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Antioch College graduation, concerning working for social and
economic justice and peace, 1932.

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

ANTIOCH COLLEGE

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Saturday, June 25th, 1932

Virgil concludes the four books of his Georgics with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes affecting men and nations were taking place all around him, the poet was nevertheless content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his love of "inglorious ease" - as he himself modestly suggests - but perhaps, more to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature, - in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection, - were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else change, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by ~~the~~ deep Euphrates.

Virgil's judgment seems sound. It is good for all men, in periods of upheaval, of intellectual or social commotion, to retreat, if only for a space long enough to recapture something of their lost spiritual equilibrium, to the quieter fields of thought where one may reflect not so much upon what is timely as upon what is timeless.

Our age, the age into which you are now entering, equipped with the training of an institution of higher learning, is, to say the least, a very

restless age. It is not only full of change, but its changes are sudden swift and radical. The time-span between changes in social thought and practice has been amazingly fore-shortened in our day.

Politically, many nations are in ferment and revolution. Within recent years revolutions have swept over South America, China, India, Spain. Many other centers of unrest exist in the world. The disconcerting fact is that these revolutions seem to have no informing principle, no single goal or objective. In the nineteenth century subject peoples struggled for independence and democracy. The objectives were clearly defined. Today nations swing to dictatorship as readily as to democracy, and after a short time they retrace their steps again. Political thought today is roiled and confused. Democracy and individualism, both heirs of eighteenth century liberalism and the dogmatics of the French Revolution are discredited in many places where once they received enthusiastic allegiance. During the world war the last great attempt was made to enkindle the martial spirit of our people with the democratic appeal. It succeeded. But it was for the last time. It can never be done again. For in common with other peoples we have lost our religious faith in democracy. We may continue to employ it as a working hypothesis. It is no longer prophecy and a battle-cry.

Economically the whole world finds itself in the grip of a severe depression. The economic machine has broken down and with it many of the sacrosanct theories of economic individualism inherited from an older and a different civilization. Two hostile systems of economic theory and practice have finally come into a life-and-death struggle, and from this struggle a new economic philosophy will undoubtedly emerge. For better or for worse, a new economic order is coming to pass. The old gods are vanishing and we have not yet erected altars to the new gods.

Religion, which in olden days was a strong, sustaining influence in men's lives disciplining them and guiding them, is not nearly as potent a factor today. Men and women in our land have not become hostile to religion as are the Bolsheviks of Russia, only indifferent, as were the Romans in the days of their national decline. We are tolerant of religion, even sympathetic. Some subscribe to it as good policy. But it no longer functions in the lives of many of us as a living presence, as a controlling and directive influence.

Morally our age is in a whirl. Men seem unable to find a set of strong, simple, moral certainties to which to render their eager loyalties and upon which to build a positive and tranquil moral life. Many confused voices are heard in our land proclaiming doctrines at sharp variance with one another, some of them utterly strange and subversive.

Thus in every department of our national life today there is a great thundering in war by deep Euphrates. Battles are being waged. Mighty changes are taking place and vast transformations. At such times it is not unwise to follow the practice of the divine poet, and to turn, if only for an hour's contemplation, to the things unchanging and immovable, to the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

There are certain ideals or principles which are indispensable to any age regardless of its intellectual, political or economic complexion. Whether the age is one of faith, reason, or scepticism, whether in its economic arrangement it is capitalistic or socialistic, and in its political organization democratic or dictatorial, certain basic ideals are inseparable from it. Without them it cannot endure. They are the quintessential values which carry a civilization along, which conserve its best traditions and which effect those adjustments

made necessary by new conditions. Just as there are qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of ²man five thousand years ago and which will hold their identical worth among men ten thousand years hence - integrity, social-mindedness, self-restraint, courage, loyalty - ~~so~~ there are social values intellectual and spiritual enterprizes and immemorial tasks which were from the beginning and which will persist unto the end.

