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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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With our eyes toward the future, 1957.

see also  
sermon 919

"WITH OUR EYES TOWARD THE FUTURE"

An address  
On the occasion of the  
44th General Assembly of the  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Royal York Hotel --- Toronto, Canada  
May 1, 1957

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

*2/11 5737 of 272*  
*(Canada)*

We may face the future with confidence because our people in America are overwhelmingly loyal. They are not conscious assimilationists. They are not deliberately running away from their faith and people as was the case with certain Jewries in the Old World, especially in the century before the World Wars. Our people have demonstrated a steady attachment and a most commendable solidarity with their fellow Jews in other lands during the supreme misery of the recent decades of collapse and disaster -- the blackest of our many nights. Their solicitude and generosity have been a source of reassurance to us and of amazement to the world. Our people have also built their communal institutions with a lavish hand. They have been remarkably responsible<sup>v2</sup> to the needs of their community life. And if the erection of many beautiful temples, synagogues and schools in our country is an indication of loyalty to the faith of our fathers then we may be fully justified in our confidence for the future. We have good material to build with.

We may also look confidently towards the future because American Jewish life is evolving in an environment which is more than friendly to religion and not unfriendly to religious minorities. Religion is not proscribed on these shores, the religionist is not disadvantaged, and Judaism is not under attack. The world in which we live gives every encouragement to religion and



Judaism is free to develop and to express itself. Government and people alike have profound reverence for the spiritual forces in civilization, and attitude which is part of the essential pattern of their history. Judaism can thrive in such an environment.

Progressive Judaism may also look hopefully toward the future, because religious liberalism has always been a powerful factor in the spiritual life of America and has had a long and honored tradition. It is still a vital and vigorous force among important if not dominant sections of our population. Progressive religion does not have to fight for its position defensively on the American scene. Nor does progressive Judaism.

But just as there are factors which give us ground for confidence in our future there are factors which <sup>should</sup> give us ground for concern. The impressive facade of American Jewish life may be somewhat misleading. The Temples and Synagogues are there but the worshippers are not, at least not in numbers comparable with the physical amplitude of the edifices or commensurate with the obligation of religious affiliation. It is not possible to serve our faith with token commitments. It was an ancient prophet of Israel who cautioned his people not to put their trust in the deceptive words: "This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord." We build Temples and they are spacious and beautiful and modern and ultra-modern, but are we building men and women whose <sup>w</sup>orshipful feet will throng their courts (Hebrew word) <sup>live</sup> eagerly and exultingly.

We should build beautiful Temples and Synagogues. It is fitting that we should worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and amidst the holiness of beauty. Why should we dwell in houses of cedar and the ark of the Lord in a tent? But the beautiful structures which we erect will not of themselves



insure the survival of our faith. They may even beguile us into dangerous self-delusions. It is we who are the Temple of our faith, ~~They may even beguile us into dangerous self-delusions or its whited sepulcher.~~ It is we who are its girders and walls, its arches and domes, its symbols and ornaments. It is our loyalty which is the replenishing oil of its Ner Tamid. The holy ark will forever remain empty and desolate if the hearts of devout worshippers will not abide therein.

Long ago, Sage and Psalmist warned our people against the tree of many branches whose roots were few. They taught us to look below the surface and <sup>To</sup> regard the roots. In their seasoned wisdom they knew that the winds of the world do often sweep down in violent fury, upon men and institutions and pluck them up and overthrow them if their roots are few. They also taught us that we must take root downward, if we are to bear fruit upward. (~~Hebrew~~ *אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְלֹא עֵץ אֲנִי*)

How deep are our roots: Have we enough reserve of spiritual energy to withstand a prolonged crisis? Are we fast depleting the inventory which past ages have accumulated? Have we taken stock of our powers of resistance, not to affliction -- we have learned how to react to affliction -- but to the ~~religiously~~ weakening influences of well-being and prosperity? Is it in the second or third generation that the process of drift and dissolution sets in, and why? What is our strength that we should hope?

What were the strong and firm roots which enabled our faith and people to outride the many cyclonic storms of the past? Not every Jewish community was so successful, but <sup>where</sup> there it was, it was due to the fact that it had sunk deep roots in Jewish learning and study, and what was learned was <sup>zealously</sup> transmitted.



The injunction which our forefathers observed throughout the ages was: "and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in they house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, when thou risest up." It was the ~~unflagging devotion~~ cultivation of heart and mind in the rich unfolding of the Torah, to them a <sup>פנין חיים</sup> ~~(Hebrew word)~~ an inexhaustible source of living truth, which insured survival for our people.

