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174

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63

Folder
212

Theodore Herzl and Jewish messianism, 1929.

THEODOR HERZL AND JEWISH MESSIANISM

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

With Theodor Herzl the political phase of the tri-millennial Messianic hope of Israel came to an end. At least provisionally. Should the Jewish Homeland develop uninterruptedly from international sanctions to actuality, the political phase will have ended definitely. Only the prophetic phase of Jewish Messianism will then remain - the heroic and eternal phase.

The Jewish Messianic hope was born not in helplessness but in power. It sprang into being when the race awakened to a realization of the unique and amazing career which destiny had carved out for it. It antedated the period of national decline. In the full-tide of its national life and in the midst of a vigorous cultural activity was the dogma of prophetic Messianism proclaimed by the spiritual spokesmen of Israel. This dogma was international in character because Jewish nationalism was then a fact not a problem. A people can be international in outlook only when its own national life is secure. It was missionary in spirit because Israel had reached a point in its spiritual development where it needed a conscious ideal in life not, as in later days, a disarming apology for living. It concerned Palestine only as the point de from which vantage point Israel could move the world. An eager, mystic, and masterful religious imperialism was at the heart of Jewish Messianism at the outset. This is the essence of the "acharit ha-yamin" visions of Micah and Isaiah. Zion must become the spiritual capital of a regenerated humanity. The peoples of the earth will flow unto it to receive instruction in the highest laws of justice and of world peace. There is superb daring and pride and exultant confidence in this Messianic concept of the race.

The minor key which we are accustomed to associate with the Messianic hope is of another and a later age. It is the product of national calamity. At the close of the eighth century the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed - never to be rebuilt. The northern provinces of Palestine were colonized by alien peoples. Galilee became the "District of the Gentiles." A century and a half later Judea was conquered and the Temple destroyed. The best elements of the population were deported. The great diaspora began. Even after the restoration of Judea and the rebuilding of the Temple there remained a wide-spread dispersion which continued increasingly throughout the subsequent centuries. Israel was "spread abroad as the four winds of heaven," through the Persian Empire and the Arabian Peninsula, in Asia Minor, in Egypt and along the shores of the Mediterranean. In Judea there remained a meager, harassed and partially assimilated people, whom prophet and scribe tried to strengthen and reclaim. The nation was in vassalage. National independence was gone - not to be recaptured except for one brief century before the second and greater destruction. Only the indomitable will to live remained and the hope of full national rehabilitation. Among the choice spirits the inexpugnable Messianic prophetism of the race continued unabated. The untoward conditions of the times and the threatened dissolution of the nation even lent fuel to the great tradition. Hitherto it was assumed, in a rather vague and undefined way, that Israel would serve as the instrument of mankind's spiritual salvation. At the hands of the great Prophet of the Dispersion, the second Isaiah, and his disciples, this belief became definite and unmistakable. It became, in fact, the new dogma of Jewish nationalism. Prophetic Messianism was now, however, linked up with the hope of national restoration. The political motif was introduced and thereafter this motif gained ascendancy in

Jewish Messianic thought. The first act in the great drama of the world redemption must be the national redemption of Israel.

It was now realized too, that the task of reconstituting society after the highest pattern of moral perfection cannot be accomplished without much suffering and sacrifice. Israel having assumed the crown must also assume the cross of world leadership. Thus the tragic theme of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" appears. Israel is destined to be stricken and afflicted. He will bear the chastisement of the world, but by his stripes will the nations of the earth be healed.

Throughout the Persian and Greek periods of Jewish history both the political and prophetic elements were present in the Messianic complex, but the grave accent was on the latter. The voice of the second Isaiah echoes and re-echoes through the writings of the post-exilic era, Biblical and Apocryphal. But with the waning of the people's hopes under Roman rule and more especially after the harrowing catastrophes of 70 and 135 the classic prophetic-Messianic tradition was forced to the back-ground. It was not lost or forgotten. It became simply incongruous. A crushed and broken people which cannot save itself cannot think much about saving the world. A dark obsession took hold of Israel - the thought of its homelessness. Its emotional group life became centered in the impassioned wish to return home.

The political motif took on a new coloring. Despair opened the way for supernaturalism. Israel's redemption can come not by way of self-emancipation, but only through the miraculous intervention of a divinely endowed personal redeemer - a scion of the House of David. The revolutionary ardor passed out of the political ideal. The people became passive in the hands of fate.

But though the "galut" cast its shadows over all the ways of the people's life, it never quite darkened that light of which it was said,

"and nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising."

When the era of political emancipation began for the Jews of Western Europe prophetic Messianism asserted itself anew in Jewish thought. It was now spoken of as the doctrine of the "mission of Israel." Many of those who championed it attempted to disengage it from the political ideal with which it had been associated ever since the diaspora began. They regarded the political equality which they had acquired as individuals in their respective countries as adequate compensation for the political equality which their people had failed to acquire. They adhered to the doctrine of prophetic Messianism forgetting or ignoring the fact that it was predicated upon a Jewish national life in Palestine. It was against this national and territorial back-ground that prophecy painted its picture of "acharit ha-yamim." In the diaspora this picture had no back-ground - and no canvass.... To attempt to dissociate the prophetic from the political element of Messianism in the diaspora was to court group extinction.

