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What Books Are You Reading?, 1957.

WHAT BOOKS ARE YOU READING?

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

February 24, 1957

Just before we came onto this pulpit this morning, one of the readers of the morning asked me, I thought, a bit hopefully whether I was going to suggest titles this morning that we ought not read. This is not my purpose. I want to speak of the value of books and of valuable books and this discussion of books and of their place in our personal lives was suggested by a visit I made last week to our Cleveland Museum of Art. I hope that many of you have seen the collection from the library of Mr. J. P. Morgan which is being featured there this month. It is a magnificent collection. There you see some of the most magnificently illustrated manuscripts ever created by man. There is an old twelfth century Christian psalter done by a pious monk in Monte Casino. How many generations of his brothers used this psalter to lead their worship? And as you look at the beautiful illustrations on each page you are impressed by the piety and the reverence and also the artistic skill of the man who undoubtedly spent years of his life in creating this master book. Side by side with this psalter is a be-silvered, be-jewelled Koran - holy book of Islam - a triumph of the art, the piety, and the skill of some Arab scribe. Further on in the room is the first Hebrew Bible ever printed as clear, as precise, as legible today as it was five centuries ago when it was first struck. As you walk further along, you come to holographs - original manuscripts by the modern geniuses of our literature - by Browning and by Poe and by Wordsworth. You see their penmanship. You see their corrections and erasures, their precision with their use of words, and you feel closer than you have ever been to the personalities of these great men. It is an awesome experience. It is a reverential experience to enter this display room. It is as if you are entering one of the throne rooms in which the genius of the human spirit presides for these are valuable books and they impress you

with the value that men have set by their books. Here you see the manuscripts - the painfully, laboriously, hand-written copies of the great books of antiquity. The only link that we have with the classic psalms and prophecies of the Hebrews, with the classic philosophy of the Greeks, and the classic poetry of Rome. If men of each generation had not taken ~~it~~ upon themselves the task of sitting down and copying word by word, sentence by sentence, at whatever cost of time, these classics we would not be able to read from them today. Think what role these books must have had in their civilization - how precious and how rare they were.

[To-day
We are spoiled by the plentifulness of books. We are spoiled by the fact that our home libraries probably contain more volumes than did any of the ^{finest} libraries of Europe during the Middle Ages. A volume then might cost a hundred, two hundred, five hundred times what a printed work costs for us. When we went to the universities, we were told what text we should buy and we went to the university bookstore, we bought them. In olden times the university session was begun by a paid lecturer standing in front of the class and reading to them from the text which was to be the subject of this semester's work, and the class each had to sit down and to make his own copy for study.

often
So valuable were books that ^{often} if a man ~~lent~~ even one or two volumes to a university or to a monastery library, it was considered as if he had left that institution a princely legacy. For books were rare - rarer than we might imagine - so rare, in fact, that I think that if all the folios and manuscripts ~~and manuscripts~~ available in medieval Europe in the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries had been added up, and brought into one building, they would not equal the ten thousand volumes which repose today in our library. Books were not available to all. If you wanted to read, you had to go to the university or monastery library and there you would find the book chained to your reading desk. If a certain volume was not available in your community, you either had to do without or you had to hire a scribe in some distant city to copy it for

you. It was a pious duty incumbent upon every Jew to either copy out the Bible in his lifetime or else to have some scribe copy it for him - so rare was that book which we freely hand out this day.

Think what a difference this made in the life of the everyday man. Books were not available to him. The wealth of tradition, of knowledge, of philosophy, and of art and of ^{thought of} poetry in a play which we take for granted was almost shut to him. He either had to be told it or rarely he had the opportunity to go to some institution to read it. There was an intellectual lag in the cities of the ancient world which beggars description. I remember coming across, once, a medieval Spanish manuscript. It was a manuscript of a book on physics by the second century Greek, Galen, and in the margin of this manuscript some thirteenth century Spanish scholar had noted - would that I had read this book seven years ago. I have been working for seven years on a proof which Galen discovered fourteen hundred years before I began to live. It is inconceivable to us ~~many~~ that scholars today might even lack information of what the laboratories of yesterday have discovered and uncovered, but fourteen hundred years often passed before knowledge passed from one part of the world to another.

^{The} Our Torah stands as an ever-present reminder of those ancient days. It is still written by hand. It is written on parchment - copied word for word, painfully, and laboriously. It takes months, and sometimes years, to complete and when it is completed, its value is several hundred times that of the printed Bible which we might buy in any bookstore. Yet because our people copied this Bible in each generation as they copied the classics of antiquity, they are available now to us and we maintain this old way - this archaic way - of writing our Bible in reverence, in thankfulness for the piety and the faithfulness of these copyists and ^{call} scribes of old.