✓ These abiding social values are quite old-fashioned. They are not new, or clever or smart or heady like a new wine. They are as unsensational as a mathematical formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists are attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours.

There is man's immemorial task of truth-seeking. This is man's cross, his crown and his immortality. Man does not know the nature of the truth which he seeks. Perhaps he will never know. It would take a mind as vast as the universe to comprehend the universe. Perhaps man, being finite and mortal, constricted by inadequate channels of cognition and dwelling upon an orb which is an insignificant speck in the limitless reaches of cosmic space, will never enjoy a knowledge which is more than fragmentary, distorted and provincial. Perhaps the smell of clay and blood, of death and decay will always rise from his most exalted thoughts; for man can never transcend his own humanity.

But if there is much that we shall never know there is much, very much, that we may come to know which may increase our well being and security. If uttermost and complete truth ^{must} ~~may~~ escape us, some compensations of truth-seeking are nevertheless always within our reach.

Man has groped for truth since the beginning of his reflective life and in the face of terrific obstacles. "The language of truth," declared Euripides, "is simple." But while the language of truth may be simple once it is discovered and formulated, the quest for it is terrifically difficult and the acceptance of it even more so. The laws of Newton are relatively simple in their formulation but centuries of bitter struggle against a millennial inertia, against Ptolmaic traditions in astronomy and orthodox theologic cosmogonies had to pass and the sacrificial labors of men of Copernicus' stamp and Kepler's and Galileo's had to take place, before Newton's simple laws of gravitation could be finally stated and accepted. The human race must overcome its own resistance to truth, its own intellectual sloth, its own dislike for new and disturbing ideas, for new adjustment, its unwillingness to surrender cherished privileges and the ideas in which they are entrenched. Men prefer routine to initiative; for routine which is also a necessary element in progress, has nevertheless the advantage of being effortless and therefore more desirable. Truth when it is first served up to man is never palatable. It never comes with the pomp and circumstance of tradition. Truth is never aristocratic. It is plebeian. It reeks of the soil. It is hard and unflattering and nearly always emanates from the unprivileged commons.

(The chief function of education, I take it, is to make of us truth-seekers. To be sure education must enable us to achieve with increasing efficiency the legitimate goals of our lives. To this end education will train us in the ways of quick, resolute, effective and creative thought. It will endow us with canons of judgment. But it must do much more than that. It is not enough to know how to discover truth. We must want to discover it and having discovered it, we must be ready to adjust our life to it. An education which does not give us the

prophetic urge towards truth seeking and the passionate resolve to translate truth into a way of life is fine feathers or a cunning device for the careerist and self-seeker. It is not the bread of life.)

In this, our sad age of drifting and confusion, we hear a great deal about the need ^{for} new leadership. What we need, however, is not new leadership but new discipleship. We have leaders enough who possess the vision, the program and the method. They lack, however, followers of resolute courage. There is enough truth in the world today to blow to pieces every indurate obstruction in the way of social progress. There is wanting, however, the valor, the faith and the unselfish idealism on the part of men, to apply the dynamics of such truth. Many know truth but do not choose to follow it. It is one thing to reveal truth. It is quite another thing to have it accepted.

(Graduation from an institution of higher learning should be tantamount to a mandate for a life-long quest of truth. As university graduates you have been admitted into the goodly fellowship of the Knights of the Open Mind. You have a life-long pilgrimage ahead of you, - the quest of the Holy Grail of Truth.

The world is full of half-truths, of slogans and catch-words, of venerable stupidities, and of absurdities decked out in the glittering raiment of modernity. Men have perfected the art of befuddling the minds of their fellowmen by cunning propaganda. Special interests everywhere find ways of biasing our judgments through the control of the channels of public information. Neither the press, the classroom, the platform or the pulpit is in position to give us forthright and objective truth at all times. (Witness the punitive measures recently visited in our city and state on teachers in schools and colleges who dared to speak the truth as they saw it.)