These were the roots of our people's life -- not alone the Jewish scholar but the educated Jewish layman, ~~f~~ the man for whom the Bible and ~~the~~ later Jewish writings and the Hebrew language, which is the very key to the casket of our literary treasures, were not a sealed book. Professor Schechter recorded what is undoubtedly a cold historic fact when he declared that Hellenistic Judaism was the only one known to history which dared to make the experiment of dispensing with the Sacred Language. The result was death. It withered away and terminated in total and wholesale apostasy from Judaism.

Is it well with us on the score of Jewish learning? Are our Sunday schools producing a generation of truly educated Jewish men and women closely familiar



with the chronicles of our glorious years and the noble testament of their peoples' ~~XXXXX~~ courage and sacrifices? Are they at ~~XXXXX~~ home in the literature which the great minds and pious hearts of Israel have produced? Have they enough provision for the long journey ahead--or is their food, which came warm to ~~XXXXX~~ us from our fathers, now dry and mouldy?

I have a feeling that ~~XXXXX~~ we have been growing satisfied with surfaces rather than with depths, with a minimum; or if not ~~XXXXX~~ satisfied, then reconciled. There are those who consider even this minimum as excessive. If that is the case then there is ground here for deep concern for the future of our faith and the survival of our people.

I hear from time to time, voices raised in pathetic yearning for the dear old days of Classical Reform Judaism, now seemingly gone ~~XXXX~~ beyond recall. I do not know what is meant by Classical Reform Judaism. The founding fathers of Reform Judaism differed sharply among themselves ~~XX~~ on nearly every question of doctrine and practice. Only one thing they <sup>shared</sup> ~~showed~~ in common. They were no longer Orthodox. Reform Judaism ~~XXXX~~ always represented a movement ~~within~~ Judaism, not a party or a sect. Sects never thrived for long in Judaism. A party or a sect may stand still on a fixed platform but a movement must move, or it becomes petrified into a ~~XXXX~~ set of dogmas and so dies as a <sup>mighty</sup> cadence of dynamic principles. Even the framers of the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885 recognized the progressive character of Judaism, and "were convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historic identity with our great past."



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The founders of so-called Classical Reform Judaism were scholars-- some of them great Hebrew scholars. Geiger and Einhorn and Adler and Samuel Hirsch and Kaufman<sup>u</sup> Kohler, among the most classical of the early Reformers, were ~~an~~ ardent students of Hebrew literature. They made significant contributions to the Science of Judaism. They wrote important books and published important periodicals in many fields of Jewish knowlege. Their greatest wish was to disseminate Jewish learning among their fellow Jews, young and old. Isaac Meyer Wise's proudest acheivement and his deepest love was the Hebrew Union College--a scholastic ~~institution~~ institution for the training of rabbis and teachers. "Reform", he asserted, "must begin with the spreading of light, more light, as much light, indeed, as the age can ~~xxxx~~ bear. Instruction, more instruction, as much of it as the intellect is capable of receiving." They all hoped for and worked for an educated Jewish laity. They held, of course, that a man need not and should not, pray in a language which he did not understand, and that therefore prayer in Hebrew was not indispensable.



*self-evident truth*  
The ancient rabbis had already asserted that. But even though they recognized that many Jews unfortunately no longer knew the Hebrew language, they hoped that Jews would learn and would come to understand it. Not a single Reform leader ever declared that in order ~~to~~<sup>for</sup> to be a one hundred percent Classical Reform Jew, one must be an all-out, ~~king~~<sup>king-size</sup> Am Ha-aretz!

The outstanding Reform leaders of the past did not conceive of Judaism as a mere "religious confession."

"The creed," wrote Dr. Kohler, formerly President of the Hebrew Union College, "is a condition sine qua non of the Christian Church. To disbelieve its dogmas is to cut oneself loose from membership. Judaism is quite different, The Jew is born into it and cannot extricate himself from it even by the renunciation of his faith, which would but render him an apostate Jew. This condition exists, because the racial community formed, and still forms, the basis of the religious community. It is birth, not confession, that imposes on the Jew the obligation to work and strive for the eternal verities of ~~x~~ Israel, for the preservation and propagation of which he has been chosen by the God of history."

These men held Judaism to be the world conquering faith of an eternal people. They were courageous, militant advocates of their faith, unafraid, even in their day, to proclaim Judaism as the one true universal religion of mankind. They were doughty champions of Jewish life and thought, valiant in attack, fierce in defense. They made no overtures for a theologic truce. They did not speak of self<sup>3</sup>effacing integration, which is a cover-up for complete assimilation. They knew that Judaism is bound up with the life of the Jewish people.



