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The bigot in our midst, 1944.

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THE BIGOT IN OUR MIDST

Is America threatened by racial and religious bigotry? Is anti-Semitism on the increase? How shall we protect ourselves against bigotry?

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, November 19, 1944

....In our Bible Jacob and Esau, these two brothers are prototypes, two types of civilization, two ways of life. Esau was the hunter, the man who used life, as the hunter seeks the hunted. He was the primordial man, the hairy man, the enemy. Jacob was the man of pride, the man who seeks to perfect himself in life. Jacob is the man who dwells peacefully in the tenets of work and study. He is the friend.

These two became the types of two cultures -- two types of nations, one type of nation who seeks to build the city of blood, builds its life on the pride of blood, the type of nation which lives by the sword, whose hand was against everyone and everyone's hand was against it -- the Esau nation, the sower of hate, discord -- that the nation of reckless military adventurers, national egoism, of insolent racism, a nation of racial or religious bigots -- that is the Esau type.

The other type is the type who seeks to build the city of justice, a pride of common kinship in God and of the spiritual nobility in all men. That is the type of nation that seeks to live in cooperation, in friendly intercourse, in mutual helpfulness with other nations. The Jacob complex -- the sower of the good seed of friendship, kindness, compassion.

And there is eternal battle between these two irreconcilable types of men, cultural civilizations -- eternal battle. War shifts the pattern from one side to the other. Sometimes one side scores, and sometimes the other scores. When the Esau type scores, mankind is set back, the world is filled with tyranny, brutality, chains, torture chambers. When the other side scores, mankind advances along the ways of freedom, justice and peace. Fortunately when the battle shifts one scores a victory. The sum total is a steady even slow gain over the Esau type of culture. That was already prophesied in this portion of the Scriptures which tells of the birth of these two brothers. "And one nation, one type shall conquer, the other the more primitive, the more primordial shall be subdued by the younger, the more advanced, more modern type."

In our own day, unfortunately, the primitive man has scored very heavily. The Esau complex has come to dominate the world in a terrifying degree. Hitlerism is just a new name. Fascism is just a new name for Esauism. They are the modern hairy men, the club men out of the jungle, and they almost succeeded in conquering the world. They filled the world, these jungle men with their fearful snarls, with their terrorism, hate, tooth and claw. They mangled human spirit, they drenched the world in blood. They showed no pity on any women, children or civilians. The Esau complex scored many a bloody victory in the last decade or two in the modern world.

But fortunately his progress has been halted, was able to be stopped. Esau today is wallowing in his own blood. He is cornered. He is wounded. He is gasping out his dying gasp. The prophecy of old is being fulfilled. "The primitive, the blood man is being mastered and subdued again by the indomitable, progressive, moral civilized Jacob complex."

But while the Esau nations -- Nazi Germany, Japan are being beaten down into defeat and surrender, the Esau blood of bigots, of prejudices and the hate breeding of and scheming/demagogues who sow racial and religious hatred in our midst -- that Esau blood is busily active on the scene. While our soldiers are fighting and dying to destroy Hitlerism, these home front types of Hitlerism and Esauism are sowing their dragon seeds in our own native country. There has been a great increase on the American scene. When the war broke, at the outset of the war, these bigots were driven under cover. Many of them scurried to safety. The hand of the law had begun to reach out for them. Many of them were spies, enemy agents, saboteurs. The government succeeded in breaking up many spy rings. Many were sent to jail. Many of them fled from the country. Their poisonous publications folded up. As the years of war lengthened, as the American people became more and more engrossed in the prosecution of the war, some of these have come out of their hidden corners. They have resumed their activities on the American scene. They are a little more circumspect, although they are becoming again bolder and bolder. They are carrying on

their poisonous campaigns as of old through whispering campaigns, but nevertheless quite effectively. Most of them are of course Germans, foreign born Germans, native born Germans. Most of them are Bundists, Nazi sympathizers, and leaders. Their leaders are the same people who carried on Nazi propaganda in the United States before we entered the war, cunningly, ruthlessly trained in all the artifices and tactics of propaganda. They are still here today. They are still active, still directing bigotry, to dim the war effort, to bring about such conditions as exists in Germany. It is this hideous curse that gives leadership of direction to all anti-Semitic campaigns in the United States. It is from them that these slanders originate, slander which seems to pop up from one part of the country to the other, slander which is quite deliberately planned, organized by these same people who are spreading a network of the most skillful and ruthless pro-Nazi propaganda. They draw in others of course, native bigots, former Coghlinites, frontists, Mothers of America, conscious or unconscious stooges to do their dirty work.