One is inclined to doubt the charge sometimes made that many of the protagonists of the mission idea in Western Europe were conscious or unconscious assimilationists. There were more direct ways out of Judaism open to them. Nor is it altogether true to say that they accepted the mission idea simply as an excuse and an apology for remaining Jews. Many of them were very loyal and very learned and very proud Jews. They believed that prophetic Messianism was a sufficient ideal for Jewish life in the diaspora, capable of sustaining it, without the aid of political autonomy either in Palestine or in the diaspora. The logic of history has proved them wrong. They are to be credited however, with having brought forward again from the periphery to the center of Jewish thought the irrepressible prophetic tradition.

Eastern-European Jewry felt the impact of this awakened prophetic Messianism along with other influences which reached it with the Haskalah movement from Western Europe. It did not come to them as a new revelation,

but as a new emphasis. Witness Krochmal, whose philosophy of Jewish history is comparable to that of Jehuda Halevi, the chief spokesman of prophetic Messianism in the Middle Ages. But Eastern-European Jewry never dissociated the prophetic from the political phase of Messianism. The Jews of Eastern Europe had not yet won their political emancipation. They lived more compactly and in the midst of peoples culturally inferior to them. The sense of group solidarity was accordingly very strong among them. The political Messianic hope was loyally clung to both by the leaders and the masses of the people.

Here and there an attempt was made to expurgate the prophetic element from Messianism. Witness Lillienblum. In all such instances the attempt was in the nature of a counterblast to the anti-nationalistic "mission" advocates of Western Europe. It was the offspring of controversy and polemics - not of reasoned thought consistent with its own major premises.

Political Messianism, as such, received its fullest expression in Theodor Herzl. His Zionism at first was a purely political interest. This was also the case with Hess and Pinsker. He was far removed from Jewish life and unacquainted with the classic traditions of his people. He came to Jewry by way of anti-semitism, not by way of Judaism. At one of the Zionist Congresses he frankly confessed that he did not know what was even meant by the term "Jewish culture." His maximum program at the outset was the establishment of a legally-secured haven of refuge for his persecuted brethren - anywhere, not necessarily in Palestine. His concept of Jewish nationalism was couched in terms of the nationalist philosophies of nineteenth-century Europe.

Herzl's exclusive political Messianism, so alien to the essential genius of the race, was destined to encounter resistance, Jewry and especially Eastern-European Jewry preserved an older and nobler nationalist philosophy. It treasured a unique national tradition of twenty-five

centuries, which was inseparably bound up with Palestine, with the Hebrew language, with Hebrew culture, with the Torah and with all the imperishable dreams of its seers and prophets. And resistance soon made itself felt. Its leader was Achad Ha-am.

Writing soon after the Zionist Congress in 1897, Achad Ha-am stated that he was not at all sure that Israel was ready to assume the role of a political nation. Furthermore that even if it were prepared and even if permission were granted to Israel to assume its place as a political entity in the world, he was not at all sure that that would represent the fulfilment of its destiny. Israel, he argues, has a higher destiny to achieve. Two thousand years of heroic suffering and martyrdom can not find their compensation in the right to play the role of a pitifully small state in a world of political intrigue, a pawn in the hands of scheming international diplomats. "The reward must be according to the suffering." An ancient people which has been "a light unto the nations" can not and should not content itself with the moiety of political autonomy enjoyed by peoples many of whom are culturally and historically insignificant and none of whom suffered as Israel has suffered. It was neither a matter of accident nor of slight moment that prophets arose in Israel who visioned "the end of days" when righteousness would be established in the world. This universal humanitarian ideal has been and must continue always to be an integral part of the ideal of Jewish nationalism. "The salvation of Israel will come to pass through prophets and not through diplomats...."

Achad Ha-am was, of course, a severe critic of the denationalized "mission" ideology in vogue among Western-European Jews. He called for a normal, full-blooded, national life for his people in Palestine which should become the seed-bed of a cultural renaissance. Unmistakably, however, Achad Ha-am's "culture" was suffused with Prophetic Messianism.

Cultural Zionism could not make much headway in the post-Dreyfus and pogrom eras which were coterminous with the first years of Herzlean Zionism. Uppermost in the minds of the people at that time was the desperate thought of "escape," not the constructive thought of "return." But in the quieter years which followed, cultural Zionism gathered strength. It became the most persuasive argument in Zionist propaganda. It proved far more effective than Herzlean political Zionism in converting the intellectual classes of our people. It responded to the deeper cravings of the Jewish soul.

A perusal of the literature of cultural Zionism covering a period of more than a quarter of a century can not fail to impress one with the note of prophetic Messianism which is constantly sounded there. These protagonists of cultural Zionism, avowedly, are not thinking of just another secular culture but of a quite unique and extraordinary culture, which ages ago was touched with the live coal of a prophetic inspiration whose glow has not been quenched in the long and wearying centuries. They are thinking of a crusading culture which will transform the world, a culture of social imperatives which will reach out for "new things, things kept in store, not hitherto known..." It is the same ancestral hunger for "malchut shamayim." The new Jewish State must be an expression of the historic social idealism of the race. The visions of the prophets must find in the nascent Jewish commonwealth "a local habitation and a name." Palestine must become the workshop of our people's highest ethical aspirations and mankind's experimental laboratory for social reconstruction.

A recent Christian pilgrim, returning from Palestine averred that "the bravest social venture in the world today" is developing in Palestine. If this is true, then the hope of the Messianic Zionists is, in part at least, being vindicated.

The prophetic element in modern Zionism is not the exuberant dream of a few romanticists. It is present in the thought of its most sober and realistic exponents. At the laying of the corner stone of the Hebrew University, Dr. Weitzmann revealed the innermost soul of himself and of the movement when he declared:

"Am I too bold if, here today in this place among the hills of Ephraim and Judah, I state my conviction that the seers of Israel have not utterly perished, that under the aegis of this university there will be a renaissance of the Divine power of prophetic wisdom that once was ours?"