You must be on your guard against all the powers that would rob you of your birthright. Let neither tradition, convention or mass-judgment keep you from exercising your critical faculties in separating the truth from the false, the real from the unreal, the fact from the fiction, and let not expediency deter you from living your truth once you have found it. "Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord God shall fight for thee." /

Then there is man's immemorial task of seeking justice. "Justice, Justice shalt thou pursue!" Look about you, and see whether justice is done in our land. In the midst of plenty, millions are in want. Our bins are glutted with the generous yield of the soil. Our coffers are filled with abundant gold. Our machines can produce all the commodities that we need. We have the skill and the technical knowledge and our people are not averse to labor. And yet millions are unemployed, driven to poverty and to the greater humiliation of charity. The pride of our manhood and womanhood is periodically dragged into the dust by an economic system which produces excessive wealth for the few and economic insecurity for the many. An unsocial competitive individualism has given us a condition of planlessness and chaos. P We live under an economic system which periodically disgorges its victims. Periodically it pries millions of men loose from their means of livelihood and sends them broken and helpless to knock at the doors of charity. This is not the first instance of mass unemployment within the memory of living men. It is a constantly recurring phenomenon, seemingly inherent in the very nature of our capitalistic society. Prosperity and depression have been the obverse and reverse of our coin of

national economy for generations. Our concentrated national wealth has been purchased through a partial or total periodic impoverishment of our working population. There are insect societies where most of the offspring are partially starved and allowed only imperfect development in order to make possible a populous society. Our economic order has been operating on such crude, primordiate principles.

(We permit our industrial system which is the most highly developed in the world to employ millions of men in the production of huge wealth which largely goes into the hands of the relatively few owners of industry, to pay its men in normal times wages which fall short of the requirements of a decent standard of living, and as soon as the opportunities for profit-making cease, to throw these men into the discard, advising them to go to the charitable agencies, to which the workers themselves had previously been asked to contribute, to beg for famine rations for themselves and their families. Such is the cynicism and brutality of our economic order! It has even failed to give to its workers the security of servitude which Feudalism once gave its serfs. So that a new terror has now come into the world. Every generation has its own overshadowing dread - pestilence, famine, invasion, the devil or the end of the world, - and the lives of ^{each} ~~that~~ generation are darkened because of it. Into the twentieth century has come the dread terror of Unemployment which hangs like a pall over the homes of the toiling masses.)

How blind the responsible leaders and protagonists of the present system must be, not to see the fateful threat in all this to their own cherished interests. Even a bad system must have certain principles to which it remains unswervingly loyal. A system which makes a travesty of its own code of ethics is doomed. The ethics of capitalism places great value upon the virtues of work, industry and thrift. Rewards, it preaches, are

in store for the faithful worker. Prosperity waits upon industry. The thrifty and saving are assured of security and advancement. But prolonged periods of unemployment give the lie to this entire code. The rewards of years of faithful labor are the bread-line and the eviction order. The thrifty are compelled to consume their savings in idleness and ultimately they find themselves in the same wretched plight as the spendthrift and wastrel. Our system teaches the dignity of labor and surrounds it with all forms of indignity. Youth is taught to eschew idleness, to work hard and to accept gladly the high discipline of labor. Yet hundreds of thousands of boys and girls who have become of working age since 1929 have not been able to find a day's work since, and have been consigned to idleness which is the seed-bed of mischief, crime and delinquency.

Most assuredly we are still in our economic dark ages, yet many of us were beguiled by a few brief years of abnormal prosperity into believing that we had entered a broad new era of economic enlightenment, progress and justice. We know now that we were fond and foolish optimists; for we had laid none of the foundations for such a new era; - no planned national economy, no central and scientific control of production, no correlation between production and consumption, no adjustment between the productivity of the machine and hours of labor, no plans for the distribution of all available work among all available workers or the transfer of surplus labor from one industry to another, no provision for a full measure of insurance against the economic disabilities of unemployment, sickness and old age. We expected a system of ruthless competition, bordering on anarchy, to yield us those advantages which only a socially-minded and a socially-organized and controlled

economic system can yield.