War, my good friends, is a ~~great~~ time of tension, great worry for people, great irritation. No people is ever happy in war time. These shrewd and cunning and trained Nazi propagandists -- they work on the American scene most effectively. They are out to capitalize upon this irritation, worry, tension in the life of the American people, and seek to offer an outlet for all this pent up feeling of dissatisfaction, unhappiness in the direction of anti-Semitism.

These tensions which exist today are likely to persist in the years after the war, perhaps are likely to increase in the years following the war, for the process of demobilization, reconversion, will be difficult. Returning veterans are not likely to adjust easily to civilian life. There will be much friction, much tensness in American life after the war, and that period will be a veritable field day for every Jew-baiter. And if there should set in a long period of depression, economic misery, after this war, which we all hope will not come about, the very stability of our friendly processes may be endangered, and anti-Semitism will increase in inverse ratio to the prosperity of the country.

A writer on the subject of the bigot in our midst calls attention to the increase of all forms of intolerance in our country in recent years. He makes this observation: "Drawing our evidence chiefly from published and unpublished public opinion polls, we may estimate roughly that one-fifth of our people are implacable Anglophobes; five to ten percent are violently anti-Semitic, while perhaps forty-five percent more are mildly bigoted in the same direction. At least forty percent express prejudice against the Negro. The numbers that are anti-Catholic, anti-Russian, anti-labor, anti-Protestant vary, but in all cases the proportion is fairly high."

Now, one need not go into the causes ^{and} ~~of~~ the psychology on bigotry. Many books have been written on the subject, and the increase in the number of books on the subject is a sad commentary on what is happening in the life of the American people. All this literature makes interesting if morbid reading, but it all does not get you very far. We know, for example, that men and nations always seek for some scapegoat to blame for their misfortunes and that minorities are the most ready scapegoats, and the Jews the most ready to serve as the scapegoat. We know that people have a tendency, individuals and groups and nations, to project all others in their own sense of guilt. A very penetrating truth of Goethe is frequently quoted in this connection: "We never feel so free from blame as when we expatiate on our own faults in other people." We know that there is a general tendency on the part of people to generalize, to blame the group for omission or commission of the individual instead of judging every man by his own acts and on the basis of his own conduct. We know that many anti-Semites, as Neitzsche pointed out long ago are worsted adventurers, unsuccessful business men, bankrupt journalists, hysterical women, the ignorant and envious.

But knowing all that, does it make the problem of bigotry any more simple? The bigot is never persuaded by logic or reason. You can tell him all these facts. He is already judging. It is doubtful if you can change any man who is prejudiced. The bigot when he is not actually an agent of a foreign government, when he is not a political adventurer hoping to fish in troubles, hoping to advance his political

by catering to prejudices in groups or classes, when he is not one or the other of these things he is just sick in sould and mind, more or less paranoic, psychotic. Ther are very few adult anti-Semities who have ever been converted.

The value of organizaction, literature, to spread good will in our country is to protect the fair-minded against having his mind drugged, against being debauched by this cunning conspiracy whereby the mind is being attacked by lying half-truths of one kind or another. The most fruitful field of propaganda is the field of childhood. Children are not born prejudiced. They are trained to prejudice. Race prejudice once implanted, is very difficult to eradicate. Most men get their prejudices before they are thirteen, fourteen, fifteen years old, before they reach adolescence. They get it in the home, in school, in the street, from their elders from adults, even if not from the spoken word. Frequently parents, consciously or unconsciously implant prejudices in the minds of their children which render their children emotionally unfit to participate in the friendly fellowship of a democratic society.

One of the serious factors in the whole situation is that it is the struggle between capital and labor which is ~~xxxx~~ sharpening this bigotry in our world. It is out of this struggle, big organized capital and big organized labor that Nazism, Fascism are born. Reactionary forces in Italy, Germany, elsewhere seized upon it and exploited it as a devisive and destructive force in their country in order to destroy democratic government were threatening their privileges. They seized upon anti-Semitism as a way of discrediting liberalism, socialism, discrediting anything they didn't like or feared. They seized upon racism, chauvenism, social reform they believe which/would ~~destroy imperialism~~ do them, the privileged classes great good. So these reactionary forces fill their quiver with all sorts of prejudices, particularly anti-Jewish bigotry in the world.

