual and his submergence.

Man begins historically as an indistinguishable member of a strongly co-ordinated community. He develops into greater freedom of thought and action as the life of the community moves into the higher ranges of civilization. In eras of decadence, individualism degenerates into anarchic subjectivism, turns anti-social and actually tends to destroy the individual.

There are epochs when the social gospel must be stressed, because individual privilege has been allowed to exploit the group. This has been true of our times when the masses which possess considerable formal political and economic freedom, do in actual practice enjoy very little of either. They are in large measure dependent upon political organizations and economic arrangements in the control of a minority which systematically exploits them. There are other times when the essential rights of the individual must be championed in the face of a dangerous encroachment of group tyranny.

Professor Eucken, in his essay "Society and the Individual" called attention forcibly to "the anti-individualistic influence of the tremendous accession of strength which has fallen to the part of the state in the course of the 19th century. This accession has been due for the most part to economic complications in the face of which every merely individual effort has seemed hopeless...The increasing complication, the technical development of civilization, demands a closer correlation of the separate forces and more organization of the whole, and therefore calls for a guiding centre. (Today we call it central planning)....Thus the visible power of the state and the invisible power of society are united against the independence of the individual"....

If that judgment of Professor Eucken held good when it was written in the days before the World War, how much more pertinent and re-enforced is it today, with state and class dictatorship riding in triumph through two thirds of the civilized world.

The post war era has been dominated by the idea of state corporateness to a far greater degree than the one which preceded it. The power and authority of the state have been augmented even in those countries where no dictatorship has been established. "The tremendous accession of strength which has fallen to the part of the state in the 19th century" is nothing in comparison to the accession of strength, control, and authority which has fallen to the part of the state since the beginning of the third decade of the 20th century.

The 19th century witnessed the triumph of bourgeois society which sought to delimit as far as possible the powers and functions of the State and to extend and establish the rights of the individual. The development of private capitalism in the 19th century necessitated and achieved a large measure of freedom for the individual and a sharply circumscribed corporate control. The 20th century is witnessing the final collapse of this system of unrestricted competitive individualism.

Everywhere the state is stepping in to check the power and authority of the individual. The democratic apparatus which middle-class individualism created to safeguard its rights is being pushed aside or discarded. Bolshevism, Fascism, and Nazism have this one thing in common:---they are all champions of maximum state authority. The state, they claim, must have absolute dictatorial power over the whole life of man. The individual has no inalienable rights---no areas forever exempted from group control and interference. Mussolini declared: "Here, as in Russia, we are advocates of the collective significance of life, and we wish to develop this at the cost of individualism".

There are spiritual advantages to a doctrine of collectivism as against the doctrine of private exploitation and careerism which characterized our passing civilization. Both Judaism and Christianity always doctrinally subordinated the private ambitions of the individual to the well-being of society as a whole. The highest good was the social good. Man was taught to discover the real significance of his own life in enterprises which contributed to the upbuilding of the perfect society. Primitive Christianity was actually communistic in its social structure and so were the monastic brotherhoods which derived from it. The whole purpose of the Mosaic Jubilee legislation, touching land tenure and sale, as well as the whole tenor of the social message of the prophets of Israel, was to discourage the exploitation of the individual at the expense of the group.

Neither Judaism nor Christianity has therefore anything to fear from the spread of the doctrine of the socialized community and the collective life which is likely to dominate the New Era. All spiritual movements of mankind had this ideal at the core of their inspiration. The peaceful, neighborly, cooperative life has been the goal of all the weary marches of civilization. All religious education has been directed towards training men to think less in terms of personal career and success and more in terms of co-worker in a common social enterprise. Life is again vindicating classic religious ethics, in that the cooperative commonwealth is actually coming to be, and in the future it will go hard with the lone wolf, the predatory exploiter, the anti-social omniverous man.

The danger lies in the excessive zeal and over-reaching on the part of the state which may lead to the complete subjugation of the individual and which in time may prove fatal to his spiritual life. Our experience of the last decade and a half in different parts of the world with experiments in the corporate society, in Communism, in State Socialism, in State Capitalism, or in the corporative state, has given men ground for fear that the individual is being sacrificed in the process of economic and political coordination.