The invention of printing is said to have taken place in China. We do

not know the exact year but by the thirteenth century, the Chinese had both a movable type press and a simple linotype machine. The invention of printing in the west is associated with Holland and with Germany and with the fifteenth century, and a copy of the first book ever printed - a Bible printed by John Gutenberg in 1450 - is available in this display this month at our Museum of Art.

What a radical change printing made in our ways of life. I, personally, believe that except for the development of the wheel and of the compass, there has been no invention ever made by man which was both as beneficial and as beneficent. This intellectual lag, this time lag in the transference of knowledge from one man to another, was almost done away with. What we are doing in our laboratories today will be by tomorrow, by next week, known throughout the world. Not only have the scholars benefited from the invention of printing, but the time it takes for the news of new discoveries, of new knowledge about the world which surrounds us, to percolate down to us has been radically diminished. It took the world almost fourteen to fifteen hundred years to even to begin to understand and assimilate the meaning of Aristotle's 'View of Life'. It took the world over three hundred years to understand the implications of Galileo's discoveries. It took the world fifty years even to become aware of the nature of the theories which Darwin was expounding. But within a decade, within ten brief years, most cultured men - most educated men - had grasped the essential facts of Einstein's much more complicated discoveries. We have reduced significantly the time it takes for men's minds to cross-pollinate so that each of us is much more keenly aware of the new discoveries of our world than was ever the case in previous history.

We have made it possible for the progress of the human race to proceed at an unprecedented pace and scholars tell us that we have every reason to believe that the progress of the human race in matters scientific, in matters technological, will grow more in the next ten years than it did in all of past recorded history.

One of the reasons for this is the development of printing, the dissemination of information, the exchange of ideas between men who are able to use and to grasp these new ideas and to put them to better use for our own benefit.

Not only was the exchange of ideas made possible between all men but I believe that the development of printing made it possible for the age of the common man, for the age of the great democracies of our world to come about. You know in medieval, ancient times knowledge was a carefully guarded secret. Knowledge is power, and the guilds and the various professions, the various priest groups, carefully kept secret and guarded their knowledge about their professions and about their trades. It was not available for all so that any who had ~~any~~ particular talents or ambitions in this line might avail themselves of this particular occupation. But with the development of printing, all this was swept aside. Any man who wanted to read of the techniques of the philosophers, of the art of the physician, of the role of the priest and of theology, of the art even of the tool-maker and the clothier, could come and read if he ^{was} ~~was~~ able and he had talent, he could set his hands and his mind to this particular occupation. So the able of the, so-called, lower classes began to compete successfully, economically, with these privileged orders and as they rose in the social scale they demanded that all the political barriers which ~~were~~ interposed between the nobility, between the merchant guilds, and between themselves be gone away with. We got the revolutions which made it possible for our modern type of social democracies to come into being.

Knowledge is power. Some of the great heroes of the modern world have been those who made it possible for the printed book to be transmitted to all men even when the vested authorities were against it. Think what it meant to the men of the new age who could now have their views broadcast broadly. When the rebels of ancient times felt the injustice of some decree, they could speak directly to as many hearers as they could gather in the forum or in some hall, or if they could gather enough disciples, they could put these disciples

to work busily by hand writing out manuscripts and letters telling of their grievances. But how many letters can the human hand write? Often, these few letters would be impounded by the police. Often, the police would raid the hall in which the man was trying to speak. But now, with the movable type printing press, hundreds upon thousands of copies of pamphlets of dissent could be printed. What Thomas Payne said on a Sunday could by the Friday of the next week be read in every village and hamlet in the thirteen colonies. When Monsieur Voltaire wrote about the social order and his hatred for it, it could be bought by almost any Frenchman for a sou or less. It could be taken to his home, to be read there in the privacy of his room. When Martin Luther preached, it was heard thousand of miles away and not only by the few who had the privilege of coming into his church and hearing his views. The pace of social change was rapidly increased because it was possible for men to read the literature of dissent, because this literature could now be sent out broadly, and as they read, they began to think. As they thought, they began to become themselves dissatisfied and to see what plans could be made for righting the wrong. They began to see how they could band together in the confraternity of those seeking a better order in the society. Once they learned the secret of banding together, of using their power, the world had come a long way towards the creation of a more equal society.

As the development of printing made it possible for the political barriers in an equal society to be cast down so it made it possible for ^{ANCIENT} the priestly and clerical barriers to a free society, to be done away with. Almost all religions have seen certain special groups, usually priest groups, claim that they knew some special knowledge, that they had some esoteric insight into the will of God. Usually they said that this knowledge was given to them by the sacred scripture which the founder of the faith had put into their hands, that unless the people allowed them to relay their prayers to God - relay

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them with a gift of money or a bribe - and unless they translated the will of God back to the people, God would not hear their prayers and they would not hear God's answers. So almost always in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, these priest groups tried to keep the sacred scriptures, the Bibles of the world, secret. Their own particular province did not open to all men.

