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Is progress a myth?, 1930.



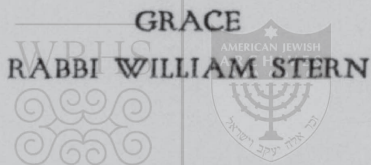
*"Be not forgetful to entertain
strangers, for thereby some have
entertained Angels unawares."*



Program

TOASTMASTER

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RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

" Is Progress a Myth ? "

" SENATOR " EDWARD FORD

" What The World Needs "

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AD-SELL NEWS

"Ad-Sell for Ad-Sellers"

VOLUME 12

MARCH 24, 1930

No. 26

*The Power and Charm of Sublime Eloquence!
The Magnetism of a Scintillating Mentality That
Embraces Sound Judgement, Clear Vision
and Straight Thinking!*

Educator, Author, Orator

**RABBI ABBA
HILLEL SILVER**

of Cleveland, Ohio

—discusses a question involving new intellectual issues forced upon mankind by new inventions, new discoveries, new social standards, new knowledge—changing the human values of a whole world.



"IS PROGRESS A MYTH?"

MONDAY, MARCH 24

LAST LADIES' NIGHT OF THE SEASON

The Board of Directors, believing that the ladies of Ad-Sell would appreciate the opportunity of hearing Rabbi Silver, arranged for an additional ladies' night in the 1929-30 schedule, that they might enjoy this privilege.

Chairman of the Evening—ISADOR ZIEGLER, Attorney

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MR. CHAS. R. SUBER, *Baritone*
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"God's in His Heaven, All's Right With the World" --- John Rice of Princeton

Creighton Makes It Hot for Flaming Youth!

If the four young gentlemen who engaged in forensic combat last Monday night before Ad-Sellers and their guests are representative examples of the youth of America, "the younger generation," and we believe they are), it would seem that the burning question as to whether or not there is hope for our young manhood, ceases to be a question, banishing doubt and fostering a feeling of certainty that there is hope—much hope for and much pride in modern youth—laboratory work to the contrary, notwithstanding.

In what past generation will you find among young men of college age greater keenness of intellect, charm of manner, eloquence, poise, dignity, a finer sense of humor, more splendid frankness and sincerity? Have past generations approached the threshold of mature manhood with as clear a vision, as true an understanding of the responsibilities and the privileges of "living" their lives, with a better appreciation of what it means to be master of the art of living? And isn't that, after all, true success?

With all due respect to the dauntless manner with which the Creighton boys upheld their side of the argument, they were animate, living refutations of their own proposition.

Herbert W. Fischer presided as chairman of the evening and introduced Karl Kreder and John Rice, visiting team of Princeton, upholding the negative of the proposition, and James Fitzgerald and Ben Kazlowsky of Creighton, upholding the affirmative.

Following is a summarized review of the debate on the proposition:

"Resolved, That there is no hope for the younger generation."

James Fitzgerald: We notice on your admission tickets you have printed "strictly stag." Evidently that carried some subtle meaning to some of your members. I am told that one gentleman called and asked if it would be safe to bring his fifteen-year-old son along as his guest.

Of course, Mr. Kazlowsky and myself hope to make things pretty hot for 'flaming youth.' Right from the beginning, I want to say that all of these terrible conditions which we will disclose to you tonight, we discovered not from personal experience but as a result, rather, of personal observation. A certain amount of laboratory work, of course, just had to be done, in order to ascertain just how bad conditions were, and my colleague, Mr. Kazlowsky, did this field work. I,

myself, did the research work in the Public Library—every man to his job.

When we take a stand against this "We won't go home until morning" generation, some of you will place us in the category with the blue-nosed, puritanical, reformers from the country of the gentlemen of the opposition. Perhaps they may picture us as standing tonight just as Jeremiah stood years ago outside the walls of Jerusalem, deploring in doleful accents, the condition of that fair city. But even the gentlemen of Princeton must admit that Jeremiah could not have rented such nice clothes as these in which to do the job. This is nothing new, of course. Aristophanes in Greece, Pliny in Rome and even Daniel Webster in our own country pursued similar policies of decrying conditions of their times. It is not our purpose tonight, however, to bewail and bemoan the conduct of our own generation and throw up our hands and cry "O tempora, O mores." But we do hope to place modern youth under the microscope and conduct a sensible investigation. If there is no cause for alarm, well and good. If there is something wrong, we don't want to be like the ostrich and bury our heads to keep from finding out what this whoopee-making generation is really doing.