Whether the suppression of the individual is only a necessary incident in the transition from one social order to another and freer social order or whether together with dictatorship it will become a permanent feature of the new social order is for the present a matter of conjecture. But for the time being at least it is alarming to behold in the lands where the corporate ideal of the state has made the greatest headway the total conscription of the individual in the service of the autocratic state. All thought is regimented. Education becomes propaganda. Every writer becomes a functionary of the state. Attempts are made, as in Germany, to make even the church an adjunct and a propaganda agency for the political state, a mouthpiece for its dogmas and pretensions. The right of the individual to quest for himself in the fields of the mind and the spirit are denied. A new orthodoxy has been enthroned. It is now proclaimed that absolute truth as regards social ethics, government and economics, even private morality, has already been revealed. It is in the safekeeping of a minority political group---a new priestly hierarchy. The individual must accept the dogma of the regime, unquestioningly and submissively or he is anathema. This new state absolutism, backed by its vast punitive power is far more dangerous than the old and now discredited absolutism of the church. The latter was frequently held in check by the secular arm of government. At least the secular and the ecclesiastical attenuated each other's powers. But with the decline in the political power of the church, and the ascendancy of the absolute authoritarian State, the individual is at the complete mercy of the latter, without recourse and without refuge.

It is quite possible that in the New Era organized religion will have to assume the role of the sole surviving champion of the rights of the individual. This necessity the Christian church in Germany has already been faced with, but for the time being, at least, the German Evangelical church has succumbed to the totalitarian state. It has been coordinated. The point of view of Dr. Krause, ganleiter of the Berlin section of the German Christians has won the day. "National Socialists must not be judged from a Biblical standpoint; it is the Bible and the Church which must be judged from a Nazi standpoint. The Nazi state embodies the totality of God".

In the face of the amazing pretensions of the state, it behooves all religious disciples to insist that man possesses certain rights over which the state, however noble its purposes and however exalted its program, has no power whatsoever. There are sovereign rights which are man's by virtue of his humanity and not by virtue of his citizenship in a given political group. Man has other relationships and other obligations than those to his country. There is the whole of mankind. There is the universe as a whole. There is his own inner spiritual microcosm. There is God.

The New Era is being ushered in by way of dictatorships. Whether they are passing or permanent it is impossible to say. It is well to remember, however, that dictatorships do not of themselves and as a matter of course pass over into democracies. They do not liquidate themselves. These dictatorships, wherever established, have so far been characterized by their utter ruthlessness. This is true both of capitalistic dictatorships, and of communistic. The latter in its revolutionary zeal to attain quickly the good life actually sacrifices all the values which men have always identified with the good life. We have entered an age of sanctified ruthlessness and exalted brutality. But even more dangerous than the terrible toll of victims of physical violence is the tragic toll of victims of the spiritual and intellectual violence. Men are driven into terrified silence. Conformity is prescribed. Men dare not dissent. All opposition, all parties, all dissenting opinion in press, pulpit, classroom, platform and book is stamped out. That this is fatal to man's spiritual life is easily apparent. It tends to dry up the well-springs of man's spiritual creativeness. It destroys the soil and roots of his moral growth. When man is not allowed to stand alone, to dissent from the majority, to proclaim the truth which has been born in him through his own soul's travail, his spiritual life is destroyed. Revelations never come to groups. At best, to quote Pestalozzi, the collective existence of our race can only civilize us; it cannot cultivate us. There were schools of prophets in ancient Israel, but they were merely monitors of ancient superstitions. It was only after the individual separated himself from the school and the group and pursued his own solitary quest of truth that prophecy discovered its authentic voice and mood.

The New Era may thus burden the church and synagogue with another task--- to save man from the dark heresy of sanctified ruthlessness and brutality at the behest of a new politico-economic Messianism and to safeguard man's spiritual and intellectual freedom in a world constricted by the encompassing wall of dictatorship.

Side by side with the doctrine of the absolute, totalitarian state, runs the doctrine of competitive nationalism and intolerant racialism, both of which victimize the individual. There is a nationalism which is as instinctive as one's love of home and family and friends. It requires no artificial indoctrination and no propaganda. It is neither exclusive, intolerant nor militant. It is not a cunning tool in the hands of economic imperialism. But the western world is harrassed and ridden today by a nationalism which makes a mockery of this simple, wholesome patriotism and employs it as a blind for shameless exploitation. The love of one's country is put under option by those who control the policies of government. A cabal of industrialists, financiers, bankers and munition makers prescribes what the government shall do,---and the individual, bound hand and foot before hand by the mandates of this newer nationalism, is delivered over to the drill sergeant. The youth of the world is being stampeded today into group intolerance and arrogant provincialism and into the shambles of another war by this disgraceful strategy. The individual seems helpless in the face of this cunningly stimulated mob-patriotism. The universal ideal which fired the imagin-