It is well that the political phase of Jewish Messianism is coming to a close in the upbuilding of the National Homeland. We shall not have to lay so much stress in the future on the importance of nationalism. We shall henceforth be confronted not with its lack but with its consequences. Hitherto wanting the full complement of the attributes of nationalism we were constrained to over-emphasize its virtues. Many of the spokesmen of our cause were driven to extoll nationalism per se, which is after all a quite recent and, demonstrably, a quite inadequate human concept. It is not mankind's ultimate vision. Certainly it is not the substance of our own ancestral tradition, whose motif is not nationalism but prophetism. Nationalism is not enough. It is a minimum requirement not a maximum program. Our national rebirth was made possible by a war in which nationalism was thoroughly exposed and discredited. Nationalism is a means, not an end. "What is great in a man" said Nietzsche, "is that he is a bridge and not a goal." This is true also of men collectively, - of nations and of national cultures.

Nationalism will not suffice the eternally questing soul of our people. After its national life is secure Israel must push on to the frontiers of the new world - the world of internationalism, of economic freedom, of brotherhood and of peace. It must resume the burden of its

Messianic career. "He shall not fail nor be crushed till he have set the right in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his teaching...."



Theodor Herzl and Jewish Messianism.

- *Abba Hillel Silver* -

With Theodore Herzl the political phase of the ^{tri-}~~two~~-millennial Messianic hope of Israel ^{came} ~~comes~~ to an end. At least provisionally. Should the Jewish Homeland develop^{ed} uninterruptedly from international ~~sanctions~~ ~~recognition and acquiescence~~ to actuality, ~~then~~ the political phase will have ended definitely. Only the prophetic phase of Jewish Messianism will then remain - the heroic and eternal phase.

The Jewish Messianic hope was born not in ~~not~~ ^{helplessness} ~~defeat~~ but in power. It sprang into being when the race awakened to a realization of the unique and amazing career which destiny had carved out for it. It antedated the period of national decline. In the full-tide of ^{life} ~~prosperity~~ and in the midst of a vigorous ~~and~~ cultural activity was the dogma of prophetic Messianism ^{proclaimed} ~~announced~~ by the ^{spiritual} spokesmen of Israel. ^{this dogma} ~~It~~ was international in character because Jewish nationalism was ^{then} a fact not a problem. A people can be international in outlook only when its own national life is secure.

It was missionary in spirit ~~not because Israel~~ ^{needed} ~~wanted~~ a disarming excuse for its existence, but because Israel had reached a point in its ^{spiritual} development ^{where} ~~when~~ it ^{needed} ~~wanted~~ a ^{conscious} ~~challenging~~ ideal for its life. It ^{was} ~~not, as in later days~~ ^{an} ~~army of apology for~~ ^{living} concerned Palestine only as ~~it might become~~ the ^{power} ~~stew~~ from which vantage point Israel could move the world. ^{in eager} ~~A~~ ^{at the heart} ~~passionate~~, mystic, ~~eager~~ and masterful, religious imperialism was the ~~essence~~ of Jewish Messianism ^{at the outset.} ~~in its early stages.~~ ^{this is the essence} ~~Such is the~~ "achavat ha-yemima" vision ^{of} ~~of~~ Micah and Isaiah. ^{must} ~~Zion is destined to become~~ the spiritual

capital of a ^{regenerated} ~~regenerated~~ humanity. The peoples of the earth ~~shall~~ ^{will} flow unto it, and ^{they shall} ~~in the house~~ of Israel's spirit and Israel's God ^{to receive instruction in} ~~in Zion~~ they ~~shall~~ learn the ^{highest} laws of ~~social~~ justice and of ^{world} ~~international~~ peace. There is ^{superb daring} and pride and ~~exultant~~ confidence in this Messianic concept of the race.

The minor key which we are accustomed to associate with the Messianic hope is of ^{another and a later age.} ~~later times.~~ It is the product of national calamity. ^{At the close of the 19th century} ~~first~~ ^{was destroyed} ~~came the destruction~~ of the Kingdom of Israel - never to be rebuilt. ~~The~~ ^{by} ~~whole~~ northern province² of Palestine ^{were} ~~was~~ colonized ~~with~~ alien peoples. Galilee becomes the "District of the Gentiles." A century and a half later Judea was conquered and the Temple ^{was} ~~destroyed~~. The best elements of the population were deported, ~~and~~ ^{rebuilding of the} the great diaspora began. ~~For~~ Even after the restoration of Judea and the Temple there remained a wide-spread dispersion which continued increasingly throughout the subsequent centuries. Israel was "spread abroad as the four winds of heaven", through the Persian Empire and the Arabian Peninsula, in Asia Minor, in Egypt and along the shores of the Mediterranean. In Judea there remained a meager, harassed and partially assimilated people, whom prophet and scribe tried to strengthen and reclaim. The nation was in vassalage. National independence was gone - not to be recaptured except for one brief century before the second ^{and} ~~great~~ ^{destruction.} Only the indomitable will to live remained and the hope of full national rehabilitation. Among the choice spirits ~~of the people~~ the ^{inexpugnable} ~~pregnable~~ Messianic prophetism of the race continued unabated. The ^{unfavourable} ~~unfavourable~~ conditions of the times and the threatened dissolution of the nation ^{even} ~~actually~~ lent fuel to the great tradition. Hitherto it was assumed, in a rather vague and undefined way, that Israel would serve as the instrument of mankind's spiritual salvation. At the hands of the great Prophet of the Dispersion, the Second Isaiah, and his disciples, this belief ^{became} ~~becomes~~ definite and unmistakable. It ^{became} ~~becomes~~, in fact, the new dogma of Jewish Nationalism. ~~But~~ ^{however} Prophetic Messianism is now ^{linked} up with the hope of national restoration. The political motif is introduced and thereafter this motif ^{gains} ~~gains~~ ascendancy in Jewish Messianic thought. The first act in the great drama of world redemption must be the national redemption of Israel.