^{The}
~~Our~~ Jewish faith was the first faith which succeeded in breaking open the Bible that it might be read for all people. [We have always been a faith, as we discussed last week,] we have always been a faith which emphasized education and because we did so, and because we created a group of interested laymen, Rabbis, scholars, teachers who felt the inequality and inequity of the claims of the priest group. About the first century of the common era, about two thousand years ago, a great revolution took place in Jewish life. The priests had, of old, controlled all sacrifice in the temple. The priests were in control of all the ritual and rights which had to do with our Jewish life. The Pharisees, the Rabbis, broke this monopoly. They claimed that the Bible was not the sacred province of this priest group. It was an open territory, open book, open for the perusal and the study of all men - that there is no esoteric knowledge in the Bible which could not be understood by whoever had the ability to so understand. They said that the religious vocation should be one of choice - not of blood and of heredity. The very fact that we read ~~from~~ the Bible publicly in our synagogues, that we have developed in our synagogues the custom of reading the Bible consecutively, so that from the beginning of one year to its completion the man who has been regular in his attendance will have heard the whole Bible read, was taken to be a living testimony to the fact that the Bible was an open book - capable of being heard or read or studied or understood by anyone who desired to spend the time. As the Torah was taken out of its ark, the Rabbis in the synagogues said that these words should be said as a perpetual reminder to the Jewish people that the Bible is an open ^{book} ~~group~~ and that we need no priest, no people

armed with some special lore, to interpret it for us. *

* This is the Torah

which God commanded us through Moses. It is the inheritance of the whole congregation of Israel - not of the priests not of the Kohanim, not of the Levites but of all of Israel.

Now in Christianity, lay people had to await the availability of the Bible before they, too, were able successfully to rebel against the tyranny of a priest group. Gutenberg's first edition, the first book ever printed, was a Bible. What a revolution this Bible brought about for as copies of the Bible were distributed, as the price was reduced so that people could buy it and bring it into their homes and read it in the quiet of an evening, they began to realize the vast difference between the teachings of the Bible - of the New Testament and of the Old - and the actions of the church about them. Jesus, they found, had preached a doctrine of apostolic poverty, of the apostles, the religious there ought to be other worldly men - men who do not reap either wealth or power by their worldly vocation as priests. Yet as they looked about themselves, they saw that the church was both worldly and wealthy. Jesus, they found, had been a pacifist and he felt that the church and the religious man ought to keep a 'hands off' policy as regards the political disputes and the petty bickerings between nation and nation, and government and government. As they looked about themselves, they found that their church had a hand in every political quarrel throughout Europe and even sponsored and maintained a professional army. As they read through the New Testament, they found that there is no mention there made of the Pope or of the supremacy of Rome, so they began to ask their priests and their leaders how they could justify their

* Omission of Hebrew

demands that they submit themselves to all the theological doctrines which Rome had, since the days of the New Testament, devised. As they read the Bible, they began to question the religious order which surrounded them. By reading the Bible, they became Protestants. They rose in protest and a new religion, a much more democratic way of worshipping God, was devised. Parenthetically I should add this - the Moslem world, the world of Islam, is the only world which has not yet had either a religious or a political revolution. It is the only world which is still steeped in medieval ways where there are priest classes and privileged classes. It is strange to note that no Mohammedan country has ever permitted the printing of the Koran, that literacy is not a major concern of Arab governments, that less than one in ten in most Arab countries and some less than one in a thousand are capable of reading. Not having read, they have not been disturbed from the ancient ways. They have not been able to see the inequalities of their position, but books ultimately cannot be always kept away from people. They will learn to read, and when they do, a mighty revolution will shake, I believe, that part of the world.

These are the blessings, then, the rich blessings which books have given men but there are no blessings without duties and without dangers. We are blessed with books. Our democracy and our way of life is made possible by books and if this is so, we must see to it that we are never censored or prevented from reading the books which might be of benefit to us. The dictatorships of the world have always devised ways of regimenting man's reading, of restricting his reading, of saying to him - this thou shalt read and this is dangerous or this is subversive. This thou shalt not touch. They developed either indexed, lists of books which are beyond the pale which it is a sin to open and to read or they try to license the publishers so that they will print only books which are harmless - books which cannot disturb man's views - or they try to engage in book burning, in eradicating the great literature of the past - the literature which expresses ^{the ideals} and the hopes of common humanity -

the literature such as the Bible which has always inspired men to seek for a better life. The dictators are quite right in attempting to censor books, to license publishing, and to burn books, because ideas are ^{their} ~~its~~ greatest enemy and only if they succeed in imposing a conformity of ideas can they have any hope of long maintaining their power.

We, in our country, in the past few years have seen that the demagogues and those who would dictate our ideas made their first attack against the freedom of libraries. They began by saying: let us see that the libraries overseas have only books which conform with the American way of life and if the McCarthyites had been successful there, they would have levelled an attack against the public libraries in America as they did in certain mid-western states and have said that there should be nothing on these shelves which might harm the young mind, which might disturb the mind, which might make him feel less American - less patriotic - and if they had succeeded in dictating our reading, they would have dictated our thoughts and ultimately our vote and ultimately our way of life.