ation of the best minds of Europe in the 18th and early 19th centuries,---the idea of a federated world wherein a man at one and the same time could be a citizen of his country and a citizen of the world---the ideal which enlarged man's estate and set him free for a spiritual career beyond the narrow boundaries of his own land---this ideal, so thoroughly Christian and so thoroughly Jewish---has been pushed out of men's minds by the command of a restrictive, truculent and arrogant nationalism. Internationalism, today, in many lands is blackest heresy. The youth of the world is being taught to think not in terms of international human solidarity, but in terms of exclusive, aggressive and jealous national loyalties. One is first and foremost a German, a Frenchman, an Italian, a Pole, and only secondarily and not always necessarily a son of man, a child of God. Modern nationalism has unquestionably ghettoized the individual and confined him to a little corner in a fragmentized and disintegrated world.

In some parts of the world, nationalism is still further being narrowed by the concept of race. Nation has been made synonymous with race. Only those belonging to the racial stock of the dominant majority are recognized as citizens. All others are disfranchised and politically, economically and socially degraded. This has been particularly true in Nazi Germany where race idolatry has run riot to a point where all human virtues have been subordinated to it. Hitler declared, in one of his recent outbursts, "I prefer a German deserter to a Jewish hero".....

It is clear that in a state where race becomes the criterion and prerequisite for rights and preferment, the individual is sacrificed. It is no longer a matter of personal character or ability, but of hereditary fatalism. One's claim to equality can no longer be based upon a shared human destiny or upon worth or merit, but upon a factor which is beyond the individual's control,---ancestry.

Unfortunately, pseudo-scientific propaganda for racial imperialism is widespread in the world today. The doctrine of racial superiority was used as a cover for the vicious motives of the last war. It has always been a blind for economic imperialism. The people in the South used it as an excuse for exploiting the colored man and for denying him his elementary human rights and his legitimate opportunities. The white man's burden becomes the black man's curse, and the brown man's and the yellow man's.

It has again been invoked in present day Germany, as a camouflage for economic reaction, which is defending itself with such desperation, as inflammable propaganda material for the purposes of political incitement and stampede in order to achieve certain objectives which calm reason would fail to achieve, and as compensation for all the rights and liberties which a Fascist dictatorship takes away from the citizens.

Some peoples which have a large element of mysticism in their make-up are particularly addicted to race idolatry. Mysticism is at bottom religious romanticism and romanticism is essentially an historic throw-back, a hankering after older forms of social life and organization, a retroversion to herd mores, folkways and myths, to what is thought to be the protoplasmic racial soul. A hundred years ago Heinrich Heine called attention to this recurrent manifestation of mysticism among the German people. In Nazism, the German mass is again manifesting these strong mystic, primitivist and collectivist tendencies. Race has again surged to the forefront of popular obsession and the cosmopolitan spirit of Lessing, Herder, Schiller, Goethe and Kant is, for the time being, homeless in Germany.

It is not necessary for me at this time to point out the fallacies of this economically motivated race propaganda---this artificial division of mankind into "Herreursasse" and "Untermenschen". There is, of course, no pure race in the world. The story of racial fusions which have gone on every where in historic and pre-historic times has been sufficiently attested by anthropology and archaeology, and is sufficiently convincing to everyone but the propagandist who has an axe to grind. And there are no superior races. There are no races endowed by nature

with superior qualities of mind and character. There are races more favored with circumstances, by environment, by geographical position, by the fertility of the soil, or by the treasures underneath the soil. There are advanced races and backward races. There are differences between races but no biologic gradations. And no race has a monopoly upon genius or creative capacity.

Dr. Paul Radin in his recent work, "The Racial Myth", wisely remarks: "In terms of a generation, we may, at times, get the impression that ability is confined to a specific corner of the earth and to specific peoples. When the time unit, however, is lengthened to two generations, doubt begins to arise; and when it is further lengthened to a century, our initial impression proves to be completely incorrect. Then it is born in upon us that Europe is an indivisible cultural unit; that race, nationality, language and religion, and social status are secondary. The Catholic agnostic Laplace is found side by side with the Protestant agnostic Kant, and the devout Protestant sectarian Faraday with the devout Catholic Pasteur; the history of the theory of relativity passes in continuous procession from the Russian Lobatchewsky to the Hungarian Bolyai, the German Riemann, the Russian Jew Minkowsky, the the South German Jew Einstein; wireless telegraphy begins experimentally with the Englishman Faraday, is given mathematical expression by the Scotchman Clerk Maxwell, proved experimentally by the German Jew Hertz, and obtains practical application by the Italian Marconi."