Of course,  $\forall$  they were moved by the spirit of their age, but also by the spirit of the ages, and they sought overwhelmingly to retain for their faith an identity, a coherence and an integrity. For the temper of the times is not always the sole nor ~~the~~ the best  $\neq$  criterion of what is religiously desirable. The prophets often found themselves under the necessity of challenging the temper and the mores of their time. They ~~confronted~~ confronted temporal predilections with eternal mandates -- 9/1/77  
"Thus saith the Lord."

These leaders may have misread, in some instances, the signs of their times. In their exuberant enthusiasm for the new day of enlightenment which had dawned for the world and for their people in Western Europe and in America, they believed that they were actually on the threshold of the Millennium. A hundred years ago, in Germany, one of the foremost leaders of Reform Judaism, Abraham Geiger, told his fellow-Jews: "Cast off your rough coat of mail, there is no longer hostility abroad; undo the trappings that hide and disfigure you - frosty and icy winds no longer blow against you - love will blossom everywhere..." It was not Jews alone who shared this euphoria. At about the same time Victor Hugo wrote: "In the nineteenth century war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, hatred will be dead, frontiers will be dead, royalty will be dead, dogmas will be dead, man will begin to live!" They saw the brilliant lights and ignored the dark shadows. They readily paid the excessive price ~~in terms~~ of national self-denial for <sup>a</sup> ~~their~~ political  $\neq$  emancipation which finally ended in total rejection, disfranchisement, exile and death. They came to believe that anti-Semitism and discrimination would rapidly disappear and that all the



political problems which confronted the Jewish people would find a rapid solution in the universal brotherhood which was fast approaching. They, accordingly, regarded all talk about finding a national solution for the Jewish problem, or any action for the establishment of a national homeland and a place of ~~refuge~~ refuge as impractical and even reactionary. Those who advocated such action were ~~"pessimists"~~ "pessimists who <sup>dis</sup>paired of human reason, the progress of humanity and the solidarity of mankind." These were the halcyon days, you will recall, before Hitler, before Naziism and Fascism, before the gas chambers, before the high total ~~destruction~~ <sup>annihilation</sup> of Jewish life in Europe. Their timetable had unfortunately gone awry -- like that of many hopeful idealists who try to rush the Millenium, who "force" the End -- ~~(Hebrew words)~~. There was another great Jew who, in his day, misread the signs of the times, and grew impatient with those who ~~were~~ were not convinced that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

I wonder, though, if these spiritual leaders, so wholly dedicated to the highest interests of their people, were they alive now, in these days following the appalling catastrophes, would not have regarded the establishment of the State of Israel and the rescue and sheltering of more than a million Jewish refugees, for whom the rest of the world could find no room, as a blessed and providential act of God. Or whether they would have, like those who presume to speak in their name today, resented this historic achievement and would have impugned the loyalty and ceaselessly harassed by base and groundless charges and innuendoes those Jews who seek to strengthen this young State economically and defend it politically, as far as they are able, against imminent or threatening dangers. Would they have chosen to prolong a controversy



whose day had passed or would they rather have striven to lay the dust of needless strife and the din of semantic battles in the Household of Israel?

I should be less suspicious of the ~~mischievous~~ motives of these "classicists" if they were dedicating more of their zeal and publicity to the other positive interests and enterprises of those early Reformers, to the encouragement, for example, of Jewish learning among the laity; the support of Jewish scholarship, the cultivation of the Hebrew language; the intensification of their religious school programs, rather than to skillful exercises in curricular excision and diminuendo...

It is, my dear friends, the inadequacy of our training and our religious self-discipline which should give us serious concern even in the very midst of our gratifying growth and outward ~~prosperity~~ prosperity which delight us all -- our inadequate teachers -- their inadequate training -- the inadequacy of the time set aside for instruction -- and our own insufficient personal commitment even to those few disciplines which we have acknowledged to be valid and vital for the survival of our faith.

Heinrich Heine, in one of his letters, writes that he once stood with a friend of his before the Cathedral of Amiens. His friend asked him: "How is it that we can ~~no~~ no longer build such an impressive pile?" and he replied: "Men in those days had convictions, we moderns have opinions, and it required something more than an opinion to build a Gothic Cathedral."

We modern Jews, have a good opinion about our Judaism, but not ~~so~~ strong enough convictions. We need a renewal of that massive religious earnestness which gave to our ancestors their patent of nobility. It is not a matter of how much but how



earnestly, how inwardly, how ~~sacrificially~~!