The price of being able to read, the price of having a great variety of books, is eternal vigilance against those who would censor our reading ~~reduce~~ and ~~reducing~~ the number of books available to us.

Reading, today, presents another type of problem and this is what I would concern myself with today. We are, as it were, deluged with an avalanche of books. Think of this. Last year twelve thousand five hundred and eighty-one new titles, new books, were published in America alone. If we had the capacity to read a book a day, it would take us forty years just to read the new books that came out in the last twelve months. I remember, as a freshman in college, entering Harvard's Wiedener library for the first time. There are twelve floors of books in that library. Each floor has over an acre of stacked space. There are over four and a half million volumes in that one

building - each different, each a different type of a work. I remember being absolutely transfixed. Where could I Begin? What could I ever hope to accomplish against this vast mass of information, of books, of literature, which the world placed before me. We are almost deluged by this avalanche of books - buried underneath it - incapable of seeing how we can even begin to sort out for ourselves the worthwhile and the worthless and finding some way of reading that which will be of benefit and of enjoyment to us. We are plagued almost with too many books. We have learned the truth of the Biblical statement ^{of} in the making of books there is no end." We almost wish that many of these titles might remain manuscripts locked away safely, never to see the light of day.

Now what has been our answer to this avalanche of books. Some of us have been concerned with increasing our reading speed. I know schools where the young scholars are graded on how many pages they can read in the course of an hour. I know of many adults who have enrolled in special classes designed to teach them the art of speed reading. Because of this emphasis on speed, I think we are in danger of becoming a generation of hot-rod readers. The hot-rod driver keeps his eyes dead center on the road. He is concerned only with the speed with which he can go from his point of origin to his destination. He knows nothing of the beauty of the countryside through which he is passing. The flowers along the wayside are just a blur to him. The brook coursing underneath the bridge that he is crossing is just a disturbance as far as his driving is concerned. We are concerned only with the speed of reading. We have become hot-rod readers, and all of the landscape with which a book abounds, the magnificence of detail, the beauty of style and of idiom, the clarity and decisiveness of description escapes us. All we try and do is to read the opening sentence and see how quickly we can get to the concluding one, and hope that at least along the way we have learned enough of the names of the

characters and the story line to be able to discuss it at the next cocktail party we attend. James Russell Lowell once described such a reader as a reading machine, always wound up and going. He has mastered all the knowledge that it is not worth/^{the}knowing. Our tradition calls them *

* - donkeys laden with books - literary jackasses - people who have read hundreds upon hundreds of volumes to know what has been said but who haven't an iota of understanding of how it was said, who have little feeling for the style, for the nuances, for the shadings, for the descriptions, for all that goes into separating the artless in literature from the art in literature.- the great book and the good book from the worthless book and the meaningless book. Hot-rod reading spoils great literature for us. You could not pick up a Thomas Mann, or a Franz Kafka, or a Tolstoi and attempt to read it by simply glancing down whatever words happen to be in the center of the page. You would have no understanding whatsoever of the rich symbolism with which these books abound, the shadings of characters which they so beautifully portray ~~for us~~. You would have forgotten it is not so much what is said but that it is how it is said which makes for the good book - good literature.

Similarly, perhaps more importantly, most books of a certain type cannot be read by hot-rod reading. You cannot read philosophy, you cannot read your professional journals ~~where you must be concerned with every detail~~, you cannot read science, you cannot read poetry with hot-rod reading. This is a type of literature which must be chewed as a cow chews its cud - over and over and over again to be understood, to be appreciated.

Several months ago a college freshman came back to the Temple and proudly announced to me that he had managed to read through Plato's Republic in two hours and I could not help but remember the chairman of the department

*Omission of Hebrew

of philosophy at the University of Chicago who at the beginning of a course on Plato several years ago told us: "You know, I read and re-read the Republic for ten years before I began to really understand what it is all about." There is certain literature which must be read deliberately, slowly, paragraph by paragraph, line by line - only then will the fullness of its thought emerge to you. Someone once advocated that we read great literature as we read the love-letters which we once received from our sweetheart - over and over and over again. You remember those letters. Each time we read them, we found a new meaning. We read behind the lines and we understood the nuances - the subtleties - what was said and what was not said. Great literature must be read in this way. It must be read over and over and over again in order to understand exactly what it was that the author intended to convey.

