



## 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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Influence of the Bible on Western Civilization, 1930.



1. Will speak; it as a single book, did never T. combined. - For its influence on W. Europe was as of a single unitary book, just as much, the fact that more than 1300 yrs elapsed bet. the composition, its <sup>earliest</sup> ~~oldest~~ <sup>parts</sup> ~~parts~~, and the variety of its subject matter, and types of liter. composition, and multiplicity of authorship.

① There are 2 reasons for this. First, when Europe actually felt the impact of the Bible, ~~it~~ through the action <sup>and by way of translation</sup> ~~has~~ <sup>of</sup> Chr. missionaries, the Bible was already a single converged book, divinely revealed, whose later part, the N.T., was <sup>regarded as</sup> the logical continuation + sacrosanct of the older part. The Bible was a theologic unit. Secondly - there is ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> central theme which runs thru that entire literature, all the books with ~~one~~ <sup>but</sup> one or two exceptions: "The providential guidance of the world by a God who is just and loving and who must be served in justice and in love." A myriad changes are run on the fabric of this single theme, but it is ~~the~~ <sup>one</sup> theme which unifies the widely scattered books of the Bible, and makes, thus, library of books a single Book. It is also one in the sense that it is the product of the rel. genius of one ~~people~~ <sup>single</sup> people, ~~in one~~ and reflects the developing rel. experience of that one people - Israel.

2. Let me at the next point to 3 ways in which the Bible exerted <sup>Next</sup> ~~upon~~ <sup>its</sup> civilization

① Judaism is incomprehensible without B. The B. is the <sup>essential</sup> ~~expression~~ <sup>expression</sup> of that rel. <sup>ethical</sup> ~~adornment~~ <sup>adornment</sup> which we call Jud. It is its source-book and its text-book. And if Jud. as a religion exercised any influence upon W. Civil, directly thru itself and Israel, & indirectly thru Christ. then that influence came entirely by way of the Bible, and by way of those who spoke in its name and interpreted it to the world. 1911 1712



② Israel, as a people, is incomprehensible without the B. Israel was a people so molded by a book! Israel has a people lived so much in a book! (Hebrew). The whole life of Jew bears visible stamp of them, text + style; B. - what is the Talmud, the Midrash, the Gemara literature, the responsa, the J. phyls, J. mysticism, J. poetry, <sup>the J. prayer book</sup> but off-shoots of B. law + lore, & it is all pyramided on the one base - the B. the daily life, customs, habits, the Jew, were regulated by that book. The education, + mental + moral training, of the J. thru the ages, was thru that book + <sup>these</sup> derivative books. (2nd part 12 ASP) - "This book shall not depart out of thy mouth" etc. And if Israel, as a people, exerted any influence on the march of W. Civilization, if the peculiar cast of that J. attitude towards life, J. conceptions of human values, has played any role in the evolution of Eur. <sup>+ modern</sup> thought then the origin of that influence and the impulse must be sought for in the Bible.

③ Ch. is incomprehensible without the Bible. Ch. derived <sup>its</sup> ~~its~~ <sup>inspiration</sup> from Israel: the person of Jesus, the Bible. The early <sup>church fathers</sup> ~~apostles~~ <sup>apostles</sup> ~~found~~ <sup>used</sup> the O.T. to prove Jesus' prop. the true M. character of Jesus. The early church appropriated O.T. and made it a ch. book - its chief source of authority, and only added to it the letters and gospels and <sup>ch.</sup> ~~prop.~~ pamphlets which complete the story of the Bible. Occasionally it was found difficult to reconcile the O.T. & the N. - in doctrine & practice. But the church found a way which harmonized both - + retained both as the sacred scriptures.



It is at the West, Ch. doctrine & dogma. It is also  
a most ~~thorough~~ <sup>thorough</sup> the Ch. as the Jew. & after  
the Bible we read accounts both saint & sinner  
the translation in the ~~uncommon~~ <sup>uncommon</sup>



The ~~early~~ <sup>early</sup> medieval life, ~~the~~ - They read it <sup>almost</sup> to the exclusion of other secular or profane literature. The leaders, the church devoted ~~to~~ to study & exposition of B. When persecution set in, it was aimed not at the chr. but at their ~~books~~ which were ~~advers~~ <sup>advers</sup> to be burnt!