In our own country, the same struggle may lead to the employment of the same technique. We are not immune in our country to anti-Semitism. It may be seized upon some day by big business as a weapon against organized labor, against anything they

would like to see corrupted or destroyed.

Certain American big business men are already using that quite effectively. It was used in the recent campaign by certain forces. This formula Hillman -- foreign born, Communist, foreign born, Jew, enemy of America -- that is the Nazi type of technique by which Germany was destroyed. "Hillman -- foreign-born, Communist". They left out the word Jews. Hoped that the average person would understand what was not specifically indicated. And many used it who are not at all anti-Semites, but they are so bent upon their main purpose, so determined to win political victory that they used any weapon which came to their hands. And this formula seems to be a very powerful weapon without taking thought of the possibility of danger to racial good will, community peace involved in the use of that formula.

That is exactly how well-intentioned people play into the hands of the sinister anti-Semitic forces in our country. I have in mind a particularly well-known columnist who if you asked him would say he is opposed to Nazism, Facism and yet he is so passionately involved in his bitter struggle, his condemnation of organized labor that he, too, uses this weapon without foresight or thought of the consequences, the results. Unconsciously he has been lead into the classic ways of Nazis. Suddenly he has become a bigot. And one bigotry has ~~xxxx~~ led him to other types of bigotry.

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"What are we/do about it? Well, in the first place, we ought not to underestimate the seriousness of the situation. Walter Rathenau, Germany Minister of Germany in 1932 was asked in 1920 to ~~xxxxxx~~ participate in the ~~gm~~ fight against anti-Semitism. He refused on the ground that it was undignified and unnecessary to fight anti-Semitism. "An immoral movement, he said, based on appeals to vulgar passions, might do considerable temporary harm, but was bound to collapse of its own inner vicbusness without outside interference." But it didn't collapse. Walter Rathenau was wrong and for his mistake he paid with his own life. He was assassinated ~~by~~ when he was Foreign Minister, in June of 1932. Millions of other Jews paid with

their lives for his mistake. You cannot be above the battle, so to speak in your relation to fighting bigotry and anti-Semitism.

On the other hand, one should not grow panicky about it. There is a strong American tradition of liberty, democracy, tolerance, fair play, decency. There are strong forces working in this country who intend to keep America American -- church, school, organizations of all types, great leaders of thought. We ought to reconcile ourselves to a certain amount of prejudice that will always be in the world as long we ~~xxxx~~ are minorities. We ought to remember that in the long run, if we are alert, that that which is true, just, civilized will master that which is primitive, jungle, dark. So we ought to help all those forces in American life which attempt to keep America American -- all forms of civic protective agencies which have grown up in our communities, all organizations which have set themselves the task of exposing lies and protecting Americans against poisonous propaganda, all organizations which aim to keep America what Abraham Lincoln practiced: "I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's bosom."

Furthermore we ought to try to live our own lives with dignity, with integrity and in good neighborliness. We should avoid any offense in conduct, in speech, in dress, behavior, in good taste. We owe that to ourselves. We owe that to the world in which we live. Our business ethics, as employee and as employer, as merchants, professional people should be above criticism and beyond reproach. We should try to be equal with the best, not equal with the least, or the run of the mine. We owe that to ourselves and to our great tradition and to our ~~new~~ position in the world. We should share community responsibility, each one in his own sphere of influence. We must all help to build a better America. No one can build a better America for himself. We must also remember to teach our children to fight back. That is American....

We face the morrow with a deep sense of pride in ourselves. We should not spend too much time and thought in apologies and polemics. We should concentrate on the positive

values in our own home, in our community life, in our national life and how we can help in the development of all that is finer in American life. With pride and with courage and without fear we can face the morrow. "Fear not, Jacob, be not dismayed, for I am with thee," saith the Lord.



1) Jacob-Esau - Prototypes -

- ① 3rd life - Hunter - sees life - Primitive - Heiny Man - "The Enemy"
- ② 2nd life - Civilized Man - Perfect Himself - 2nd life - "The Friend"

2) Two Types - Cultures - Nations - Ways of Life

- ① 1st life - Pride - Crest of Blood - Tears - Live by Sword - 31.
Source of Hate - Reckless Military Advan. - Nat. Egot. - Insult
Reverit - Prigot

- ② 2nd life - Pride of Common Churchills in God - Sp. Nobility
He Lives - Truth - Sympathy - Cooperation - Serve of God and