I had occasion, the last few weeks, to have this point dramatically driven home to me. In our pre-confirmation class in our Temple this year, we have inaugurated a program of Bible reading. Our hope is that by exposing the young people to many narrative portions of the Bible, we will develop within them a love of Bible language and of Bible literature. We will make them feel at home in the Bible and that later on in their lives, they will not be afraid to pick it up and read from it. We have read together the Books of Jonah, Ruth, Esther, and many of the beautiful narrative portions of Genesis. Now I teach three of these classes each week. In each one of these classes, we go over the same paragraphs. We read them aloud together. You might think that I would become utterly bored by this constant repetition yet each time that a class deals with a text, I find new meaning in that text. I feel closer to it. I understand it the better and I leave each class with a greater love for the book and a greater appreciation for the genius of the man who first wrote it.

You, in your own lives, might try a simple experiment. Take a play of

Shakespeare's, take some beautiful poem of Browning's, or any other piece of literature which you particularly love, and resolve to read it once a week for the next month - four or five times in the course of several months. I think that you will come, at the end of that period, to really appreciate this work of art. You will love it the more. You will feel closer to it. You will have understood it the more completely. The more you turn over a great book, the more you will find in it, and that is why it is not so much how much you have read - how many books you have completed - but how well you have read and how much you have derived from the books which you have digested.

But how shall we begin? What books shall we select? There is, of course, no worse guide to our reading than the best seller list. Books appear on the best seller list because they are fadish or sensational, because they have appealed to the erotic or the pathological instincts of our age. Today's best sellers inevitably clog next year's second-hand bookshelves. Much that is worthwhile in our literature never makes the best seller list. We should read whatever we want to read - whatever intrigues us - whatever interests us - whatever books we think we will enjoy - whatever books we think we will learn something from or gain some ^{benefit} ~~thing~~ from - but as we read, we should remember ^{close} one thing that you can open a book and that you can also ^{close} it. Many of us are compulsive about finishing any book that we begin but most books if you open their first few pages, either tell you I am written well, there is a style here, I have something to say or I simply wrote this to produce a book, to be paid the author's royalties, to be sensational. We ought to learn to close and put down the worthless books - the meaningless books. I am sure that we won't be ostracized from society if we put down even the books which are most commonly discussed ~~among~~ in our afternoon canasta games and evening parties. Learn to put down the books which do not appeal to you because you will have to be your own critic. You cannot choose the books which appeal to any other person - his background is different. His training is different. His interests

are different. You have to be your own critic and books/^{are}a type of knowledge you can learn about only by opening the book and by beginning to read from it. The privilege of opening the book is also the privilege of closing it and putting it away but if as you read a book, you enjoy it - keep the book. Put it on your shelves. Learn to make the books/^{which}you have read and learned something from and enjoyed constant companions. You will enjoy browsing in them again from time to time and refreshing yourself with their beauty and perhaps/^{even}more important, your children, as they grow up, will be able to go to shelves filled with books which you have enjoyed and derive some enjoyment from it. I often think that we forget how much the young people in our homes are culturally conditioned to the good things in the culture which surrounds us. We know that they are culturally conditioned by the television, by the movies, by the comic books, but they are also conditioned by the music which is played on the home victrola and by the books which are in the home shelves and by the pictures which are on the walls of your home. The level of art, of culture, which you keep in your home ^{will} be the level which they/try to attain. If these young people go to their parents' bookshelves and find there condensations of modern novels and the pathologically neurotic novels - sensational novels - with which our day abounds and perhaps one or two other cartoon books, this will be the level at which they will gear their reading, but if they go there and find more worthwhile things - books which open their eyes to new areas of life, to new geographies of learning - they will read these books and learn to love them and all their lives they will pick up books of that type and read them over.

I think we ought to begin to ^{reintroduce}redo in our homes a lost art. Most of us read to our children that is, we read to them as long as they cannot read. We read to them the wonderful picture books which they so delight to have told to them. But the minute the schools have taught them the alphabet,

we stop reading. We never again recapture those wonderful moments of togetherness when we and our child and a book are somehow banded together in love. And yet the fact that the child has learned to read does not mean that the child has developed a taste for the good in reading, or that the child is aware of what beauty in style and beauty in language really means. If we would take poems or stories which appeal to the child but which are yet good literature - ~~well-written literature~~ well-written literature - and would read them aloud, the child's ear would learn to appreciate beauties of style and of language and all his life, he will return to these books read with his parents with love and he will look for books which have the same ring to them - the same sound to them - the same flavor to them - as those which he read with his father.

It is a vast sea - this world of books. There is no key to it, no critical avenue of approach save the one that we, ourselves, can develop. We must begin by reading, by reading whatever intrigues us, by learning to discriminate between the books which appear to us artless and those which appear to be good literature, and as we read, we will learn to discriminate. We will learn that we do not need to follow slavishly any man's one hundred best books - be them what they may - but we will learn also, I think, one fact about the books of our day. Our age is unique in that it has produced a generation of popularizers - of men and of women who have seen to it that the previously scholarly levels of our universities are open to us, that physics and astronomy and mathematics and history and archeology and all areas of research, are made available to us in books which we, ourselves, can understand. Ours is the great age of scientific popularization and these men have rendered us a great service in that they have ~~xxx~~ made available to us an avenue of insight and of understanding into this radically new and ever-changing world which surrounds us and we would do well to acquaint ourselves with many of these books and to learn much more