When Chr. became the estab. rel., the Rom. Empire in early part 14c. the Bible began its ~~remarkable~~ <sup>advancing</sup> ~~career~~ <sup>career</sup> throughout Europe. Soon ~~but~~ law began to influence Roman law, Constantine public branding. No ~~one~~ man shall be admitted as notary witnesses.   
 22 19 71 2130 266 10 11 11 131 26 10 11  
~~The early medieval~~

The ~~patristic literature~~ <sup>patristic literature</sup>, the church ~~it~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~theology~~ <sup>theology</sup> & ~~has~~ <sup>has</sup> ~~life~~ <sup>life</sup>. The dogmatics and apologetics, the ~~ritual~~ <sup>ritual</sup> and ~~living~~ <sup>living</sup> of its ~~bitter~~ <sup>bitter</sup> ~~rel.~~ <sup>rel.</sup> ~~controversies~~ <sup>controversies</sup> and wars, the heresies <sup>the sectarianism & its demon.</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>sub-denomin.</sup> ~~reformation~~ <sup>reformation</sup> can only be understood in the light of the Bible. The ~~same~~ <sup>same</sup> ~~that-pattern~~ <sup>that-pattern</sup> of the ~~man~~ <sup>man</sup>, the Middle Ages was ~~determined~~ <sup>determined</sup> by ~~only~~ <sup>only</sup> ~~history~~ <sup>history</sup>, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~chronology~~ <sup>chronology</sup>, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~causality~~ <sup>causality</sup>, ~~but~~ <sup>but</sup> ~~world-concepts~~ <sup>world-concepts</sup>.   
 Frequently, in the Middle Ages, the church ~~they~~ <sup>they</sup> ~~ordered~~ <sup>ordered</sup> the Bible presented to the layman, and ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~able~~ <sup>able</sup> to read, for the reading, it led to heresies, and to a challenge, the Cath. Church. "Every man can quote Scripture" Every man. Church ~~resents~~ <sup>resents</sup> ~~right~~ <sup>right</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~authentic~~ <sup>authentic</sup> ~~interp.~~ <sup>interp.</sup>. That it has to ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> ~~clergy~~ <sup>clergy</sup> ~~only~~ <sup>only</sup> ~~read~~ <sup>read</sup> ~~bible~~ <sup>bible</sup>. But when in 12c. <sup>12c.</sup> laymen began to read it - ~~terrible~~ <sup>terrible</sup> ~~books~~ <sup>books</sup> ~~out~~ <sup>out</sup>. In S. France the Waldensians (1176) <sup>1176</sup> (Peter Waldo, a merchant of Lyons) <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~Albigensians~~ <sup>Albigensians</sup> ~~(Tornacensis 1177)~~ <sup>(Tornacensis 1177)</sup> were ritually exterminated.



The canon-law of the Church, law governing  
the org. & functions, the Church, and, the  
laity in relation to the Church & to  
Christianity was derived largely from  
the Bible -









It was the Bible which ~~set in motion~~ <sup>were responsible for</sup>  
~~the~~ <sup>which was anti-Ecclesiast. in character & communistic tendencies</sup>  
Wycliffe ~~and~~, which may have  
had its repercussion in the Peasants Revolt  
1381. The Hussite movement, too, which  
began about this time and which finally  
resulted in the creation of Czech  
nationalism, had its inspiration likewise  
in the Bible

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WRHS









④ Would you think of Bohls a literature -

"It is literature smothered by reviews"  
think of it a Theology. But - it is great  
literature - Every type is there - Epic, lyric,  
narrative, the historical. It is essay, story,  
my, sermon, law, drama, ballad,  
prophecy and history - It is all  
with life and light & color - It is other  
with life, movement & struggle - It uses  
to heighten uncreated - plumb depths  
unsuspected - Murkin - P. L. Newman (note 6)

⑤ We wonder that it has appealed to  
poet, dramatist, artist & musician.

⑥ Talk the Pub. phras, ideas, imagery,  
out of Hilton - what have you left?  
Can you separate Pub. from knowing  
without destroying him? What  
is Wants without the Publical background?

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" may well  
be, in all intents & purposes, a part of the  
Publ.

Can you read Frederick's and  
Maugham, without hearing the "stern  
unharmful head" of Paul a General

⑦ Kurkin (note 7) Reveries - "Reveries"



Here then is ~~the~~ another vast influence — The moral  
impulse of W. Eur. Civil — Not always effective — but  
always present & always insistent & admonishing —  
The poor found his champion there. The oppressed  
4. needed sacred writs — He desired to be understood  
found to have prophets for these ~~moderations~~  
their rights. (Prof. Huxley<sup>(3)</sup> - Read).

#### 4. Influence on Literature.

- Enormous. No single book exercised such profound  
influence on literature & so many peoples.