It is ^{now} realized, ^{too} ~~however~~, that the task of reconstituting society after the highest pattern of moral perfection cannot be accomplished without much suffering and sacrifice. Israel having assumed the crown must also ~~be~~ ^{assume} ~~reconciled~~ to the cross of world leadership. Thus the tragic theme of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" appears. Israel will be stricken and afflicted. He will bear the chastisement of the world, but by his stripes will the nations of the earth be healed.

Throughout the Persian and Greek periods of Jewish history both the political and prophetic elements were present in the Messianic complex, ~~into~~ ^{but} the grave accent was on the latter. The voice of the second ^{Isaiah} ~~Israel~~ echoes and re-echoes through the writings of the post-exilic era, Biblical and Apocryphal. ^{But} With the waning of the people's hopes under Roman rule and more especially after the harrowing catastrophes of 70 and 135 the classic prophetic-Messianic tradition ~~is~~ ^{was} forced to the back-ground. It ~~is~~ ^{was} not lost or forgotten. It ~~becomes~~ ^{became} simply incongruous. A crushed and broken people which cannot save itself cannot think much about saving ^{the world.} ~~mankind.~~ A dark obsession took hold of Israel - ^{the thought of} ~~its~~ homelessness. ~~The "galuth" cast its shadows over the way of life.~~ Its emotional group life became centered in the impassioned wish to return home.

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But though the "galuth" cast its shadows over all the ways of ^{the} ~~our~~ people's life, it never quite darkened that light of which it was said, "and nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising."

When the era of political emancipation began for the Jews of Western Europe

prophetic Messianism ~~begin~~^{ad} to assert ~~again~~^{again} itself in Jewish thought. It was now spoken of as the doctrine of the "mission of Israel." Many of those who championed it ~~however~~, attempted to disengage it from the political ideal with which it had been associated ever since the diaspora began. They regarded the political equality which they had acquired as individuals in their respective countries as adequate compensation for the political equality which their people, ~~had~~^{had} failed to acquire. They ~~subscribed~~^{adhered to the doctrine} to prophetic Messianism forgetting or ignoring the fact that it was ~~indicated~~^{predicated} upon a Jewish national life in Palestine. It was ~~against~~^{national and territorial} this back-ground that prophecy painted its picture of "~~acharit~~^{acharit} ha-y^ammim." In the diaspora this picture had no back-ground - and no canvass..... To attempt to dissociate the prophetic from the political element of Messianism in the diaspora ~~is~~^{was} to court group extinction.

One is inclined to doubt the charge sometimes made that many of the protagonists of the "mission idea" in Western Europe were conscious of unconscious assimilationists. There were more direct ways out of Judaism. ^{open to them.} Nor is it altogether ~~true~~^{true} to say that they accepted the "mission idea" simply as an excuse and an apology for remaining Jews. Many of them were very loyal and very learned and very proud Jews. They believed that prophetic Messianism was a sufficient ideal for Jewish life in the diaspora, capable of sustaining it, without the aid of political autonomy either in Palestine or in the diaspora. The logic of history has proved them wrong. They are to be credited however, with having ~~XXX~~ brought forward again from the ~~periphery~~^{periphery} to the center of Jewish thought ~~the~~^{the} irrepressible ~~racial~~^{prophetic} tradition.

Eastern-European Jewry felt the impact of this awakened prophetic-Messianism ^{though} which had always been with them ~~it was nevertheless~~^{it was nevertheless} quiescent - along with other influences which reached it with the Haskalah movement from Western Europe. Witness Krochmal, whose philosophy of

Jewish history is comparable ~~only~~ to that of Jehuda Halevi, the chief spokesman of prophetic-Messianism in the Middle Ages. ~~Witness also~~^{But they were associated the} ~~prophetic from the political phase of Messianism.~~^{prophetic from the political phase of Messianism.} Rapoport and Revenson and Smolenski. ~~But~~ The Jews of Eastern Europe had not

yet won their political emancipation. They lived more compactly and in the midst of peoples culturally inferior to them. The sense of group solidarity ~~and nationalism~~ was accordingly very strong among them. The political Messianic hope was loyally clung to by the ^{leaders and the} masses, ~~as well as~~ ^{the people,} ~~by the leaders.~~ No attempt was therefore made to dissociate the prophetic ~~from the political phases of Messianism.~~

Here and there an attempt was made to ^{expurgate} the prophetic element from Messianism. Witness Lilienblum. In all such instances the attempt was in the nature of a counterblast to the anti-nationalist "mission" advocate^s of Western Europe. It was ~~the outcome~~ ^{the offspring} of controversy and polemics - not of reasoned thought consistent with their own major premises.

Political Messianism ^{as such,} ~~first~~ received its fullest expression in Theodore Herzl. His Zionism ~~was~~ ^{first was} at the ~~outset~~ ^{outset} a purely political interest, ~~as~~ ^{this} was also the case with Hess and Pinsker. He was far removed from Jewish life and unacquainted with ~~the~~ ^{the} classic traditions of his people. He came to Jewry by ~~the~~ way of anti-semitism, not by ~~the~~ way of Judaism. At one of the Zionist Congresses he frankly confessed that he did not know what was even meant by the term "Jewish culture." His maximum program at ~~the outset~~ ^{the outset} was the establishment of a legally-secured haven of refuge for his persecuted brethren. - anywhere, not necessarily in Palestine. ^{His concept} If he thought of Jewish nationalism ~~it was in~~ ^{was conceived in} terms of the nationalist philosophies of ~~19th~~ ^{19th} century Europe.