3) Eternal Battle - Furies - When "Esau-Complex"
Furiously - 2nd, 3rd, 2nd - 1st, 2nd, 1st

4) In our day - the "Primitive" - scold heavily - "Esau-Complex" - down with
terrifying degree - In Hitlerism - new waves - modern theory has
"Club-War" - Almost Inevitable - Filled world - final events
With tooth & claw - Drummed - No Pity - Shew -

5) Furiously - Shift - Esau is wallowing - Hunter - cornered
Prophecy -

6) But while the Esau-nations - the Esau Blood -
And while our Soldiers - Hitlerism - home-front - Drop on seeds

7) Planning increase in their activities -
War drove them - underground - Scurried - Spies - Rings
fare - Fled - Publications.
But as years pass by them - came forth - resumed - boldly
"So Ho Voe" -

Most of them former Bandits - Nazi sympathy - The Bandits.
Trained - Still here - It is this hidden crew -

Others - dirty work - former Cryptanalysts -

8). War is a time of tension - great worry - irritations.

Never happy - The cunning - capitalize - dread - descript
hinder war-effort

Tensions likely to persist - Demobilization (Field-Day)

And if long depression - the very stability.

Ants. increases in inverse ratio

(Just increase)

9). One need not go into causes of psych. Bigotry -

(Bools) - Sad Comments - Interlocking of world reading

And it all does not fit in very far!

- We know that men treaters - Scapegoat - humorists

- We know that (Prophet)
Isaiah. We never feel so free from blame as when we
expatriate on our own faults in other people.

- We know - Generalize

- We know - many Antis - Nutzoos - Worthless under - worsted
adventurers - unwieldy bus. men - bankrupt journalists
hypnotized women - ignorant - curms

- But knowing all that - does not produce any love

- Bigot is never persuaded - doubtful whether - when he is not
Sick soul & mind - more or less paranoid - psychotic

- Very few admit Antisem - who are ever converted

10). Value of org. & later - to prohibit - dropping - debarment

Most fruitful children - School-Arms

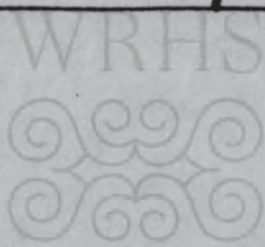
Race prejudice, once implanted,

Most men get - before adolescence - From elders

Of ten parents - sends them authoritatively unfit.

13. It is Struggle bet. Capital & Labor - sharpened - by big
outlet - France & Japan were born
Reactionary can be seized - every device - to destroy those
endangering their privileges
Antisem. - to discredit liberalism - socialism
Chamberlain & Kraus to divert -
Filled their gullet

14. In our own country - Struggle may be bad - employment
of same techniques
Antisem. will be used as weapons - esp. labor
Certain Am. bus. men are already using it
In use during recent pol. Campaigns - Formulas



11) Many used it, who own our Autos - They were so ^{resolved} ~~attached~~ in their determination to beat Roosevelt - that they used any excuse that came to hand.

But that is exactly how well-intentioned people play into the hands of the sinister Anti-Sem. forces in our country.
(People) - Any thing that will get results - any impact - Sem - They become bigots! (Just) 13

12) What to do about it?

① Not to understand: Walter Rathenau, when asked in 1920 to participate in the first agreement that he refused on the ground that it was unjust, and unnecessary. An immoral movement, based on appeals to Wilson's promises, and it do considerable temporary harm but was bound to collapse, its own inner weakness without outside interference" - Foreign Minister - JOW, 1922. assassinated - Above the Battle (C. G. L. 11)

② Not to grow passively about it. There is a strong Anti-Semitic

struggle going on against it. Press - Church - Schools - Organizations - individuals -

③ A certain amount is inevitable - Sick Society - Summers

④ Help all these forces - Civic Protection Agency - all former victims - "I have not willingly planted a thorn in any man's breast" Kindler Good Neighbors

⑤ Live for our lives - Americans - Dignity - Integrity

- Avoid giving offense - in careless speech, dress, behavior, good taste

- Remove ethics - about criticism or reproval - equal with the best

- Share in common decency

- Help build a better America - for better for all!

⑥ Pride - Fight Back - Let us not spend our days either in too much apologetics or in too much polemics. Positive values - our Rel. life - architecture

⑦ With pride, with courage or without fear let us face to-morrow

2 This remarkable resiliency up to now is due most of all to our unique tradition. Every single American is here because he personally, or his ancestors before him, sought escape from some type of oppression. All of us are scions of minority groups that have at some time deliberately sought fresh air and mental health in this new land. Only the Negro and the American Indian are exceptions, and even they have been caught up in the same dream of emancipation and equality. Deep down we have this traditional check on our intolerant impulses.

