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Reel
178

Box
65

Folder
477

The record and the promise, 1938.

THE RECORD AND THE PROMISE
- Dr. Abba Hillel Silver -

1938

The Jewish people enters the modern world without any apology. It takes its place among the peoples of the earth as one of the most creative and culturally prolific agencies of modern civilization. When one realizes the relative size of Israel in comparison with the vast population of mankind, one may be filled with a justifiable sense of pride when he contemplates the amazing number of precious intellectual and spiritual gifts which Israel has contributed to the total ~~life~~ life of mankind.

Israel has been a creative factor in the world ever since ancient times. In the ancient world Israel re-evaluated all the religious and ethical concepts of mankind. It developed the idea of the one spiritual God and it waged a millennial warfare upon idolatry and polytheism until it finally destroyed them. In the ancient world, Israel gave to mankind the most exalted code of private and public morality which has, to this day, remained the treasured heritage of the whole of mankind.

To Christianity, Israel contributed its three essential elements - the personality of Jesus, the Bible and its basic moral principles. To Mohammedanism Israel likewise contributed its essential monotheism as well as many of its heroes, legends and laws.

In the Middle Ages, Israel served as the channel of communication between the Arabic and the Latin civilizations. Through their numerous translation of Arabic works into Latin, the Jewish thinkers of the Middle Ages made possible the transmission of Greek learning and science to Europe, thereby paving the way for the revival of learning - for the Renaissance.

The Hebrew Bible and its basic religious and ethical teachings were also important influences in the Protestant Reformation and in Puritanism.

So that the Jew enters the modern world with a unique record of achievements and benefits bestowed upon mankind. And in the modern world the creative genius of

the race, freed from the shackles of the disabilities and discriminations which bound and constricted it, burst forth into an amazing era of productivity. In every field of human endeavor, in commerce and industry, in science and the arts, in philosophy and education, in government and statesmanship, the Jewish mind carved highways of human progress.

The Jews have enjoyed emancipation in modern times only since the French Revolution. It is only within the last twenty years that one-half of the Jews of the world obtained citizenship. In many countries, full social and political equality are still denied our people. And yet, despite these disabilities and restrictions upon opportunity, the Jewish mind has been functioning most enterprisingly and fruitfully in every sphere.

Both in the development of modern capitalism as well as in the development of the modern labor movement and in the social theories and experiments for the establishment of greater economic justice in the world, Jews have played a leading and decisive role.

It still remains the task of some future historian to tell the full story of the pioneering role which Jews have played in the establishment of the essential industrial, commercial and colonial enterprises of the modern world.

For the part which many Jews have taken in the battles for the economic liberation of mankind, Israel is being subjected to one of the most vicious, vituperative and concerted attacks of reactionaries known to our history. Their very boundless, hysterical and sputtering hatred of us is evidence of the importance which they attach to Jewish leadership in the fields of social and economic reform and reconstruction.

It is significant that in many fields of thought Jews have written the basic textbooks - Karl Marx for Socialism, Ricardo for Political Economy, Lazarus for Racial Psychology, Hertz for Electricity, Freud for Psychoanalysis, Einstein for ~~Modern~~ Physics. What field

in science, art and literature, in music and the drama, in education and government can one point to, wherein one will not find outstanding Jewish names?

All this is said not in a spirit of racial braggadocio. There is too much of that sort of thing in the modern world. But because there are so many venomous traducers of Israel on the rampage in the Western World today, determined upon depreciating, derogating and disparaging our people, these things need to be said. There are very few peoples in the world, even among those who are numerically much stronger than Israel, and whose careers were far less tragic, scattered and checkered than that of our people, who can even approximate the remarkable achievements of Israel. All that is quintessential in the heritage of the Western World, derives from two sources - the Greek and the Hebrew.

And the story is not yet fully told. After thirty-five centuries, it may be said of Israel as it was said of Moses: "His ~~eye~~ ^{eye} is not dimmed and his natural force is not abated."

With vigor undiminished, with a vast hunger for life, with an indefeasible faith and courage, Israel continues today its historic destiny - a pathfinder, a pioneer and a builder.