Herzl's ^{exclusive} political Messianism was destined to ~~encounter~~ ^{so akin to the essential genius of the race} resistance. ^{and especially} Eastern European Jewry ^{preserved} ~~and~~ an older and nobler nationalist philosophy. It ^{treasured} ~~preserved~~ a unique national tradition of twenty-five centuries, which was ^{probably} bound up inseparably with Palestine, the Hebrew language, ~~Jewish~~ ^{with Hebrew} culture, the Torah and with all the ^{imprudent} dreams of its seers and prophets. And resistance soon made ~~that~~ ^{itself} felt. Its leader was Achad Ha-am.

Writing ^{some} after the first Zionist Congress in 1897 Achad ^Hma-am stated that he was not at all sure that Israel was ready to assume the role of a political nation. Furthermore that even if it were prepared and even if permission were granted to Israel to assume its place as a political entity in the world, he was not at all sure that that would represent the fulfilment of its destiny. Israel, he argues, has a higher destiny to achieve. Two thousand years of heroic suffering and martyrdom can not find their compensation in the right to play the role of a pitifully small state in ^athe world of political intrigue, a pawn in the hands of scheming international diplomats. "The reward must be according to the suffering." An ancient people which has been "a light unto the nations" can not and should not content itself with the moiety of political autonomy enjoyed by peoples many of whom are culturally and historically insignificant and none of whom suffered as Israel has suffered. It was neither a matter of accident nor of slight moment that prophets arose in Israel who visioned "the end of days" when righteousness would be established in the world. This universal humanitarian ideal has been and must continue always to be an integral part of the ideal of Jewish nationalism. "The salvation of Israel will come to pass through prophets and not through diplomats..."

Achad Ha-am was ^{of course} a ^{severe} ~~relentless~~ critic of the denationalized "mission" ideology ^{then} in vogue among Western European Jews. He called for a normal, full-^{blooded}, national life ^{for his people} in Palestine which shall be the ^{seed-bed of} ~~vehicle for~~ a cultural ~~Jewish~~ renaissance. Unmistakably, ^{however} that "culture" was ^{suppressed} ~~suppressed~~ with Prophetic Messianism.

Achad Ha-am's ~~culture~~

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Cultural Zionism could not make great headway during the post-Dreyfuss ~~era~~ and ~~the~~ pogrom era^s which were coterminous with the first years of the Zionist congresses. Uppermost in the minds of the people at that time was the desperate thought of "escape", not of "return". But in the quieter years which followed, cultural Zionism gathered strength. It became the most persuasive argument in Zionist propaganda. It proved far more effective than Herzlean political Zionism in converting the intellectual classes of our people. It responded to the deeper cravings of the Jewish soul.

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~~And if it is true, as a~~ recent Christian pilgrim, returning from Palestine ^{ad} avers, that "The bravest social venture in the world today" is developing in Palestine, ^{If this is true, then the hope of the Messianic Zionists} ~~then this hope is~~, in part at least, being ^{vindicated} ~~vindicated~~.

The prophetic element in modern Zionism is not the exuberant dream of a few romanticists. It is present in the thought of its most sober and realistic exponents. At the laying of ^{of} the corner stone of the Hebrew University, Dr. Weitzmann ^{revealed} ~~laid bare~~ the innermost soul of himself and of the movement when he

8

declared: "Am I too bold if, here today in this place, among the hills of Ephraim and Judah, I state my conviction that the seers of Israel have not utterly perished, ^{that} ~~but~~ under the aegis of this ^{University} there will be a renaissance of ^{the} Divine power of prophetic wisdom that once was ours?"

It is well that the political phase of Jewish Messianism is coming to a close in the upbuilding of the National Homeland. We shall not have to lay ^{so} much stress in the future on the importance of Nationalism. We shall henceforth be ^{confronted} ~~constrained~~ not with its lack but with its consequences. Hitherto, ^{wanting} ~~wishing~~ the full complement of the attributes of Nationalism we were constrained to over-emphasize its ^{virtues} ~~importance~~. Many of the spokesmen of our cause were driven to extoll ⁱⁿ Nationalism ^{per se,} ~~power~~, which is after all a quite recent and demonstrably, a quite inadequate human concept. It is not mankind's ultimate ~~vision~~ vision. Certainly it is not the substance of our ancestral tradition, ^{whose} ~~the~~ motif is not Nationalism but prophetism. Nationalism is not enough. It is a minimum requirement not a maximum program. Our national rebirth was made possible by a war in which nationalism was thoroughly exposed and discredited. "What is great in a man" said Nietzsche, "is that he is a bridge and not a goal." This is true also of men collectively, - of nations and of national cultures.

Nationalism will not suffice the eternally questing soul of our people. After its national life is secure Israel must push on to the frontiers of the new world - the world of internationalism, of economic freedom, of brotherhood and of peace. It must resume the burden of its ^{M/} messianic career. "He shall not fail nor be crushed ^{have} ~~has~~ till he set the right in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his teaching".....

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And if it is true, as the ~~most~~ recent pilgrim
who returned from Palestine, John Hays Holman,
declared that "the bravest social venture in the
world to-day" is developing in Palestine, then

the inherent prophetic Messianism of Israel is again being invoked.