There is a second reason for our long-standing resiliency, namely, our frontier. Having discovered that the melting pot was a turbulent pot, and that the New World was not invariably friendly to all minorities, perhaps to our own, we could until recently get up and move out if we didn't like our neighbors, or if our neighbors didn't like us. The Mormons saved themselves from massacre by fleeing to Utah. The Underground Railroad brought many rebellious slaves northward. Individual families sought greater freedom in westward migration. Now, however, it is not clear where the Jews, the Negroes, the Mexican- and Japanese-Americans can take up their residence unmolested. The safety-valve of the frontier is no longer an appreciable protection against the mounting pressure within.

3 Our gauges reveal that at present the pressure is dangerously high. Public opinion polls show that 85 percent of the population is ready to scapegoat some group or other (at least they accuse them of not making a fair share of their contribution to the war effort). Labor and the Jews are

We have always had bigots in our midst and probably shall always have them. What concerns us now is their numbers and their complexion in 1944. Drawing our evidence chiefly from published and unpublished public opinion polls, we may estimate roughly that one-fifth of our people are implacable Anglophobes; five to ten percent are violently anti-Semitic, while perhaps forty-five percent more are mildly bigoted in the same direction. At least forty percent express prejudice against the Negro. The numbers that are anti-Catholic, anti-Russian, anti-labor, anti-Protestant vary, but in all cases the proportion is fairly high.

We have then, a large nucleus of people who are aggressive Antis. Some are so paranoid that they are ready now to start violent persecutions, and are constantly striving to convert the wavering, mildly bigoted fringes. When a large enough group has been aroused so that it has a sense of safety in numbers, it looks around for a pretext to vent its hate. The pretexts were easily found in Beaumont, Detroit, Los Angeles. What they were does not matter. When the conditions for an outbreak are ripe, anything—even a baseless rumor—will precipitate the violence.

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It was Lord Bryce, I believe, who once said that there is a solution to every social problem but one—race prejudice. His pessimism, I suspect, was based on the observation that treatment of the adult bigoted mind seldom seems to have any effect. Even though the aim of democracy, of

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10 (Approximately ten million of our young men are living out their youth under the essentially totalitarian regimentation of the armed services. And their habits are being formed according to the strong man outlook of military hierarchies. No back-talk permitted, no discussion of basic policies, no group decision, no majority rule. We know that most of our officers are considerate toward their men, yet it is inevitable that many basic democratic attitudes have to be held in abeyance during the time of military service. History shows that veterans' organizations, following their wartime habits, are usually inclined toward some kind of military influence in government. Bewildered civilians often join the demand. And we know that post-war mentality is characteristically quick to saddle the blame for war's dislocations upon some convenient scapegoat. (We recall the "red scare" of 1919-20). This whole pattern of reaction will recur after the present conflict is over (unless perchance it lasts an unexpectedly long time, bringing in its train so many changes that there is no possibility of reaction).

2 B 11 paper The primary lesson of this war, not at all learned by Americans, is the connection between fascism and the latent bigotry in people who are not technically fascists. People who have the character structure of the bigot embrace fascist principles and techniques to protect their prejudices. But they seldom realize that they are

doing it. More likely they invoke democratic symbols to justify their attacks (states' rights, private initiative, freedom of speech and the like). What people do not know is that fascism can come to this country under the banner of "democracy."

At this moment our paranoid bigots are busily engaged in rousing hatred against this scapegoat or that, chiefly the Jew. Having themselves given up the struggle for intellectual and emotional maturity, they are seeking power over the masses in order to cajole them into a similar welter of regressive hatreds.

On the other side of the battle line we have much of the press, most of the churches, many stalwart opinion leaders, including teachers, statesmen, writers. *Against*

Both sides are struggling to influence people's minds which, though they have their tabloid tendencies and their modicum of bigotry, are nonetheless half-conscious of the meaning of the American tradition of fair play and of the requirements of democratic decency in communal living. At this moment my guess is that our Christian-democratic-scientific ethos will decide the battle, but one cannot be too certain. The strain of the coming months and years will bring an added array of frustrations, bewilderments and demagogues. Bigotry is ever the easier way to respond to this particular combination of social and psychological pressures.