than we perhaps know of what our science tells us is the nature of our world and what our psychology tells us is the nature of our being and what our sociology tells us is the nature of our relationships with other people. I And, similarly, as a Rabbi, I would suggest to you that you begin to pick up the great popularizations of Jewish learning which have been written in the last decade. A good one has been written by one of the members of this congregation. Books about Jewish history, Jewish tradition, and Jewish learning. There are an amazing variety of these available to you only if after services you would go back into our library and ask Miss Leikind to tell you about books in whatever field might interest you. You know, we Jews are uniquely in need of books. This is a society in which Christianity is, to a sense, taught just by the living. Their holidays are public holidays. Their scriptures are often serialized in the public press or retold in dramatic form on the mass media of communication. But our tradition, our unique way of life, the reasons for our uniqueness and ^{for} our distinctiveness are not public knowledge. You can satisfy yourselves about their reason. You can learn more about ^{the} the purpose of continuing differences which we maintain religiously between ourselves and our neighbors only by going to Jewish books and by spending a few hours of your life arguing with them, learning from them, digesting what they have to say. >

These popularizations are of great value. * *

I would be ashamed to suggest that you read the great classics of our age - be they Jewish or non-Jewish - we are not a generation of classic readers. We ought to share the books which men have always claimed to be the acme of good literature but we seem to be an age which prefers the popularization of literature, but at least us read these. Let us learn in digest form what these people have to say. Read widely. Read wisely and I am sure that you will enjoy the reading. You will feel more alive to the world about you. You will be more aware of the many beauties that it contains and you will be a fuller and completer person for having taken upon yourself the opportunity and the obligation of reading good books.

Our Art Museum is displaying this month some of the most valuable treasures from the library of Mr. J. P. Morgan. It is stimulating to be in a room full of such valuable manuscripts and to think what our books have meant to the progress of our civilization. Here open beside us are ancient copies of mankind's most cherished books: a ^{well} ~~magnificent~~ illuminated ~~book~~ moral capital and illustrated by a devote monk living 700 years in Monte Cassino; a lavishly illuminated Koran folio - a triumph of art and style of a Muslim scribe; the first book ever printed in Belgium - a Bible as clean and legible to-day as the way Gutenberg saw when it was first bound; a simple Virgil in the famous French minuscule - beautiful yet almost illegible to the modern eye. Side by side with these famous editions of ancient wisdom are modern holographs - the original manuscripts of Browning, Poe, Hawthorne and other great - what a thrill it is to see their own penmanship - their names and corrections - you feel close to the personalities of these truly great men of letters.

This display brings to mind the role books have played through the years in our Western civilization. Part of the collection is in manuscript - written out in longhand in parchment or paper. The ancients had no other way of setting down their plays and poems and philosophies. As such an eye ^{edition} ~~book~~ was necessary to be written and extremely valuable. Manuscripts were carried to reading desks of great libraries. At the great universities you did not buy the assigned texts - but the professor would send a part of each day reading aloud from the school copy while each student transcribed the book on which the course was to be based. Few have possessed even a single manuscript - Jewish law books that each adult will carry out a Bible in it and has a ^{do} ~~write to~~ volume for him - but even among our backward American people a city possessed men learned in the ancient texts - doctors - The age of the home library awaited the invention of printing.

The classics were respected and studied by ~~some~~ ^{many} academic circles. Some culture - like our own - laid great store on literary and education - but in general the impact and influence of these books - if ^{was limited a great} ~~it was not at all unusual~~ of a public used in public schools - It was not at all unusual of a middle class Frenchman or German might pass his whole life without even seeing - much less reading - a book. There were small groups of scholars in the ~~university~~ ^{universities}, the monasteries, at the cathedral school

On Trade of the remainder of the on credit way. It is written by hand-
loga copied to avoid in his old. It is written on parchment according to definite
rules. It takes several months to read and it costs anywhere from 600 to
1200 times as much as could purchase a printed Bible.

The rest of books - The time we spend is completely lost. The difficulty of preventing errors of transcription from creeping into the text. The possibility that the original would be revised to such an extent that the original would be cancelled, as you have mentioned. - all these factors kept the flow of communication and you the decline of ideas from getting along and fitful. extend years and after decades for the description of new ideas or innovation to reach communities represented by advanced hundred miles, often books were lost. From the Fall of Rome until the 13th century - a period of over 800 years - not a single complete copy of any of the works of Plato or Aristotle was available at all in Europe. ^{Then} too the effect of new books was generally limited to a certain cultural elite and class - mass education and mass awareness of the contents of these books awaited the very late printing press.