It is well that the political phase of Jewish Messianism is coming to a close in the up-building of the national homeland. We shall not have to lay so much stress in the future on the importance of nationalism. ^(For) ~~It is~~ ^{that}, lacking the full complement of the attributes of nationalism we were constrained to overemphasize ~~the~~ ^{its} importance. Many of the spokesmen of our cause were driven to extol nationalism per se, which is after all a quite recent and demonstrably a quite inadequate human concept. It is not ^{regarding} ~~the~~ ultimate vision. Certainly it is not the substance of our ancestral tradition, ^{has} ~~which~~ is not nationalism but propheticism. Nationalism is not enough. It is a minimum requirement, not a maximum program. ^(The) ~~It~~ ^{Nationalism} will not suffice the eternally questing soul of our race. ~~But~~ ^{After its baptism of fire} ~~we~~ ^{we} must push on to the frontiers of the new world. ^(We) ~~Let~~ ^{No} ~~us~~ ^{let} shall not fail nor be crushed till ~~we~~ ^{they} set the right on the earth, and the isles shall wait for his teaching.....

(1) ^{henceforth}
we shall ~~then~~ be confronted not with ~~the~~ its
lack but with its consequences.

(2)
One national rebirth was made possible
by a war in which ^{modern} nationalism was
thoroughly exposed and discredited. What is
great in man," said Nietzsche, "is that he is a bridge
and not a goal". This is even truer of men collectively,
of nations and of national cultures.

(3)
— the world, ^{internationalism of} economic freedom, of justice, of brotherhood
and of peace — ^{It must} ~~and~~ resume its Messianic career.

Cultural Zionism could not make much headway during the ^{post-}Ally years ^{which were co-permious with the first year, the Zionist movement} and the pogrom era. The desperate thought ^{of flight and} escape ~~was~~ uppermost in the minds of the people. But in the quiet years which followed, cultural Zionism gathered strength. ~~and it~~ became the most ^{persuasive} ~~effective~~ and appealing argument in Zionist ~~propaganda~~ ^{strengthening}. It converted first the masses and latterly the classes to Zionism. It proved far more ^{effective} in convincing ~~both the masses & the classes~~ ^{the intellectual & upper life} than Herzl's political Zionism for it responded to the deeper ^{problems} of the Jewish soul.

~~that~~ ~~a~~ ~~period~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~life~~ ~~of~~ ~~cultural~~ ~~Zionism~~
covering a period of time, that a great ^{secretly} secret
must fail to recognize with the recurrent
note of prophetic warning which is ~~the~~ sounded
there. ~~On~~ ~~and~~ ~~on~~ ~~again~~ ~~are~~ These protagonists of cultural
Zionism are not ^{speaking} speaking of just another ^{secular} secular
culture - but, ~~to~~ a quite unique & extraordinary
cultural ~~issue~~, which ~~is~~ touches with
the live coal of a prophetic inspiration ~~in~~ here,
~~from~~ ~~which~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~drawn~~ ~~from~~ it ~~not~~ ~~far~~
~~into~~ ~~the~~ ~~corbed~~ ~~these~~ ~~long~~ ~~and~~ ~~endless~~ ~~prophetic~~
centuries. They speak of a dynamic, ^{and} ^{encompassing} culture
which will transform the world; ~~a culture which~~
~~their culture~~ - a culture ~~it~~ a culture reaching
out for a new heaven and a new earth, for "new
things, things kept in store, not hitherto known."
It is the hunger for "mashlut shamayim"

THEODOR HERZL AND JEWISH MESSIANISM

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

With Theodore Herzl the political phase of the tri-millennial Messianic hope of Israel came to an end. At least provisionally. Should the Jewish Homeland develop uninterⁿruptedly from international sanctions to actuality, the political phase will have ended definitely. Only the prophetic phase of Jewish Messianism will then remain - the heroic and eternal phase. ^{TR}The Jewish Messianic hope was born not in helplessness but in power. It sprang into being when the race awakened to a realization of the unique and amazing career which destiny had carved out for it. It antedated the period of national decline. In the full-tide of its national life and in the midst of a vigorous cultural activity was the dogma of prophetic Messianism proclaimed by the spiritual spokesmen of Israel. This dogma was international in character because Jewish nationalism was then a fact not a problem. A people can be international in outlook only when its own national life is secure. It was missionary in spirit because Israel had reached a point in its spiritual development where it needed a conscious ideal in life not, as in later days, a disarming apology for living. It concerned Palestine only as the ^upo~~st~~ ^ustow from which vantage point Israel could move the world. An eager, mystic, and masterful religious imperialism was at the heart of Jewish Messianism at the outset. This is the essence of the "acharit ha-yamim" visions of Micah and Isaiah. Zion must become the spiritual capital of a regenerated humanity. The peoples of the earth will flow unto it to receive instruction in the highest laws of justice and of world peace. There is superb daring and pride and exultant confidence in this Messianic concept of the race.