① It should be remembered — summaries — Bact.  
had no written lang. — no literature — Miss.  
designed their alphabets & charac. in order to  
Trans. Bible — grammar & syntax reconstruction.  
Ulfilas - (4c) a Wulfila - Gothic alph-  
~~was~~ first book & in natural liter. - ~~the~~  
influenced all subsequent writing —

② Luther - Goethe - (Note 4)

③ Of influence, English Bible upon Eng. Liter.  
Too much cannot be said — Prof Gardner  
Am. Prof. of English — Harvard. (Note 5)

The stability, the dignity, the simplicity of the Bible  
echoes & reflects thru all the classic liter., the  
Eng. speaking peoples.



5/ The Art / Europe borrowed liberally from the Bible  
for its subject matter. The paintings on the walls  
the bas-reliefs, the sculpture in the Gothic Cathedral  
the ~~glorious masterpieces~~ exalted ~~creations~~, the  
masterpieces. The Renaissance are ~~greatly indebted~~  
~~to the Bible~~ - Raphael - Michelangelo - ~~Perugino~~ - ~~Verrocchio~~ - ~~Donatello~~ - ~~Alberti~~  
in these days but what employed his art  
in depicting some scene ~~from the Bible~~ ~~from the life of~~ ~~pastor~~ ~~prophet~~ ~~and~~  
Holy family and apostles. And ~~the~~ ~~great~~  
too, was the ~~Bible's~~ influence, in the art, the  
stained glass windows, the illuminated manuscripts,  
the tapestry, ~~and other~~ <sup>vestments</sup> church ornamentation.

MAR 1 1930  
6/ The ~~drama~~ <sup>Theatre</sup>, too, was ~~so~~ much to the Bible.  
The western theatre traces its direct line back  
not to the drama of ~~ancient~~ ~~Greece~~ ~~and~~ ~~Rome~~ ~~but~~ to the  
mystery plays of Med. Church festivals,  
when the Bible came ~~was~~ ~~unpacked~~ ~~to~~ ~~people~~  
this medium of simple drama presentations.  
The ~~same~~ ~~plays~~ ~~we~~ ~~day~~ ~~are~~ ~~numerous~~  
that ~~were~~ ~~the~~ ~~European~~ ~~dramatic~~ ~~art~~ ~~but~~ ~~these~~  
~~are~~ ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~as~~ ~~the~~ ~~ancient~~ ~~drama~~ ~~the~~ ~~Idyll~~ ~~of~~ ~~Par-~~

7/ Bible, too, directly resp. for the immortal  
musical ~~natures~~ <sup>and composers</sup>, Bach, Händel,  
Haydn, Mendelssohn & others - The spirit  
Bc. is in their ~~works~~ ~~solemnity~~ ~~power~~



Story of Joseph & Brothers - Moses & Aaron -  
Jephthah's daughter, Samson & Delilah,  
Haman & Mordechai, Solomon & Sheba,  
Athaliah, Judith, Ruth, Job, Salomon  
& John Baptist, Epic of Jesus -  
formed these 5 great dramatic ~~for~~  
Compositions

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H. Kable & Turner

1. his work of illustration, inspiration,  
as greatest human document  
reporting man's struggle upward  
to God & to goodness -





94 in support of salvation  
94

No rule is binding <sup>made it infallible</sup> upon Ch. - but the rule of Bible.  
Prof. <sup>entirely</sup> Bible. It had its advan. & advantages.  
Bible can be <sup>read & its meaning is not always</sup> ~~read~~ <sup>clear & simple</sup> ~~read~~ <sup>but judgment was soon to enter</sup> during life here, but then  
a whole crop of sects sprang up - some, then  
wildly fantastic, like the Anabaptists, the Quakers  
etc - who were destined to read Prof. Ch. with close  
unto your sect volumes - Be that as it may.  
Prof. for 400 yrs, has revolved round the Bible as its  
center of authority and inspiration. Private life &  
conduct were influenced by it. At haver, Calvinist  
Sunday took on strict character of Prof. Sullivan.  
Mather refused to take an oath - Bib.  
names were given to children - A child's  
education centered <sup>so</sup> in Bib. Knowledge  
Community - life - likewise. Von Ullrich -  
quotes from the records, the colony, here  
Haver. (Read) <sup>to this day</sup>

Clearly Ch. & the life history of Ch. people  
cannot be understood without ref. to the  
part which the Bible played in their lives.

1. Wichman, has its own record book - Koran -  
not yet -



1. Single Book. quite regardless. - 2 Reasons  
(1) Impact - canonized (2) One theme - Myriad -  
- library - Single people.