It is upon the inwardness of Judaism, upon the intellectual quest of God through the time-honored techniques of Jewish life, through learning and ~~study~~ study, through the disciplines of the devotional life, that we shall have to concentrate in the days to come. It is with these grave obligations that we must confront ourselves.

There is no longer any nourishing food for the coming generations of Jews in any program of revision of surface customs and practices. We are really down to the bone already. Nor will a warmed-over campaign of anti-~~traditionalism~~ <sup>nationalism</sup>--a German-Jewish importation, and a dismal failure even in ~~its~~ <sup>the</sup> land of origin, meet the situation. If, however, at the behest of a faith of boundless horizons, and of a tradition ~~which~~ <sup>to</sup> which gave primacy to study and scholarship, we resolve to carry on, not catering to modernity, but seeking ~~new~~ renewal, not reaching out for discarded paraphernalia, but for depth and inwardness, we shall, I am confident be able to move into the inscrutable future, knowing that the jar of meal shall never be spent, neither shall the cruise of oil ever fail us....

My friends, the future belongs to Judaism! Judaism is the faith of tomorrow! Not its forms and rituals--these are <sup>intended for</sup> ~~important~~ only for us so as to discipline and alert <sup>ourselves</sup> ~~us~~ for our covenanted tasks and our appointed destiny--~~but~~ but ~~its~~ its spiritual message and program. ~~A~~ message and program designed to sustain and advance ~~man's~~ human life on earth. Judaism is a reasonable faith, responsive both to man's <sup>soundest</sup> instincts and to his <sup>highest</sup> aspirations. It offers mankind a gospel of social progress and it summons men to social action, to the building of the good society in justice, in brotherhood, and in peace. ~~It is a faith~~ ~~with~~



It is a faith built not on salvationism or ~~xxx~~ resignation or ~~other~~ <sup>asceticism</sup> asceticism. It has confidence in man's inexhaustible spiritual resources. It teaches a boundless reverence for life and for all that contributes to its noble fulfillment and enjoyment.

All these are original ideas of Judaism and they are as valid and vital in the Atomic Age as they were in the days of the Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Sages. They are from everlasting to everlasting. For they emanate from the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, and, in vouchsafing unto us this Torah of Life, for the blessing of mankind, He has implanted eternal life within us.

This Torah is, in very truth, a part of a Tree of Life. Let us make sure that its roots are set firmly in learning, in discipline and in loyalty.



"WITH OUR EYES TOWARD THE FUTURE"

57-4

An address  
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We may also look confidently towards the future because American Jewish life is evolving in an environment which is more than friendly to religion and not unfriendly to religious minorities. Religion is not proscribed on these shores, the religionist is not disadvantaged and Judaism is not under attack. The world in which we live gives every encouragement to religion and Judaism is free to develop and to express itself. Government and people alike have profound reverence for the spiritual forces in civilization, an attitude which is part of the essential pattern of their history. Judaism can thrive in such an environment.



Progressive Judaism may also look hopefully toward the future, because religious liberalism has always been a powerful factor in the spiritual life of America and has had a long and honored tradition. It is still a vital and vigorous force among important if not dominant sections of our population. Progressive religion does not have to fight for its position defensively on the American scene. Nor does progressive Judaism.

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We should build beautiful Temples and Synagogues. It is fitting that we should worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and amidst the holiness of beauty. Why should we dwell in houses of cedar and the ark of the Lord in a tent? But the beautiful structures which we erect will not of themselves insure the survival of our faith. They may even beguile us into dangerous self-delusions. It is we who are the Temple of our faith, or its whited sepulchers. It is we who are its girders and walls, its arches and domes, its symbols and ornaments. It is our loyalty which is the replenishing oil of its Ner Tamid. The holy ark will forever remain empty and desolate if the hearts of devout worshipers will not abide therein.

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It is upon the inwardness of Judaism, upon the intellectual quest of God through the time-honored techniques of Jewish life, through learning and study, through the disciplines of the devotional life, that we shall have to concentrate in the days to come. It is with these grave obligations that we must confront ourselves.

There is no longer any nourishing food for the coming generations of Jews in any program of revision of surface customs and practices. We are really down to the bone already. If, however, at the behest of a faith of boundless horizons, and of a tradition which gave primacy to study and scholarship, we resolve to carry on, not catering to modernity, but seeking renewal, not reaching out for discarded paraphernalia, but for depth and inwardness, we shall, I am confident be able to move into the future, however unpredictable, knowing that the jar of meal shall never be spent, neither shall the cruise of oil ever fail us.