Of course, when Creighton says there is "no hope" we do not necessarily mean that youth is sunken in depravity so deeply that they are absolutely beyond recall. No—while there is life, there is hope. And we admit there is certainly plenty of life in the younger generation. We understand this "no hope" to be merely a figurative wording, for the purpose of debate. The question really at issue is whether or not the younger generation is inferior to the preceding generation and whether they are fitting themselves to take the places of their fathers and mothers.

The only way to conduct a thorough investigation is to accompany some of the members of this younger generation as they start out to make hey, hey while the moon shines. Beyond the question of doubt, this is the greatest day in history, at least for any one with a name like Fitzgerald. Perhaps a good many other gentlemen are out other places this evening, doing other things, working up headaches for tomorrow, who will wish they had celebrated as sensibly as we have, by makin only imaginary whoopee.

First of all we will jump into the mother-in-law seat—which in

English means the rumble seat—in the back of a young man's car. He calls for his fair partner—at least she is fair in some respects. We are just a little surprised that this girl is the product of a civilized country. She looks a great deal more like a South Sea Islander with her maximum of paint and her minimum of clothes. We come to the conclusion that the old man was not such a fool who said that women's skirts were growing shorter and shorter and he hoped his eyesight held out for ten years longer. And that calls to mind the story of the man who read that fashion decreed the lengthening of women's skirts and forthwith he spent the last ten dollars he had to take a memory course.

The scantily clad miss climbs in and we're off with breath taking speed. We in the rumble seat cling together to keep from falling out. Evidently the couple ahead are also afraid of tumbling out. At any rate they are clinging closely together.

Our first stop is to lay in provisions for the long, hard night ahead. This type of provision comes wrapped in bottles and has a decidedly alcoholic aroma and one may also detect traces of fusel-oil, glycerine and what not. In fact, conditions have become so bad lately that young people can't tell the difference between prohibition gin and radiator anti-freeze solution. It's a deplorable condition when the younger generation cannot tell the difference between radiator solution and so-called pre-war stuff.

After this stop events occur much more rapidly—and much more happily as well. We arrive at a place where there is dancing, take a quiet

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table in the corner and watch the objects of our investigation as they begin a series of weird manipulations, misnamed dancing. They jibble past, their bodies shaking like two dishes of jello. To anyone who has an appreciation of graceful and rhythmic dancing, the spectacle is nauseating. Listening in to the couple's conversation we discover that we really need an interpreter, for the American language has been replaced by the American "slanguage." But at any rate, from what we gather from their topics of conversation, we think it would be better to pass over them silently and not discuss them in this polite gathering.

We are not left long to meditation for the youngsters soon hurry off to another so-called dance, thence to another place to eat and finally there is nothing left to do but return to that place that used to be called home, but now is just a filling station where the young stock up on food and money and start off again.

We get up about noon the next day and begin thinking the things over that were observed on our trip. Perhaps there is nothing morally wrong in this craze for excitement but it gives youth an outlook of irresponsibility. It indicates the trend of the age, the atmosphere of a pleasure crazed world. We reflect that perhaps there is nothing wrong with the happy, carefree actions of the young men and women, with smoking, drinking, dancing and scanty apparel, but it is the inevitable end to which these things lead that make them dangerous. Youth is restless and impetuous and often he mistakes freedom for license.

So we see from our analysis that the younger generation is living in an atmosphere charged with irresponsibility, restlessness and unrestraint. There is cause, indeed, to worry about any generation which condemns all conventions and seeks to wriggle free from all restraints. John Rice:

The affirmative, in their opening statements on the proposition, have taken us for a joy ride and they have dodged the issue. Princeton did not come out here to dodge issues. We have laboratories, too. We mean "hope" in its most literal sense. We have come half way across the continent to say that "God is still in His heaven and all is right with the world."

The youth of today have the weight of the world on their shoulders and it is a heavy burden. Anyone who says there is no hope gives himself up to a philosophy of fatalism. Pessimism reigns supreme—the pearly gates are closed forever—humanity is bankrupt of that which "springs eternal in the human breast," hope. We of this generation must ever live and know no hope. They can only fail in establishing their premise that "there is no hope." But, since they have so bravely dodged it we must bring them to terms.

