



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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World War I, 1917.

After our men are through crushing forever the menace to human peace and national comity, they will come back and set about deliberately and determinedly to smash the lines here at home and they are going to smash every line that confines and limits the onrushing spirit of freedom-seeking men and women.

They are going to smash ruthlessly and relentlessly every line of social injustice, every line of economic wrong, every line of political prejudice and intolerance that exists here in this land, and that confines and stultifies the spirit of onrushing ambitions of freedom loving men and women.

They will not be satisfied with smashing the line "Over there" and crushing the enemy "over there", and coming back bleeding and wounded perhaps, but with depths of spiritual emotions profoundly stirred with a knowledge and a vision of wider horizons and greater opportunities, with the consciousness of their own strength and power, they will come back and ask "if we did not tolerate lines 'over there', if we gave of our blood to break lines 'over there', why should we tolerate them here?" And they will not tolerate them. They are going to smash the line of social injustice.

They will ask themselves, why should we permit life to be starved and smothered in little groups because of lack of opportunity; why should not each son of God be given a chance to develop himself, the chance of education, the chance of infinite opportunity to make himself the best that he is capable of; why not smash the line and permit the sons of God to become great with the greatness of life. They will ask the question and you will answer it, and the answer will be "smash the line for the new day has come". And, they will also ask themselves when they come back concerning the economic injustice and wrong of our land. "Over there" they have become conscious of the awful responsibility of citizenship. For the first time they have realized how awful, but terrible, the responsibility of citizenship is, when a nation could take you as if by invisible hands from your peaceful occupation and throw you into a trench to be hacked and butchered and mutilated for

the sake of the common good.

These men will ask themselves, "If our responsibilities are so awful, why shouldn't our privileges be commensurately great and noble?" "Why, in a land blessed by God with plenty and prosperity, should there be the eternal menace of poverty, of men living on the brink of penury? Why are children forced into shops to learn a living for themselves and for their parents; why are women taken out of their rightful sphere of influence, the home, and sent to the loom and the machine? Why? Why?" And you will answer them, and the answer will be - "We are going to smash the line". "The old order must pass, the order of competitive life, of great wealth and of poverty must go and give way for an order of co-operation and greater equality."

And when our men come back, they will not tolerate the old traditional political parties of our land, parties whose strifes and contentions and pretensions are absolutely irrelevant today to the needs of men.

"They will ask for political parties and organizations that will give them an honest, comprehensive plan of social reconstruction. They will ask for political organizations that will be more sensitive to the immediate and pressing and social economic needs of their lives. They will ask for political organizations that will be in every sense of the word, in spirit and purpose, democratic. There is going to be a smashing of lines along political lines and there is going to be a smashing of lines along religious lines. My friends, the God which our boys have found on the bloody fields of Flanders is not the God of the snobbish church, of the creed and the dogma, and the ritual, and they are not coming back to them.

They have found a new God, a God who is the universal spirit of brotherhood of all, a God whose service is loyalty and devotion and sacrifice to a great cause and whose ritual is the bleeding heart. They have become conscious of a new spirit in the world, a God who is the embodiment of those things that prodded them on and drove them over the tortured fields of agony and sacrifice, and when they come back they are going to ask the priests and the ministers and the rabbis of this land, "who is this God you are preaching unto us?" Is it merely the God of our fathers or is it also the God of our children; or is it merely the God of yesterday; or is ~~it merely the God of yesterday~~

He also the God of tomorrow; is He the God merely of dogma and creed or is He the God of social justice and righteousness?" And woe be unto him who cannot say to those men, "We are going to smash the line of religious narrowness and bigotry and intolerance; we are going to throw open the portals of our temples and churches so that even God can enter."