The future belongs to Judaism; Judaism is the faith of tomorrow! In its forms and rituals -- these are important only for us to discipline and preserve us for our appointed tasks and testimony by its spiritual message and program, -- this message and program is designed to sustain and advance human life on earth. Judaism is a reasonable faith, responsive both to man's instincts and his aspirations; it offers mankind a gospel of social progress and it summons men to social action, to the building of the good society. It is a faith built not on salvationism or non-resistance or other-worldliness. It has confidence in man's inexhaustible spiritual resources.

It has a boundless reverence for life and for all that contributes to its noble fulfillment and enjoyment. All these are original and eternal ideas of Judaism and they are as relative and valid in the Atomic Age as they were in the days of the Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Sages. They are from everlasting to everlasting for they emanate from the High and lofty One Who inhabits eternity and in vouchsafing unto us this Torah of Life for the blessing and enlightenment of the whole world He has implanted eternal life within us.



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UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

44

th general  
assembly



TORONTO 1957

REFORM  
JUDAISM:

*Principles in Action*

NATIONAL  
FEDERATION OF  
TEMPLE  
SISTERHOODS

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TEMPLE SECRETARIES



Wednesday  
☆  
(Continued)

Installation of Officers and New Board Members  
RABBI MAURICE N. EISENDRATH  
Presentation of Certificates to Centennial Congregations  
JUDGE SOLOMON ELSNER, *Hartford, Conn.*  
Address: "With Our Eyes Toward the Future"  
RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER, *Cleveland*  
Benediction . . . . RABBI JONAH B. WISE, *New York*

Thursday  
May 2  
☆

9:00 A.M.-  
12:00 Noon  
(includes  
breakfast)

10:00 A.M.-  
5:00 P.M.

*Conference of Congregational Presidents*  
HUNTING ROOM — KING EDWARD SHERATON HOTEL

*Social Action Leadership Day*



I. CYRUS GORDON,  
*Rockville Centre, N. Y.*  
Chairman, Commission on Social Action

PARLOR D — ROYAL YORK HOTEL

All delegates welcome

12:00 Noon

*Luncheon for Rabbis*

FOUNTAIN COURT — KING EDWARD SHERATON HOTEL



Saturday  
April 27  
☆

## XXI BIENNIAL ASSEMBLY National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods

*Theme: Say YES to Judaism*

ROYAL YORK HOTEL

Registration — 6:30 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

8:00 P.M.

### *Pre-Convention NFTS Executive Board Meeting*

— PARLOR A

Invocation in Unison

Heavenly Father, as we begin our labors, we thank Thee for Thy mercies unto us in the past, and we ask Thy blessing for the days that lie ahead. Be Thou with us, O Lord. May it be Thy will ever to inspire us, that with determination we may strive to uphold the hands of our spiritual leaders, to purify our inmost thoughts and to spread good among all Thy creatures. Amen.

### *Pre-Convention Events*

8:15 P.M.

*Buses leave Royal York and King Edward Sheraton Hotels for Holy Blossom Temple.*

8:45 P.M.

*Tour of Holy Blossom Temple.*

9:30 P.M.

Holy Blossom Temple, Maurice N. Eisendrath Auditorium. The Temple Players will present an adaptation of Paddy Chayefsky's TV play "Holiday Song" — The story of a devout Brooklyn cantor who loses his faith in God. His broken morale is mended by a modern miracle in the Manhattan subway.

Refreshments will be served by Holy Blossom Temple Sisterhood.

### BALL ROOM FLOOR

A "Get-Together" desk is combined with the NFTS information desk so that delegates can place their names and secure names for getting together with other Sisterhood representatives for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, cocktails, or just to chat.

Registration — all day — starting at 8:00 A.M.

### OPENING OF CONVENTION

#### *Continental Get-Acquainted Breakfast*

BANQUET HALL

BLESSING BEFORE FOOD (*to be recited in unison*):

O God, grant that as we enjoy the food that Thou dost provide, we may be moved the more willingly to share that we have with those who suffer want. Boruch Ato Adonoi Eloheinu Melech ho-olom, hamotsi lechem min hor-orets. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth. Amen.

Social period during which delegates and visitors will be given cards on which they will obtain the names of persons whom they did not know before the Convention, together with their addresses.

Registered delegates and visitors will be the guests of the Sisterhood of Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto.

Sunday  
April 28  
☆

10:00-  
11:00 A.M.