2) Printing is a Chinese invention. In early 14c. at. in Chinese in-
cluded a movable press and a ^{small} ~~hand~~ ^{type} machine. In the West the
movable ~~press~~ ^{type} is credited with the ~~invention of printing~~ ^{invention of printing} ~~in the 15c.~~ ^{in the 15c.} One
invented in 1450 at Leipzig is known as ^{the first} printed edition of the Bible. One
example of each first edition is included in the current modern
series.

As filed.
 Though it was almost a century
 to be put - the man can be said - no other
 of the law - the subject so radically
 of the law - the subject so radically

~~Printing & publication of all forms of clerical regulations.
Priest & monk in the religious and political~~

[illegible]

2) Printing is a Chinese invention. As early as the 14th cent. the Chinese had developed a movable press & a simple handset. In the West the invention of printing is credited with the name of J. Gutenberg who in 1450 it is supposed having printed on a movable press an edition of the Bible. One of the ^{first} ~~first~~ printed by him is included in the present museum display.

at least almost - and, for the effect of the new method of book making
to be fully felt - But as man explored the new world which was
production of books opened to him, they found themselves on the threshold of
a new & thrilling age. No other invention in human history - some perhaps
that of the wheel & the compass - has added so much to the sum total
of well being & happiness.

~~On a manuscript now in England~~
In the margin of a manuscript ~~now in England~~ ^{of 1400} ^{copy of Galen} a disturbed
medieval scholar penned "I looked on this agreement for some years.
Of I had only known then of the work" to show and maintain was the
dissemination of information ~~the~~ ^{the} records of ideas dated 1400 yrs after
a major work had been written - a scholar was unaware of its
content.

With the development of the art of printing the pace of progress was immeasurably increased. To-day almost all ^{intellectual} technical lag has been eliminated. To-day experiments are known tomorrow in every part of our globe. ~~There will never be more ignorance.~~

It is not only the school curriculum. The average man can today quickly learn the implications of new discoveries, it took the average world over a 1000 yrs. for even the educated minority to be made aware of Aristotle's ideas - ^{Newton - Darwin} Within a decade the basic outlines of Einstein's much more complex theories were part of our common mental currency.

The printed book has made it possible for the human mind to explore knowledge frontiers & uncover nature's secrets at an unprecedented rate - So much so that we can expect more technical progress & scientific understandings to be developed in the next decade than in all of previously recorded history.

Printing has effected our way of life as well as our knowledge about life.
I believe that ^{putting} the book more than any other single factor is responsible
for the use of the great dem. of the world & the eye of the common man.

Knowledge is power. When everyone can read there are no limits to the knowledge
the so-called middle & lower class people can demand. There is no longer any
need for the privilege to maintain such a distinction - the rich, the
poor, some of the new ~~able~~ ^{to be able} will meet on the same level.

The printed book increased the tempo of social change. Until the invention
of printing, knowledge was limited to the no. of men - who could tell much or the
no. of laboriously handwritten letters, his disciples ~~disputed~~ ^{disputed}. After all, the
words would be impounded by the priest. But the new - St. Thomas Paine's
mighty speed could be read in a ~~few~~ ^{even bridge} in the callous by Fido
Mr. de Voltaire books could enter any French home - Martin Luther's
sermons reached many a man who never heard him preach. The
printing press made men aware of their grievances and bound them together
for joint action to redress their wrongs. The American Information
Agency and the Propaganda Bureau by which we to day are still trying to
help the enslaved & crushed the disappointed are witnessing testimony of
the effect of the printed word.

Into books men poured their hopes. From books we formed our
view. From books we learnt of the inequities which surrounded
us & of the opp. for reform which were open to us. A book opened
us to the art of reading. Men clamored to read. To read was to
think - To think was to question & to lay new plans. Men asked only for
this opp. - When it was made available to them a new age was born.

Priests had much the effect on the re. world that it did on the political
 & in world has changed in such a way as to make religious ideas seem ~~obsolete~~
 less than ^{the} modernizing dogmas & under that too many dogmas can
 not push to lead unless he pays them down. Naturally these priest classes
 learn that they are the undertakers of some special knowledge - know only
 to them; ~~this knowledge~~ ^{this knowledge} ~~is~~ ^{is} kept from others - and being
 one the governing; interpreters of scripture.

~~Chenopodium~~ ^{Prick} ~~gracile~~ ~~horizontal~~ ~~to~~ ~~slight~~ ~~with~~ ~~blue~~

[illegible]

more ~~was~~ full now not as you is to appear in print. as certainly
it appeared in the paper of some publishing before that could be accomplished
no longer as the Bible was copied by hand - the only person heard in terms
and ~~which~~ ^{to make} as print wanted to sell him & interpreted in the most direct.
But with printing having copies of the Bible purchased and in home -
with quiet diligence & the living - now. and I am to read the
do cannot in which the full was heard - & they were suggested
questions.

years they overstepped his apostles. And the rest men ought to learn in
 points; yet we cannot understand the mystery & meaning

from practical position - and the rest men ought to understand the
 power & the place of life - yet the church has a hand in and
 and, the rest & the rest. There were men of the world

The N. T. could neither almost ~~the~~ pass on the merits of
submitting to the system demanded by Nature - or without
and we cannot pass its claim to power.