The minor key which we are accustomed to associate with the Messianic hope is of another and a later age. It is the product of national calamity. At the close of the eighth century the Kingdom of Israel was destroyed - never to be rebuilt. The northern provinces of Palestine were colonized — by alien peoples. Galilee ^{became} ~~becomes~~ the "District of the Gentiles." A century and a half later Judea was conquered and the Temple destroyed. The best elements of the population were deported. The great diaspora began. Even after the restoration of Judea and the rebuilding of the Temple there remained a wide-spread dispersion which continued increasingly throughout the subsequent centuries. Israel was "spread abroad as the four winds of heaven," through the Persian Empire and the Arabian Peninsula, in Asia Minor, in Egypt and along the shores of the Mediterranean. In Judea there remained a meager, harassed and partially assimilated people, whom prophet and scribe tried to strengthen and reclaim. The nation was in vassalage. National independence was gone - not to be recaptured except for one brief century before the second and greater destruction. Only the indomitable ^A will to live remained and the hope of full national rehabilitation. Among the choice spirits the inexp^{er}ignable Messianic prophetism of the race continued unabated. The untoward conditions of the times and the threatened dissolution of the nation even lent fuel to the great tradition. Hitherto it was assumed, in a rather vague and undefined way, that Israel would serve as the instrument of mankind's spiritual salvation. At the hands of the great Prophet of the Dispersion, the ²second Isaiah, and his disciples, this belief became definite and unmistakable. — It became, in fact, the new dogma of Jewish nationalism. Prophetic Messianism ^{was} is now, however, linked up with the hope of national restoration. The political motif ^{was} ~~is~~ introduced and thereafter this motif gain^{ed} ascendancy in

in Jewish Messianic thought. The first act in the great drama of the world redemption must be the national redemption of Israel.

It ^{was} ~~is~~ now realized too, that the task of reconstituting society after the highest pattern of moral perfection cannot be accomplished without much suffering and sacrifice. Israel having assumed the crown must also assume the cross of world leadership. Thus the tragic theme of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" appears. Israel ^{is destined to} ~~will be~~ stricken and afflicted. He will bear the chastisement of the world, but by his stripes will the nations of the earth be healed.

Throughout the Persian and Greek periods of Jewish history both the political and prophetic elements were present in the Messianic complex, but the grave accent was on the latter. The voice of the second Isaiah echoes and re-echoes through the writings of the post-exilic era, Biblical and Apocryphal. But with the waning of the people's hopes under Roman rule and more especially after the harrowing catastrophes of 70 and 135 the classic prophetic-Messianic tradition was forced to the back-ground. It was not lost or forgotten. It became simply incongruous. A crushed and broken people which cannot save itself cannot think much about saving the world. A dark obsession took hold of Israel - the thought of its homelessness. Its emotional group life became centered in the impassioned wish to return home.

The political motif took on a new coloring. Despair opened the way for supernaturalism. Israel's redemption can come not by way of self-emancipation, but only through the miraculous intervention of a divinely endowed personal redeemer - a scion of the House of David. The revolutionary ardor passed out of the political ideal. The people became passive in the hands of fate.

But though the "galuth" cast its shadows over all the ways of the people's life, it never quite darkened that light of which it was said, "and nations

shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising."

When the era of political emancipation began for the Jews of Western Europe prophetic Messianism asserted itself anew in Jewish thought. It was now spoken of as the doctrine of the "mission of Israel." Many of those who championed it attempted to disengage it from the political ideal with which it had been associated ever since the diaspora began. They regarded the political equality which they had acquired as individuals in their respective countries as adequate compensation for the political equality which their people had failed to acquire. They adhered to the doctrine of prophetic Messianism forgetting or ignoring the fact that it was predicated upon a Jewish national life in Palestine. It was against this national and territorial back-ground that prophecy — painted its picture of "acharit ha-yamim". In the diaspora this picture had no back-ground - and no canvass.... To attempt to dissociate the prophetic from the political element of Messianism in the diaspora was to court group extinction.

One is inclined to doubt the charge sometimes made that many of the — protagonists of the "mission idea" in Western Europe were conscious or unconscious assimilationists. There were more direct ways out of Judaism open to them. Nor is it altogether true to say that they accepted the — "mission idea" simply as an excuse and an apology for remaining Jews. Many of them were very loyal and very learned and very proud Jews. They believed that prophetic Messianism was a sufficient ideal for Jewish life in the diaspora, capable of sustaining it, without the aid of political autonomy either in Palestine or in the diaspora. The logic of history has proved them wrong. They are to be credited however, with having brought forward again from the periphery to the center of Jewish thought the irrepressible prophetic tradition.

9+ ~~did~~ ⁵ ~~not~~ ^{come to them as} ~~a new revelation~~, but as a new emphasis

Eastern-European Jewry felt the impact of this awakened prophetic Messianism which ~~though it had always been with it, was nevertheless~~ ~~quiescent~~ along with other influences which reached it with the Haskalah movement from Western Europe. Witness Krochmal, whose philosophy of Jewish history is comparable to that of Jehuda Halevi, the chief spokesman of prophetic Messianism in the Middle Ages. But ^{Eastern-European Jewry} ~~they~~ never dissociated the prophetic from the political phase of Messianism. The Jews of Eastern Europe had not yet won their political emancipation. They lived more compactly and in the midst of peoples culturally inferior to them. The sense of group solidarity was accordingly very strong among them. The political Messianic hope was loyally clung to ^{both} by the leaders and the masses of the people.

Here and there an attempt was made to expurgate the prophetic element from Messianism. Witness Lilienblum. In all such instances the attempt was in the nature of a counterblast to the anti-nationalistic "mission" advocates of Western Europe. It was the offspring of controversy and polemics - not of reasoned thought consistent with ^{its} ~~their~~ own major premises.

Political Messianism, as such, received its fullest expression in Theodore Herzl. His Zionism at first was a purely political interest. This was also the case with Hess and Pinsker. He was far removed from Jewish life and unacquainted with the classic traditions of his people. He came to Jewry by way of anti-semitism, not by way of Judaism. At one of the Zionist Congresses he frankly confessed that he did not know what was even meant by the term "Jewish culture." His maximum program at the outset was the establishment of a legally-secured haven of refuge for his persecuted brethren - anywhere, not necessarily in Palestine. His concept of Jewish nationalism was couched in terms of the nationalist philosophies of nineteenth-century Europe.