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• ADDRESSES AND DISCUSSIONS •

# Joint Evening Meetings and Banquet

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44TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

AND

21ST BIENNIAL ASSEMBLY

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TEMPLE SISTERHOODS

•

TORONTO, CANADA

1957



Wednesday, May 1, 1957

"WITH OUR EYES TOWARD THE FUTURE"

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER, *Cleveland, Ohio*

We may face the future with confidence because our people in America are overwhelmingly loyal. They are not conscious assimilationists. They are not deliberately running away from their faith and people as was the case with certain Jewries in the Old World, especially in the century before the World Wars. Our people have demonstrated a steady attachment and a most commendable solidarity with their fellow Jews in other lands during the supreme misery of the recent decades of collapse and disaster — the blackest of our many nights. Their solicitude and generosity have been a source of reassurance to us and of amazement to the world. Our people have also built their communal institutions with a lavish hand. They have been remarkably responsive to the needs of their community life. And if the erection of many beautiful temples, synagogues and schools in our country is an indication of loyalty to the faith of our fathers then we may be fully justified in our confidence for the future. We have good material to build with.

We may also look confidently towards the future because American Jewish life is evolving in an environment which is most friendly to religion and not unfriendly to religious minorities. Religion is not prescribed on these shores; the religionist is not disadvantaged and Judaism is not under attack. The world in which we live gives every encouragement to religion and Judaism is free to develop and to express itself. Government and people alike have profound reverence for the spiritual forces in civilization, an attitude which is part of the essential pattern of their history. Judaism can thrive in such an environment.

Progressive Judaism may also look hopefully toward the future, because religious liberalism has always been a powerful factor in the spiritual life of America and has had a long and honored tradition. It is still a vital and vigorous force among important if not dominant sections of our population. Progressive religion does not have to fight for its position defensively on the American scene. Nor does Progressive Judaism.

But just as there are factors which give us ground for confidence in our future there are factors which give us ground for concern. The impressive facade of American Jewish life may be somewhat misleading. The temples and synagogues are there but the worshippers are not, at least not in numbers comparable with the physical amplitude of the edifices or commensurate with the obligations of religious affiliation. It is not possible to serve one's faith with token commitments. It was an ancient prophet of Israel who cautioned his people not to put their trust in the deceptive words: "This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord." We build temples and they are spacious and beautiful and modern and ultra-modern, but are we building men and women whose worshipful feet will throng their courts eagerly and exultingly?

We *should* build beautiful temples and synagogues. It is fitting that we



should worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and amidst the holiness of beauty. Why should we dwell in houses of cedar and the ark of the Lord in a tent? But the beautiful structures which we erect will not of themselves insure the survival of our faith. They may even beguile us into dangerous self-delusions. It is *we* who are the Temple of our faith, or its whited sepulcher. It is we who are its girders and walls, its arches and domes, its symbols and ornaments. It is our loyalty which is the replenishing oil of its Ner Tamid. The holy ark will forever remain empty and desolate if the hearts of devout worshippers will not abide therein.

Long ago, Sage and Psalmist warned our people against the tree of many branches whose roots were few. They taught us to look below the surface and regard the roots. In their seasoned wisdom they knew that the winds of the world do often sweep down in violent fury, upon men and institutions and pluck them up and overthrow them if their roots are few. They also taught us that we must take root downward, if we are to bear fruit upward.

How deep are our roots? Have we enough reserve of spiritual energy to withstand a prolonged crisis? Are we fast depleting the inventory which past ages have accumulated? Have we taken stock of our powers of resistance, not to affliction — we have learned how to react to affliction — but to the weakening influences of well-being and prosperity? Is it in the second or third generation that the process of drift and dissolution sets in, and why? What is our strength that we should hope?

What were the strong and firm roots which enabled our faith and people to outlive the many storms of the past? Not every Jewish community was so successful but where it was, it was due to the fact that it had sunk deep roots in Jewish learning and study — and what was learned was transmitted. The injunction which our forefathers observed throughout the ages was: "and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt speak of them when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, when thou risest up." It was the unflagging cultivation of heart and mind in the rich unfolding of the Torah, to them a Torat Chavim — an inexhaustible source of living truth, which insured survival for our people.

These were the roots of our people's life — not alone the Jewish scholar but the educated Jewish layman, the man for whom the Bible and later Jewish writings and the Hebrew language, which is the very key to the casket of our literary treasures, were not a sealed book. Professor Schechter recorded what is undoubtedly a cold historic fact when he declared that Hellenistic Judaism was the only one known to history which dared to make the experiment of dispensing with the Sacred Language. The result was death. It withered away and terminated in total and wholesale apostasy from Judaism.

Is it well with us on the score of Jewish learning? Are our Sunday schools producing a generation of truly educated Jewish men and women closely familiar with the chronicles of our glorious years and the noble testament of their peoples' courage and sacrifices? Are they at home in the literature which the great minds and pious hearts of Israel have produced? Have they enough provision for the long journey ahead — or is their food, which came warm to us from our fathers, now dry and mouldy? . . .