It is an age old cry, this cry of age criticising the rashness of youth. The oldest letter ever found proves to be this same old theme—an irate father objecting to the extravagance of his spendthrift son, Homer, in the "Illiad," says that 'the young men are not like they were in my day.' Aristophanes boasted that his generation produced cultured men and not the loud-mouthed revelers that he now found about him. Cicero exclaimed, "O tempora! O mores!" He found cause for alarm in the fact that youths put olive oil on their hair and danced disrobed at feasts. The same condition exists now between young iconoclasts and collegiate cynics.

This condition of age crying out against youth is not new. Our own venerated Benjamin Franklin in one of the pithy lines for which he is famous, says that "reckless youth makes rueful age." Benjamin Franklin, the father of The Saturday Evening Post and several illegitimate children.

Rabelais cried out: "Youth is hot and age is cold; youth is wild and age tame; oh youth! I do adore thee!"

Look at the first generation, Cain and Abel. We read "And Cain slew Abel." The first generation, 100% cold blooded murderers! Can you beat that?

But let us point out the issues that really face us in this question. We believe you will agree that one of the main issues is religion.

The great Dr. Stratton has said, "Look at the millions of young people today who are not Christians." What is Christianity if it is not hope? Young and old are more creedless than ever before in the world's history. Most thinking people agree with Dr. Fosdick when he says that "God is no longer regarded as a sort of cosmic bell boy whom we expect to come willingly and instantly to our aid." This young generation has seen hell burn out. There is a liberal movement taking place. Youth is freed from servitude to the letter of the law. Youth does not believe with Robert Ingersoll that "man is God's noblest creation."

Kazlowsky:

I want to assure the gentlemen from Princeton that Creighton deems it a privilege and an honor to meet in debate representatives from a university so steeped in the tradition and history of our country, steeped in the puritanical principles of the forefathers of this country. We do not quite understand how it is that they should come here to defend the younger generation.

There is only one little point we want to take issue on at this time, and that is relative to their interpretation of the question. We cannot understand how they can come here and insist that where there is life there is no hope. We do not mean there is not the slightest bit of hope for the younger generation. We mean it in a com-

parative sense—the new philosophy compared to the old, new morals compared to the old. That is the way this question must be debated. If not unfair, it is at least a little bit unwise to insist upon the literal interpretation of the phrasing.

Up to this point we have seen something of the behavior and activities of the younger generation, its desires, diversions, conduct. We have revealed the social fabric of the generation eagerly awaiting (though none too courteously) to take the place of you oldsters? What kind of fathers and mothers will they make? What kind of business men, what kind of leaders? From the start, are they apt to carry on your work as you would like it? We believe you will readily admit that the outlook is none too bright. It shall not be my endeavor to deliver myself of a snarling invective against the younger generation. After all it is my generation—I must live with it. Should I become somewhat critical, call me a pessimist if you will. I would rather be a pessimist than an ostrich.

There is little difference in our intelligence. Take, for example, the learned gentlemen from Princeton and the other half of the Creighton team. Their intelligence is about of the same order. The general functioning of our minds changes very little from generation to generation, century to century. But sometimes I begin to wonder if there is not some blight on our mentality. But what we are interested in is not mentality but morality. So, we find the social fabric exceedingly flimsy, both literally and figuratively.



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Published weekly by the Advertising-Selling League of Omaha, Nebraska. Headquarters, Hotel Fontenelle. Phone: JA. 6767-68.

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One hears a great deal of chatter nowadays about the new youth with its new freedom, new ideals and ideas. There is nothing new about 'new youth' but that they are doing things without exercising the slightest bit of self restraint. It is the same old youth with the bridle off. And the man will be largely what he makes of himself in his youth. A child grows up retaining those habits that were tolerated in it during its period of formation. An undisciplined puppy grows up into an undisciplined dog. An untamed colt grows up into an untamed work horse. This so-called new freedom of youth smacks a little of the whistle with which a lonely urchin braves his way through a dark alley or a lonely graveyard.