Racial conceits and pretensions are ripe in the world today and as long as these race mythologies and blood cults persist so long will the individual as such be disadvantaged and world unity will remain, as heretofore, an unrealized dream.

There is far more race idolatry in the world today than ever before in the history of mankind. There was no color line in antiquity. The Greeks were conscious of their cultural superiority but they did not attribute it to biology. They claimed excellency on the basis of their civilization, not their blood. The Romans were splendid racial cosmopolites. Roman citizenship was not restricted to any one racial group within the far-flung empire. Roman citizenship which at first was the privilege of only the few who lived in Rome was soon extended to the limits of the empire and under Caracalla it was universalized throughout the vast empire. The Jew was proud not of his race but of his religion, and the proselyte to the faith was welcomed into the life of the race. The Jews regarded themselves as the chosen people not because of their racial traits but because of having been selected to be the servants of Jahweh to carry His moral law to the world. They were a covenanted people, a kingdom not of supermen but of priests...Their prophets kept them from excessive pride by reminding them:

"Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me
"O children of Israel? saith the Lord.
"Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt
"And the Philistine from Caphtor
"And Aram from Kir?"

Yahweh was the God of all nations. Israel's prerogative lay only in arduous moral and religious pioneering. When that ceased, when Israel no longer wished to bear the burden of religious leadership, it knew itself to be rejected of God.

The Jew refused to inter-marry not on the ground that the resultant racial admixture would produce an inferior type, less gifted artists, scientists, or musicians. There was but one reason throughout the ages: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other Gods". The Jew persisted in racial uniqueness in order to preserve the integrity of his faith. The heathen who was a scholar was held in far higher repute by the rabbis than an ignorant High Priest who could trace his descent from Aaron himself.

In its highest ethical ranges, the law of Israel drew no line of distinction between native and foreigner. "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you. And thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt".

Christianity, of course, took over the prophetic, universalistic concept from Judaism, emphasized it, enlarged upon it, and carried it to the far corners of the earth. "The God that made the world and all nations therein, he, being Lord of Heaven and earth.....made of one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth". The organic racial oneness of the whole human family is nowhere in the Bible more clearly and forcibly enunciated. And again: For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him". The entire concept of race which is fatalistic and exclusive is subordinated to the concept of faith which is volitional and all-inclusive. "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise". (Gal. 3.29).

It is therefore no accident that Nazi racialists have been led to a repudiation of both the Old and the New Testaments and are invoking anew the dethroned tribal Gods of primitive, heathen Germany. And it is no accident either that the great Christian leaders of present day Germany have clearly seen the menace in atavistic Nazi racialism to the spirit and mission of their historic faith and are so strenuously resisting it.

The Middle Ages knew very little of that racial chauvinism which is so rampant in our day. There was no talk of race purity in the Middle Ages. It was with the rise of nationalism and of colonial imperialism among the Northwestern European peoples, particularly during the last century, and the consequent exploitation of the backward races that the necessity arose for some ideologic justification of such exploitation. It soon appeared in the form of pseudo-scientific theories of race superiority. These theories gained prestige and popularity as the European peoples proceeded to conquer, subject and despoil backward peoples. Some apologists even employed High Church terminology such as "Bearing the White Man's Burden" to savor the miserable mess of imperialistic pottage, by means of which European peoples robbed other races of their birthright of freedom. And, again, the "White Man's burden" became the black man's curse and the brown man's and the yellow man's.

Modern nationalism has fallen under the blight of this race idolatry, particularly among a people like the Germans who are not empire-builders and therefore politically provincial and among whom national unity is a quite recent achievement and hence still a matter of hallelujah. The novel doctrine is now being loudly proclaimed that a nation must be racially homogenous and every national within the state who can not trace his ancestry back to the racial stock of the majority is an alien and an intruder. Racial minorities are almost everywhere disadvantaged in the modern state and so are, of course, all the individual members of such racial minorities.

Racial imperialism like religious imperialism is a stumbling block in the way of man's freedom and progress. What is required in our day is not superheated race apologetics but a generous way of life which will give each race and to all men regardless of race, the opportunity to live their own life, to express their own soul and to contribute their unique values to the commonalty of human life. Our age needs a form of good will which will not only tolerate racial and cultural differences but which will gladly use them for the enrichment of life.