I have a feeling that we have been growing satisfied with surfaces rather than with depths, with a minimum; or if not satisfied, then reconciled. There are those who consider even this minimum excessive. If that is the case then there is ground here for deep concern for the future of our glorious faith and the survival of our people.

I hear, from time to time, voices raised in pathetic yearning for the dear old days of Classical Reform Judaism, now seemingly gone beyond recall. I do not know what is meant by Classical Reform Judaism. The founding fathers of Reform Judaism differed sharply among themselves on nearly every question of doctrine and practice. Only one thing they shared in common. They were no longer Orthodox. Reform Judaism always represented a *movement* within Judaism, not a party or a sect. Sects never thrived for long in Judaism. A party or a sect may stand still on a fixed platform but a movement must move, or it becomes petrified into a set of dogmas and so dies as a rhythmic cadence of dynamic principles. Even the framers of the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885 recognized the progressive character of Judaism, and "were convinced of the utmost necessity of preserving the historic identity with our great past."

The founders of so-called Classical Reform Judaism were scholars — some of them great Hebrew scholars. Geiger and Einhorn and Adler and Samuel Hirsch and Kaufmann Kohler — among the most classical of the early Reformers — were ardent students of Hebrew literature. They made significant contributions to the Science of Judaism. They wrote important books and published important periodicals in many fields of Jewish knowledge. Their greatest wish was to disseminate Jewish learning among their fellow Jews, young and old. Isaac Mayer Wise's proudest achievement and his deepest love was the Hebrew Union College — a scholastic institution for the training of rabbis and teachers. "Reform," he asserted, "must begin with the spreading of light, more light, as much light, indeed, as the age can bear. Instruction, more instruction, as much of it as the intellect is capable of receiving." They all hoped for and worked for an educated Jewish laity. They maintained, of course, that a man need not and should not, pray in a language which he did not understand, and that therefore prayer in Hebrew was not indispensable.

The ancient rabbis had already asserted that. But even though they recognized that many Jews unfortunately no longer knew the Hebrew language, they hoped that Jews would learn and would come to understand it. Not a single Reform leader ever declared that in order to be a one hundred per cent Classical Reform Jew, one must be an all-out, king-size Am Ha-aretz!

The outstanding Reform leaders of the past did not conceive of Judaism as a mere "religious confession."

"The creed," wrote Dr. Kohler, formerly President of the Hebrew Union College, "is a condition *sine qua non* of the Christian church. To disbelieve its dogmas is to cut oneself loose from membership. Judaism is quite different. The Jew is born into it and cannot extricate himself from it even by the renunciation of his faith, which would but render him an apostate Jew. This condition exists, because the racial community formed, and still forms, the basis of the religious community. It is birth, not confession, that imposes on the Jew the obligation to



work and strive for the eternal verities of Israel, for the preservation and propagation of which he has been chosen by the God of history."

These men held Judaism to be the world conquering faith of an eternal people. They were courageous, militant advocates of their faith, unafraid, even in their day, to proclaim Judaism as the one true universal religion of mankind. They were doughty champions of Jewish life and thought, valiant in attack, fierce in defense. They made no overtures for a theologic truce. They did not speak of self-effacing integration, which is a cover-up for complete assimilation. They knew that Judaism is bound up with the life of the Jewish people.

Of course, they were moved by the spirit of their age, but also by the spirit of the ages, and they sought overwhelmingly to retain for their faith an identity, a coherence and an integrity. For the temper of the times is not always the sole nor the best criterion of what is religiously desirable. The prophets often found themselves under the necessity of challenging the temper and the mores of their time. They confronted temporal predilections with eternal mandates — "Thus saith the Lord. . . ."

The Reform leaders may have misread, in some instances, the signs of their times. In their exuberant enthusiasm for the new day of enlightenment which had dawned for the world and for their people in Western Europe and in America, they believed that they were actually on the threshold of the Millennium. A hundred years ago, in *Germany*, one of the foremost leaders of Reform Judaism, Abraham Geiger, told his fellow-Jews: "Cast off your rough coat of mail, there is no longer hostility abroad; undo the trappings that hide and disfigure you — frosty and icy winds no longer blow against you — love will blossom everywhere. . . ." It was not Jews alone who shared this euphoria. At about the same time Victor Hugo wrote "In the nineteenth century war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, hatred will be dead, frontiers will be dead, royalty will be dead, dogmas will be dead, man will begin to live!" They saw the brilliant lights and ignored the dark shadows. They readily paid the excessive price in terms of national self-denial for their political emancipation which finally ended in total rejection, disfranchisement, exile and death. They came to believe that anti-Semitism and discrimination would rapidly disappear and that all the political problems which confronted the Jewish people would find a rapid solution in the universal brotherhood which was fast approaching. They, accordingly, regarded all talk about finding a national solution for the Jewish problem, or any action for the establishment of a national homeland and a place of refuge as impractical and even reactionary. Those who advocated such action were "pessimists who despaired of human reason, the progress of humanity and the solidarity of mankind." These were the halcyon days, you will recall, before Hitler, before Naziism and Fascism, before the gas chambers, before the nigh total destruction of Jewish life in Europe. Their time table had unfortunately gone awry — like that of many hopeful idealists who try to rush the Millennium, who "force" the End. There was another great Jew who, in his day, misread the signs of the times, and grew impatient with those who were not convinced that the Kingdom of God was at hand. . . .