Herzl's exclusive political Messianism, so alien to the essential

genius of the race, was destined to encounter resistance, Jewry and especially Eastern-European ^{Jewry} preserved an older and nobler nationalist philosophy. It treasured a unique national tradition of twenty-five centuries, which was inseparably bound up with Palestine, with the Hebrew language, with Hebrew culture, with the Torah and with all the imperishable dreams of its seers and prophets. And resistance soon made itself felt. Its leader was Achad Ha-am.

Writing soon after the first Zionist Congress in 1897, Achad Ha-am stated that he was not at all sure that Israel was ready to assume the role of a political nation. Furthermore that even if it were prepared and even if permission were granted to Israel to assume its place as a political entity in the world, he was not at all sure that that would represent the fulfilment of its destiny. Israel, he argues, has a higher destiny to achieve. Two thousand years of heroic suffering and martyrdom can not find their compensation in the right to play the role of a pitifully small state in a world of political intrigue, a pawn in the hands of scheming international diplomats. "The reward must be according to the suffering." An ancient people which has been ["]a light unto the nations" can not and should not content itself with the moiety of political autonomy enjoyed by peoples many of whom are culturally and historically insignificant and none of whom suffered as Israel has suffered. It was neither a matter of accident nor of slight moment that ^pProphets arose in Israel who visioned "the end of days" when righteousness would be established in the world. This universal humanitarian ideal has been and must continue always to be an integral part of the ideal of Jewish nationalism. "The salvation of Israel will come to pass through prophets and not through diplomats....."

Achad Ha-am was, of course, a severe critic of the denationalized "mission"

— ideology ~~then~~ in vogue among Western-European Jews. He called for ^{an}normal, full-blooded, national life for his people in Palestine which ^{should become} ~~shall be~~ the seed-bed of a cultural renaissance. Unmistakably, however, Achad Ha-am's "culture" was ^{suffused} ~~suppressed~~ with Prophetic Messianism.

— Cultural Zionism could not make ^{much} ~~great~~ headway ⁱⁿ ~~during~~ the post-Dreyfuss and pogrom eras which were coterminous with the first years of ^{Herzlean Zionism,} ~~the Zionist~~ ~~congresses~~. Uppermost in the minds of the people at that time was the desperate thought of "escape", not ^{the constructive thought} of "return." But in the quieter years which followed, cultural Zionism gathered strength. It became the most persuasive argument in Zionist propoganda. It proved far more effective than Herzlean political Zionism in converting the intellectual classes of our people. It responded to the deeper cravings of the Jewish soul.

A perusal of the literature of cultural Zionism covering a period of more than a quarter of a century can not fail to impress one with the note of prophetic Messianism which is constantly sounded there. These protagonists of cultural Zionism, avowedly, are not thinking of just another secular culture but of a quite unique and extraordinary culture, which ages ago was touched with the live coal of a prophetic inspiration whose glow has not been quenched in the long and wearying centuries. They are thinking of a crusading culture which will transform the world, a culture ^{of social imperatives} which will reach out for "new things, things kept in store, not hitherto known....." It is the same ancestral hunger for "malchut shamayim." The new Jewish State must be an expression of the historic social idealism of the race. The visions of the prophets must find in the nascent Jewish commonwealth "a local habitation and a name." Palestine must become the workshop of our people's highest ethical aspirations and mankind's experimental laboratory for social reconstruction.

— A recent Christian pilgrim, returning from Palestine ~~av~~erred that "the bravest social venture in the world today" is developing in Palestine.

If this is true, then the hope of the Messianic Zionists is, in part at least, being vindicated.

The prophetic element in modern Zionism is not the exuberant dream of a few romanticists. It is present in the thought of its most sober and realistic exponents. At the laying of the corner stone of the Hebrew University, Dr. Weitzmann revealed the innermost soul of himself and of the movement when he declared:

"Am I too bold if, here today in this place among the hills of Ephraim and Judah, I state my conviction that the seers of Israel have not utterly perished, that under the aegis of this university there will be a renaissance of the Divine power of prophetic wisdom that once was ours?"

It is well that the political phase of Jewish Messianism is coming to a close in the upbuilding of the National Homeland. We shall not have to lay so much stress in the future on the importance of nationalism. We shall henceforth be confronted not with its lack but with its consequences. Hitherto, wanting the full complement of the attributes of nationalism we ^{were} ~~were~~ constrained to over-emphasize its virtues. Many of the spokesmen of our cause were driven to extoll nationalism per se, which is after all a quite recent and, demonstrably, a quite inadequate human concept. It is not mankind's ultimate vision. Certainly — it is not the substance of our ^{own} ancestral tradition, whose motif is not nationalism but prophetism. Nationalism is not enough. It is a minimum requirement not a maximum program. Our national rebirth was made possible by a war in which nationalism was thoroughly exposed and discredited. Nationalism is a means, not an end. "What is great in a man" said Nietzsche, "is that he is a bridge and not a goal." This is true also of men collectively, — of nations and of national cultures.

Nationalism will not suffice the eternally questing soul of our people. After its national life is secure Israel must push on to the frontiers of the new world — the world of internationalism, of economic freedom, of brotherhood and of peace. It must resume the burden of its Messianic career. "He shall

not fail nor be crushed till he have set the right in the earth; and the
isles shall wait for his teaching....."