There are people who would like to acquire good will through assimilation. They know that intolerance, in the last analysis, is due to the existence of differences---racial differences, cultural differences. They would therefore do away with intolerance by obliterating these differences. But that is paying too high a price! The thing gained is less than the thing surrendered.

I like to be on the best of terms with my neighbor. I invite his friendship even as I proffer mine---but only on one condition: that he respect my individuality even as I respect his. He must take me for what I am even as I take him for what he is, not for what each of us would like the other one to be. I am what I am. I am ready to acknowledge that my neighbor has the same right to retain his individuality and his racial and cultural distinctiveness. It is on the basis of such contrasts which are not conflicts that I would build a real comradeship of free men and good works.

There are some very high-minded men in our country who rightfully would resent any charge of racial intolerance, who nevertheless by their fond hankering after an American social and cultural unification, a sort of American "gleichschaltung" are unconsciously contributing to that very intolerance which they would repudiate. They are opposed to the existence of various social groups, based largely upon racial identity, in American society. They assume that there must be only one social group in America, and one thorough-going cultural totalitarianism. They regard all distinctive cultural groups in America as socially baneful. The Jewish community for example is sometimes criticised by these people, who clearly are not anti-Semitic, for its separatism, its solidarity and its refusal to assimilate.

To which the spokesmen of the Jewish group would reply that cultural uniformity is not a prerequisite of American democratic society or of any other democratic society, that such uniformity is not intrinsically preferable and that cooperation and good will in common national tasks are possible in spite of the existence of differences.

When it is claimed that if the Jew would surrender everything except his "personal religious views", the anti-Semitic disease would disappear and all would be well with him, these spokesmen reply that the German Jew for decades practised this very theory of assimilation. They tried in all ways not to be different. Their group consciousness had dwindled to a vanishing point. And yet, such is the patent bankruptcy of this whole thesis, the most virulent anti-Semitism developed in Germany, and in place of a self-willed "difference", a legal, prescriptive, and discriminating "difference" was forced upon them as a mark of shame. Even non-Aryan Christian clergymen who certainly never suffered from excessive Jewish group-consciousness have been "differentiated" and stigmatized in the land of classic Jewish assimilation.

"Social unity" or "cultural unity" is just as dangerous a slogan to raise in modern society as "racial unity". Too many noble ideals of mankind are being broken on the wheel of totalitarian obsessions in the world today for liberal churchmen, lay or cleric, who value individualism and exalt personality to permit themselves to become champions of "unification" crusades in American life.

What is needed in the world today is not race or religious imperialism, or mystic yearning after cultural or social reform and unification, after the monolithic society which crushes the individual, but the courageous reassertion of that liberal, generous, tolerant view of life which our present unhappy age has so tragically lost, but to which it will have to return if life is to be livable, and if men and minorities are to be saved from the tyranny of the mass and the curse of regimentation. If we men of faith are to remain faithful to the classic ideals of our religions we must set about rekindling the light of the ideal of one Humanity of free men within an economic system which will permit true freedom, and we must redirect the aspirations of men towards it. Then the questions of state and race and nationalism will assume their proper place of secondary importance in human life, and mutual adjustments will then be made far more simply and naturally than is possible today. The lost perspective will have been restored.

Classic religion has sought both to humble man and to exalt him. In order to check his pride, ^{+ conceit} and correct his overreaching ambition - qualities which are disruptive of moral sanity; religion has at all times reminded man that he is fashioned out, the dust and ^{most} will return unto the dust, ~~and~~ that his years are spent as a tale that is told and ^{that} all their strength is but labor and sorrow. Even in the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, ^{not to speak of material things} man should not exalt; "for in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow". The poor in spirit - there is the kingdom of heaven. The meek - they shall inherit the earth.

On the other hand, religion wished to give man confidence in the widest of his mortal limitations, confidence and a sense of greatness. It did not wish to man to feel puny and insignificant - for that too is destructive of a moral tone of living. Unless man ^{is conscious} ~~has~~ a sense of ^{his} worth and dignity and something of splendor in his life, there will be little of moral ^{up-}reaching in his days. Hence to the plaint "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" comes the rejoinder: "Thou hast made him but a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet." - It is true that man is fashioned out, the dust, ~~but~~ the ground, but it is also true that God fashioned man in His own image, in the image of God created ~~the~~ him."