2. Let me at once - 3 major influences

(1) Judaism - incompreh - Essential Expression  
- And if Jud. - שרבי ארבי

(2) Israel - incompreh - Never - molded

[Heine], Literature, Talmud - Pyramid  
daily life - Education - ארבי -  
If Israel -

(3) Christianity. 2 values - Apostles -

O.T. Christian Book - Harmonize -  
Patriotic - Canon Law - Persecuted -  
Scholars - Thought-pattern -

A. Was book of Church, also Heretics  
- proscribed - 12-13c - Waldenses,  
Albigenses -

1. John Wycliffe - Anti-Ch -  
burnt - Peasant Rev. 1381.

2. Hussites

3. Under Henry VIII

4. Tyndale's - burnt - Cross of



St. Paul's - strangled + burnt.

5. But this same Bible - Puritan -  
Cromwell - Round-heads.

### B. Protestant Reformation.

Prepared - To the set up authority -

No rule - Sufficient - Infallible -

Advantages - Translated - Popular

Book - Influenced daily life -

Sabbath - Names - Education -

Influence on Public Life. "New

Haven [2]

Clearly Chris. + history cannot be

### 3. Matthew Arnold - 2 streams -

{ Right thinking - R. Acting  
that - Conduct

{ Life - conquest - Self-conquest

- Into Roman world - Prop. Rish. + Jesus  
new!

- who was always looking up to them!

- Repetition - Barbarians heard -

- Moral influence - The poor! [Huxley]



#### 4. Literature - Enormous -

1. Missionaries - Velflas -
2. Luther - Goethe [4] wants
3. English - Gardner [5]
4. Word often speak of B. as Literature  
- "Smothered in Reviews" - Theology -  
- Great Literature - Every Type -  
Ablaze - Authors - Rises - Mirror  
[Stevens]
5. Talk B. phrase - Milton, Browning,  
Bunyan - Lincoln's, Kipling -  
[Ruskin]

#### 5. Art - basilica - sculpture - paintings

#### 6. Theatre - Miracle - Plays - How often -

7. Music - Oratorios - Bach, Händel,  
Hayden, Mendelssohn, Mozart
8. Bible & Scripture <sup>Stumbling-block</sup> ~~to~~ Slavery, Information  
- Greatest human document -



When, in June, 1639, "all the free planters" of the colony of New Haven "assembled together in a general meeting to consult about settling civil government according to God," the first question laid before them by John Davenport was: "Whether the Scriptures do hold forth a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to God and men **as well in the government of families and commonwealth as in matters of the church.**" "This was assented unto by all, no man dissenting, as was expressed by holding up of hands." The second question was whether all do hold themselves bound by that (plantation) covenant that "in all public offices, etc., we would all of us be ordered by those rules which the Scripture holds forth to us." This was answered in the same way. Therefore it was voted unanimously, "that the Word of God shall be the only rule to be attended unto in ordering the affairs of government in this plantation."



"The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and of the oppressed; down to modern times no State has had a constitution in which the interests of the people are so largely taken into account; in which the duties, so much more than the privileges of rulers, are insisted on, as that drawn up for Israel; . . . nowhere is the fundamental truth that the welfare of the State in the long run depends on the welfare of the citizen, so strongly laid down . . .

I do not say that even the highest Biblical ideal is exclusive of others or needs no supplement. But I do believe that the human race is not yet, possibly never may be, in a position to dispense with it."



Professor Huxley



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"The Bible is a book of eternally effective power."

. . Goethe





"The book which of all books in English is the most native and the most deeply ingrained in our literature and our language."

"In discussing the book I shall look at it as the one book which in the last three centuries has reached the hearts and expressed the deepest feelings of all classes of English-speaking people, as the book which since the time of the great Puritan uprising of the seventeenth century has so worked itself into the bone and sinew of English literature and of the English language that today our common speech is full of its phrases."

"Incidentally, translated into English, and grown into a single book, these books have become the greatest single monument of our own literature."

Prof. J. H. Gardiner,  
Assistant Prof. of English  
Harvard University.



"Written in the East, these characters live for ever in the West; written in one province, they pervade the world; penned in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances; product of antiquity, they come home to the business and bosoms of men, women and children in modern days. Then is it any exaggeration to say that the 'characters of Scripture are a marvel of the mind'?"

Louis Stevenson





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"All that I have taught of Art, everything that I have written, whatever greatness there has been in any thought of mine, whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that, when I was a child, my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible, and daily made me learn a part of it by heart."

Ruskin

