

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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National Peace Conference, 1936.

The religion which I have the honor to represent to-night - Judaism - has an ancient tradition of peace. The vision of universal peace - of nations beating their swords into ploughshares and learning war no more - was first born in the soul of the people of Israel. 2700 years ago, Isaiah and Micah, voiced the high hope that a redeemed and reconciled humanity would stream into the mountain of the Lord's house in Zion - a spiritual Geneva - where the law of nations would be proclaimed and just international arbitraments rendered, so that thereafter all nations would walk in the ways of God, and not in the ways of strife and war.

Just as peace has been an historic and essential doctrine of
Judaism, so has it been an indispensable factor in the security and well-being
of the Jewish people. No people suffers as much from war as does the Jewish
people. Every war takes a double toll of misery from the Jew. The brutal
persecutions of the Jews in Germany to-day, and the menacing spread of antiSemitic agitation in so many parts of the world, are directly traceable to the
World War - to put the economic disorganization and impoverishment of peoples
and all their attendant conflicts and bitterness which bear down with particular
harshness upon a minority group - and to national frustrations and wounded
national pride which seek compensation in chauvenism and intolerance. Perhaps
more than any other people, the Jew has a momentous stake in world peace.

That church and synagogue, while pledged to peace and preaching peace, have nevertheless failed to bring it appreciably nearer to realization, goes without saying. That both church and synagogue, were tragically helpless either to prevent or to end the last war and that they docilely lent themselves

to the warring states as channels for war propaganda, is acknowledged in sadness and contrition by all the best spirits of both religious organizations. And that the drive and compulsion of another war, when once it is declared, and the political emergencies which that would create, and the patriotic madness which it would unleash might compel the church and synagogue to do the same thing over again - that too is clearly and fearfully envisaged by them. They realize that the opportunity to work for peace, and to avert war, is in times of peace. When war is once declared, the choice is blind obedience to the authority of the state - or martyrdom. And the martyrdom of a few or even of a large number of brave spirits who refuse to fight never has and never will put an end to war.

Peace will never come to pass through pacifism. Pacifism is an ideal not adapted to the Western World. It is questionable whether outside the lives of some few saintly individuals or some small detached religious communities, pacifism can ever be a decisive factor in the pacification of the world.

Peace will never come to pass through peace-time pledges on the part of earnest and sincere youths never to fight. It is a noble gesture, but quite inadequate to meet the situation. There always will be enough young men ready to fight either out of a sense of duty and loyalty, or out of sheer adventure - and their number will far outweigh the others who will be overwhelmed, drawn in by suction, or destroyed.

Peace will never come to pass through extolling the virtues of peace, and, by contrast, through painting the horrors, the tragedies, the destructiveness and the futility of war. People know all that! The desirability of peace does not have to be sold to the masses of the world! Outside the

ranks of the professional militarists, Fascist adventurers and munition
merchants who profit from war - the great masses of the world desperately want
and long for peace. Peace will never come to pass through disarmament conferences.

Every disarmament conference has led to increased armaments. Nations will
disarm only when they will feel secure. Back of all competitive armament is
fear. Until the nations of the world are assured of a strong, competent
international agency which will protect them against aggression, they will not
disarm - and competitive armament is a sure provocative of war.

The world's hope, therefore, lies in the establishment of such institutions and agencies for collective security, backed by force, swiftly and impartially employed, as will give all peoples the confidence of protection against attack and the invasion of their rights. A heague of Nations, restrained by its own avowed friends, from enforcing its findings through automatic sanctions, is actually an unwilling accessory to treaty violations and definitely a menace to world peace. The failure of the League to act against Japan when it invaded China, encouraged Mussolini, a few years later, to invade Ethiopia. The failure of the League to act effectively against Italy, encouraged Hitler, a few months later, to scrap the Locarno pact. The failure of the League to act against Nazi Germany will undoubedly be responsible for the next international crisis, pregnant with war.

Only a world organization which has the economic and military power to back up all international covenants, and which is free to employ it when the occasion arises, can be of any significance in the kind of a world in which we live.

And it is upon the building or the rebuilding of such a world organization, that the constructive thought and energy of all peace-loving men

and women throughout the world should be concentrated. This, in our judgment, is the practical way to Peace.



The religion while I have the hour to refuserth graduous has an ancient tradition of prace. The vision of uneversal peace - of riations beating their sunds into plunghshares and learning was no more - was first born in the soul the high hope that a volume I and resourcited human by would steam couts the coountain, the house in Zion, he perclaimed, and tinternational arbitrations would not that therapter prakers until walk in the ways of Bod, and not in the ways of stripe and war. Just as peace has hen an historie and essential doction y Judaismi dos has it to been an indispersible factor in the seconds and will-being I've Jewish people. No people suffers as much from war told of misery from the Jew. The brutal persontions of the Jews in Germany to-day, and the menacing spread of outs- Sent he agitation in so many parts 1 the word, as diverly travable to the world war - To the securine disorganizations and impererishment of peoples and all their attendant conflicts and bitterness which hear down with fartrailer harshvers upon a minimity gents- and to national frustrations and revurded national file which seek compensation in Thanvenis un my ma aul cutolerance.

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