I wonder, though, if these spiritual leaders, so wholly dedicated to the highest



interests of their people, were they alive now, in these days following the appalling catastrophies, would not have regarded the establishment of the State of Israel and the rescue and sheltering of more than a million Jewish refugees for whom the rest of the world could find no room, as a blessed and providential act of God. Or whether they would have, like those who presume to speak in their name today, resented this historic achievement and would have impugned the loyalty and ceaselessly harassed by base and groundless charges and innuendoes those Jews who seek to strengthen this young State economically and defend it politically as far as they are able, against imminent or threatening dangers. Would they have chosen to prolong a controversy whose day had passed or would they rather have striven to lay the dust of needless strife and the din of semantic battles in the Household of Israel?

I should be less suspicious of the motives of these "classicists" if they were dedicating more of their zeal and publicity to the positive interests and enterprises of those early Reformers, to the encouragement, for example, of Jewish learning among the laity; the support of Jewish scholarship, the cultivation of the Hebrew language; the intensification of their religious school programs, rather than to skilful exercises in curricular excision and diminuendo. . . .

It is, my dear friends, the inadequacy of our training and our religious self-discipline which should give us serious concern even in the very midst of our gratifying growth and outward prosperity pleasing to us all — our inadequate teachers — their inadequate training — the inadequacy of the time set aside for instruction — and our own insufficient personal commitments even to those few disciplines which we acknowledge to be valid and vital for the survival of our faith.

Heinrich Heine, in one of his letters, writes that he once stood with a friend of his before the Cathedral of Amiens. His friends asked him: "How is it that we can no longer build such an impressive pile?" and he replied: "Men in those days had convictions, we moderns have opinions, and it required something more than an opinion to build a Gothic cathedral."

We modern Jews have a good opinion about our Judaism, but not strong enough convictions. We need a renewal of that massive religious earnestness which gave to our ancestors their patent of nobility. It is not a matter of how much but how earnestly, how inwardly, how sacrificially!

It is upon the inwardness of Judaism, upon the intellectual quest of God through the time-honoured techniques of Jewish life, through learning and study, through the disciplines of the devotional life, that we shall have to concentrate in the days to come. It is with these grave obligations that we must confront ourselves.

There is no longer any nourishing food for the coming generations of Jews in any program of revision of surface customs and practices. We are really down to the bone already. Nor will a warmed-over campaign of anti-nationalism — a German-Jewish importation, and a dismal failure even in its land of origin — meet the situation. If, however, at the behest of a faith of boundless horizons, and of a tradition which gave primacy to study and scholarship, we resolve to carry on, not catering to modernity, but seeking renewal, not reaching out for discarded paraphernalia, but for depth and inwardness, we shall, I am confident,



be able to move into the inscrutable future, knowing that the jar of meal shall never be spent, neither shall the cruse of oil ever fail us.

My friends, the future belongs to Judaism. Judaism is the faith of tomorrow! Not its forms and rituals — these are important only for us to discipline and alert us for our covenanted tasks and our appointed destiny — but its spiritual message and program — a message and program designed to sustain and advance human life on earth. Judaism is a reasonable faith, responsive both to man's instincts and to his aspirations. It offers mankind a gospel of social progress and it summons men to social action, to the building of the good society in justice, in brotherhood, and in peace. It is a faith built not on salvationism or resignation or asceticism. It has confidence in man's inexhaustible spiritual resources. It teaches a boundless reverence for life and for all that contributes to its noble fulfilment and enjoyment.

All of these are original ideas of Judaism and they are as valid and vital in the Atomic Age as they were in the days of the Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Sages. They are from everlasting to everlasting. For they emanate from the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity. In vouchsafing unto us this Torah of Life for the blessing of mankind, He has implanted eternal life within us.