Youth's injurious use of liquor, scantiness of attire, intimacy of the sexes is a breaking down of ancient barriers. Human nature has remained basically the same for the past six thousand years. Yet the ultra modern would ask us to believe that human nature has overcome its inherent tendencies and desires. Self-styled philosophers use the pulpits to pardon, forgive and actually encourage the prevailing tendencies of the younger generation. Look what it has done! It has emancipated womanhood! Yes, smoking and sex gratification! If these are emancipations then they have come centuries too soon. If we have come to confound license with emancipation, then it has come too soon.

They say youth is rising in revolt against the past, against prudishness, reticence, inhibitions. They uphold a single standard for both men and women instead of the double standard which means that both sexes are drawn down to the same low level instead of elevated to a higher plane. It is only in hell's ledger that two wrongs make a right.

To admit these conditions is to admit the hopelessness of the situation. Convention has been dispensed

with, tradition wiped out, obligations disregarded. License becomes our national motto. What are you oldsters to do before the onslaught of this younger generation? What are our children going to do with and to us, they ask. That a girl may be a bad influence for her mother or a boy for his father is no longer far-fetched or bizarre.

Then, taking up the religious question. It is not alone that the younger generation does not know what they believe on religious and spiritual matters but they have little care to decide what they do believe. There is less respect for authority, less sense of the supernatural. We live for today and let tomorrow go hang. Inertia is the result of a philosophy of this kind.

I could go on indefinitely pointing out these tendencies of our new youth. What we contend at this time is that the customs and procedures of generations must not be ruthlessly swept aside until we have something better to replace them. Suppose we find something better before we destroy what the brains of the ages have built up.

Karl Kreder:

Gentlemen, after that I should hang my head in shame. We are sunk. We haven't a chance. But we are scheduled here, so I guess we better go on. As I rose to speak I found myself again in need of water and that reminded me of the story told of Nebraska's Senator Norris. Senator Norris asked the chairman to supply him with a pitcher of water and the chairman queried, "I don't suppose you want it to drink?" "Oh, no," replied the senator, "I always do a high diving act for the folks."

Another story particularly applicable comes to my mind, about the shooting of a dog. Two men met each other on the street corner and the first man said to the second, "I shot a dawg today." "Ye did?" said the second man. "Was he mad?" "Well," replied the first, "he wasn't any too damn pleased."

Our opponents would have you believe that we are going to discuss the younger generation as a generation that is shot. As a representative of that younger generation, I want to say that I'm not any too damned pleased.

Their contention lacks a certain substance. We are faced with new problems. The problems which face us are different from the ones which faced you. The whole economic structure of the world, the religious and social structure is naturally affected. Tho' creedless, we are not irreligious; our morals, tho' not high, we are hopeful, and we should be hopeful.

A good deal of the information which you are given about the vices of the younger generation is untrue and is, in a sense, merely concocted from the fertile brains of middle-aged journalists.

First, I would take up briefly the morals of the older generation—and I am told I had better speak

briefly. All these tales cannot be just prevarications. I am reminded of the words of a mellow old Missouri gentleman when asked if the youth of his day necked. "Why, bless your heart, son, that's all we ever did. You use autos and we buggies, the H M Y kind. Your autos are more spacious and comfortable but the super intelligence of our mode of power overcame that handicap."

Too many conclusions are drawn from episodes. They always start out with "I know the case of a girl,—she came from a good family, too and—" I don't say things like that don't happen but I do say that they are exceptions and generalizations are drawn from these exceptions which condemn all of us.

In fact, I read the article from which most of that speech came, and I liked it very much. You can always find a wag and a pessimist who will tell you, "I read in the paper this morning how a coed and a law student—" If this is news it always gets on the front pages of all these tabulating newspapers. It is so rare that it is news. If it was commonplace, it would not even get in the papers.

You heard this long speech, and it was applauded—and should have been. But gentlemen, every man here was making mental exceptions of his own children. Every father in our nation would be doing the same thing and there would be about 19 or 20 of the younger generation that would be excepted.

Now about the morals of the younger generation. You agree that it is a fundamental desire of all mankind to mate and bear offspring. Woman seems particularly fitted for this job. Until recent times it was the custom, not confined to Spain, to marry. In our fathers' and grandfathers' and great-grandfathers' time it was done. But it is not being done. At the age of sixteen or seventeen it was possible for a young man to go into some business or profession.

(The balance of the opening speech of Karl Kreder, second speaker for Princeton, and the rebuttals of both teams will be printed in next week's issue.)

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