And, taken by and large, it is as the basis of ^{freedom, confidence & self-respect} ~~free confidence~~ that religion has set to build the structure of the moral life. Hence, we believe, religion is vitally interested in all social, political and economic phenomena and movements, because, their ^{possible} ~~possible~~ ^{adverse} reactions upon these qualities which it regards as ^{basic} ~~essential~~ to the moral life of man.

One of the most fundamental and continuing problems of civilization has been the problem, the one and the many, the individual and society. How to insure the fullest self-expression, the individual

without disrupting society. How to coordinate personal freedom with group responsibility? The pendulum, through the ages, has swung all the way from the extreme of unrestricted individualism to that of absolute group control, from the exaltation of the individual to his submergence.

Man begins historically - He develops - In eras of decadence ind. degenerates into anarchic selfishness. From anti-social and actually tends to destroy the individual.

In the last few centuries, in the Western world, there have been great revol. movements which have def. enlarged the estate of the ind. - ~~and~~ The Ren. paved the way for his intell. emancipation ^{from the thralldom of dogma and tradition}. Man rediscovered the autonomy, his reasoning mind. The Prot. Refor. emancipated a spiritual emancipation from the thralldom of religious uniformity and dogmatic church authoritarianism. Man rediscovered within himself the main springs of spiritual sanction and authority. The Fr. Revol. established the unalienable rights, the ind. as against the rights of State & Church. The Ind. Rev. and the cap. dev. of the 18 and 19 C. called for and achieved a sharp limitation in the power of the publ. state, and an unrestricted econ. field for the ind.

But much has occurred in the last 2 ^{post-war} decades in the Western world which seems to point to the decline, the end and the sharp circumscription of his rights and privileges. The apparent break-down of the system of manufacturing comp. ind., in the econ. field has been responsible for state encroachment in many fields hitherto reserved for the ind. When bus. and ind. wanted little or no govt. aid - state enterprises and

(4) It is a Nat. which underestimates the power of the world with the distrust of the neighbor across the frontier, and with the idea of the mental. ^{best of us.}

(5) Putting youth in order in America - & teaching them to want war by war -

(6) It is a Nat. which is provincializing - restricting - ghettoizing -

(7) A Nat. which is making him small.

Racism

In our country - and is still far from overcome by concepts race.

It is clear that in a state when race becomes -

It is no longer - hereditary patriotism

One is gilded up to against his will, to the destiny of a group - a mass - & is no longer master of his own destiny -

Conclusion

Reassertion of the great principle which was at heart of great human movement, ~~the~~ W. world - Renewal. Prot. Ref. - Fr. Revol.

(1) State - areas.

Hard-mouthed by accident - Means - Ends - liberals

(2) Nationalism - Man is just Man! Citizen, World!
- Resurgence 11/11/18-1918 -

(3) Racism - Are we not all brethren -
God who
- Adam -

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL
ROAD AND E. 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 18, 1934

THE DECLINE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Whether the suppression of the individual is only a necessary incident in the transition from one social order to another and freer social order, or whether together with dictatorship it will become a permanent feature of the new social order, is for the present a matter of conjecture. But for the time being at least it is alarming to behold in the lands where the corporate ideal of the state has made the greatest headway, the total conscription of the individual in the service of the autocratic state. All thought is regimented. Education becomes propaganda. Every writer becomes a functionary of the state. Attempts are made, as in Germany, to make even the church an adjunct and a propaganda agency for the political state, a mouth-piece for its dogmas and pretensions. The right of the individual to quest for himself in the fields of the mind and the spirit is denied. A new orthodoxy has been enthroned. It is now proclaimed that absolute truth as regards social ethics, government and economics, even private morality, has already been revealed. It is in the safekeeping of a minority political group--a new priestly hierarchy. The individual must accept the dogma of the regime, unquestioningly and submissively, or he is anathema. This new state absolutism, backed by its vast punitive power, is far more dangerous than the old and now discredited absolutism of the church. The latter was frequently held in check by the secular arm of government. At least the secular and the ecclesiastical attenuated each other's powers. But with the decline of the political power of the church, and the ascendancy of the absolute authoritarian state, the individual is at the complete mercy of the latter, without recourse and without refuge.

In the face of the amazing pretensions of the state, it behooves all religious disciples to insist that man possesses certain rights over which the state, however noble its purposes and however exalted its program, has no power whatsoever. There

are sovereign rights which are man's by virtue of his humanity and not by virtue of his citizenship in a given political group. Man has other relationships and other obligations than those to his country. There is the whole of mankind. There is the universe as a whole. There is his own inner spiritual microcosm. There is God.