We must now give up, if we have not already, the messianic economic romancing which characterized the pre-depression era, and all the apocalyptic dreams of miracle-working captains of industry who by acts of mystic financial wizardry would make us all rich and put two cars in every workingman's garage. Painstakingly and forcibly we must apply ourselves to the task of a radical economic reconstruction, drawing upon our own best knowledge, courage and enthusiasm.

We must build a new civilization. Spires, domes and minarets are not religion. Neither are radios, airplanes and swarming cities civilization. The essence of civilization is the free, secure and creative social life. The criteria of civilization are neither wealth, nor size, nor speed, nor invention but the values which it places upon human personality, the rewards which it grants to labor and merit, the quality of its intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic interests and the stimulus which it gives to those social factors which make human life sweeter, more confident and more joyous. Measured by these criteria our present-day civilization is but an ultra-modern expression of barbarism, and the sharp contrast which exists between its social backwardness and its scientific progress only makes the fact more bewildering and, at the same time, more menacing.

We must build a new civilization. We must wage war upon chaos. Chaos is matter resisting form. Chaos is the principle of the unformed, the unorganized, the uncontrolled. The creative, life-giving word today is social control of industry. This is in no sense a war upon individualism or upon the individual and his sovereign, inalienable rights. It is not the individualism of growth and self-expression which is menacing society today, but the individualism of exploitation, the individualism which destroys the individual.

We have the power to build such a new civilization. Man's mind

is capable of solving every problem created for him by the machines which he created. Man can master his machine-world. Only naive and easily frightened romanticists will call for a moratorium on inventions and the scrapping of machines. The machine has lifted the curse of drudgery from the shoulders of the workers of the earth. It will in the future release more and more of man's time and energies for the real joyous adventure of living. We have till now stupidly misused the gifts of the mind-made machine, permitting the few to monopolize the wealth which it produced, and the leisure and the security. Put the machine in the hands of a truly social ideal, and mankind will be launched on a career of social evolution such as no prophet of the race has ever dreamt of.

Unless justice is established, unless men are restored to their inalienable right to provide ^{for} themselves and their dependents with at least the minimum requirements of a decent standard of civilized living, unless the toilers of the world are protected against the disabilities of unemployment, sickness and old age, and permitted to share more equitably in the good things of life which they help to produce, our civilization will go down to defeat. The battle lines are already drawn.)

And lastly there is the immemorial task of peace - the age-old but unfulfilled hope of the race. (The other day I heard a friend of mine say: "Peace, peace, I am tired of all this peace talk. Wherever I go they talk of peace. Every newspaper and magazine that I pick up is filled with articles on peace. I am tired of it all."

And I said to him: "Yes friend, you are tired, but not nearly as tired as the millions of mothers of the earth who sent their sons away to the last war, sons who never came back. The hearts of these mothers, ~~they~~ they are much more tired than yours, my friend, tired with the weary loneliness and the vain longing which only the grave will quiet at last. You are tired, my friend, but not nearly

as tired as the millions of men who came back from the war maimed, blinded or gassed, and who now carry through the weary years the fragments of their shattered lives and their broken dreams. They are tired."

Peace? There is no peace in our world today. At a time when the nations of the earth are beset with hunger and want they are wasting that substance which should go to feed the hungry and clothe the naked for the maintenance and upbuilding of large war machines which insure them against any possible future peace. Our own country which led the way in an international pledge to outlaw war, spends one-fifth of what the rest of the world combined is spending upon its war organization. This state of affairs cannot last. The whole system will crack.) The coming generation will have to choose between two alternatives: either the time-honored aggressive nationalism, with its need for military preparedness, leading to defensive alliances, secret diplomacy and war; or international cooperation and inter-dependent nationalism - with its agencies for peaceful settlement of differences, leading to disarmament, the abolition of war and - peace. There is no other choice!

This generation of oldish men who went through the last war will not be able to make the choice. They may wish for peace, but always they will think in terms of war. They are "lukewarm in faith and old." Salvation is not with them. But their day is nearly done. Their civilization, for better or for worse, ended, politically in 1918 and economically in 1929. But you are to build the new civilization. Seek peace and the ways of peace! Do not be trapped into another war. Do not be led as the youth of the last generations, like docile lambs to "a mad, unnecessary sacrifice.")

These, my friends, are the high altars of humanity - Truth, Justice, Peace - to which life is summoning you. May you be found worthy of your destiny.

ANTIOCH COLLEGE

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SEVENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT



TEN O'CLOCK, SATURDAY MORNING

JUNE THE TWENTY-FIFTH

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-TWO

CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Betty Rose Bachrach	Jarvis Bardwell Hadley
Horace Carl Champney	Jean Christine Hanson
James Stainforth Earley	Stanley Obermann Hoerr
John Polhemus Elliott	William Bross Lloyd, Jr.

Bachelor of Arts

*Henry Shaw Adams, Jr.	Lawrence Wayne Hodges
Robert McCormick Adams	Ruth Penfield Hollenbeck
Leon Samuel Alschuler	Ruth Clark Hutchinson
Arthur Allison Amsler	Paul Browning Johnson, Jr.
Waldemar Alexander Ayres	Donald Allen Jones
*Joe Riley Beckenbach	Martha Ann Palmer Juringus
Richard Scott Berkey	Janet Irvine Leckie
Lincoln Wilmarth Bishop	Ruth Rebecca Leibig
Ellsworth Hovey Brown	E. Willis Logan
*Dorothy Ellen Carr	John Lawrence Lord
*Wellman Chamberlin	Dorothy Lunt
Charlotte May Corbett	†Jean Van Alstyne MacKay
Eliot Davis	*Rufus Edward Miles, Jr.
Robert Foster Duff	Paul Lewis Nagel
Margaret Janet Edge	Mary Isabel Sanders
Kathryne Rose Franklin	Lilian Eleanor Schueler
Robert Coleman Hall	Catherine Loveday Shaw
Helen Margaret Hanson	Edward Stanwood, III
*Monroe Kamman Harris	*Ruth Fehr Steidinger
Violet Romaine Hausrath	Georgia Marcella Thomas
John Alden Hewitt	Clair Ellis Wilcox

Bachelor of Science with Honors

William Charles Bruckman

Bachelor of Science

†Sara Brown	*Frederic E. Fuller
*Gordon Anders Carlson	James Beye Fyfe
Bruce Gregory Davis	*Frederick Davis Herbert, Jr.
Ernest Clifford Dybdal	*Donald Follansbee MacGregor
John Hamblin Dyer	Charles Philip Moos
Henry Benedict Fisher, Jr.	*Carl Albert Sipe
	John Litchfield Stoughton

*Distinction in field of concentration.

†Degree deferred.

PROGRAM

Marche Pontificale Gounod

College Orchestra

Invocation Paul Jones

Address Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

Quartette in G minor, Gypsy Rondo Brahms

William N. Smith, violin Herman Krebs, 'cello
Richard Colburn, viola Ava H. Champney, piano

Conferring of Degrees President Morgan

Antioch Hymn Sung by the Audience

ANTIOCH HYMN

*From many ways and wide apart,
Fair Antioch, at thy call,
To thee we turn with loyal heart,
Dear Mother of us all!
For more than gold has been the lore
We learned beside thy knee—
The faith that grows from more to more,
The truth that maketh free.*

*Be proud, O Antioch, of thy past!
It lives in thee today;
And still its high traditions cast
Their light upon thy way.
Our love and hope ring out their chime
Above thy festival;
Thy children bless thee through all time,
Thou who hast blessed us all.*

—F. L. HOSMER.

The public is invited to the Commencement luncheon served upon the campus at 12 noon. Tickets are sixty cents each.