Protestants were born as men began again - to read for Luther & Co

really have diff. was the spirit of the Church in one day - to do that
in the day of the Lord & against the authority of Rome, ~~as~~ set the
testimony of their eyes - and a ^{rel.} reformation was inevitable.

Practically - such a rel. reformation has never taken place in the
modern world. Islam is still giving rel. & pol. by medieval models.
A privileged rel. & pol. class governs and benefits. Part of the
reason may be that the Muslim leaders have never allowed the Koran
to be ^{printed} ~~published~~ in any of their countries. The masses have never read
what Mohammed really said. Part of the reason may be that
printing is carried on by license and always under strict censorship.
As - I think the Muslim world only those who benefit from the
rel. & pol. inequalities have been allowed to read.

Censorship is, of course, the acceptance by which old privileges try to
beat into submission new ideas. There is censorship by publishing
an Index - a list of prohibited books, which it is sinful to possess.
There is censorship by license - where the publisher may print only
that which the state has certified as harmless. There is censorship
by book burning - where a state tries to track into all ^{remains} ~~remains~~ of
subversive published books which may have ~~been~~ found on
way into homes & libraries & might plant seed of discontent - no
dictatorship can survive without censorship. Modernism can
survive unless it is ignorant to suppress all attempts to
increase conformity by requiring mass reading - it is at the
reading which people do that the m. clergy of our land always
level their first attack - if they can remove "subversive text"
from our libraries closed and "no conformist alt" from our
schools at home - soon they will see to it that we read
only what they think - ~~standards~~ ^{is the first law of dem. living.} against all attacks on mass
freedom to read ~~is the first law of dem. living.~~

desire - They are sweet and pleasant but rather nourishing, not
sustaining.

Some of our reading should be hard and battle reading - the reading
which keeps us abreast of our professional interest. Some should be
novel and potboiler reading - valuable to us in making us aware
of the world in which we live and of the kind of people among whom
we live and of the type of person that we are.

Fortunately, we are a generation blessed with men who have
translated the sciences learning into our daily vision. The technical
language of science is difficult but the Russell's and the Dirac's of
our day have made it possible for us to become aware of the
questions which they raised and of the nature of the answers which
they demand. The world of science is a highly technical one - but
have also the De Kruif's and the Huxley's and the Banting's
have written intelligibly of the latest discoveries so that we can
understand at least the world view which underlies
and which has so challenging unfolded. Psychology, sociology,
mathematics, ^{archaeology} and of the disciplines in its popularization and we
are much in our debt and ought to be so conscious of their
value.

Beyond this we ought to read the lib. and the fiction and the
poetry which intrigues because of its subject matter or because of
its ~~style~~ ^{style} of the author. Sometimes a novel succeeds in capturing
the mood of the moral questions of an age - sometimes it introduces
us to a way of life and ideal of which we were unaware - but
sometimes we read and should read deliberately - and we should
not be afraid to put aside a book which is obviously not
going anywhere or saying anything. Even if a book is all or none -
we will not be ostracized for putting it down - along its way - To keep
books which are, however, the ~~stages~~ ^{stages} of every book.

What we have enjoyed reading we ought to keep around on hand.
It ought to be available to us for ~~reference~~ ^{reference} and to our children
as to our ~~self~~ ^{self} of some of our young people read less
of value. It is often said they have been so fast in their home -
where so many ~~affiliated~~ ^{affiliated} or ~~joined~~ ^{joined} to bookshelves filled
only with popular ~~novels~~ ^{novels} and paperback magazines. ^{to}
books for reading must be cultivated. There is no better way
to help young people - and yourself - reach the beauty of

The danger is "hot red reading" is that we ~~are~~ ^{are} unprepared for the
fully understandable world. If we take the part of a Thomas Mann or
San Walter Pater ^{or} Franz Kafka and will miss not only the real beauty of
the style but the full meaning of their symbolism - even if we understand
the true beauty of the story line. Cannot tell. We not only - but how
the story is told and what shades of character and description the author
Pater was story -

"Hot red reading" facts entirely in philosophy or scientific fact. or in
poetry. The edition of Emerson's Philosophy told me once I took him 10
years of reading even to begin to understand Plato's Republic - yet I
know a hundred who claim to have finished it in 2 hours. The Bible
is the remainder story of a lifetime. I have had this pt. since I was
under sixteen. I have just done and much. Dr. P. C. Carver has been
been reading some of the remarkable portions in class - we have to
make the young people love the language & feel at home in it - so
that they will not be afraid in later life to pick up the Bible and read
from it. We have read some portions as found, Ruth, & Esther. I
read those sections. That time we read some reading the
same section - yet with each reading I catch new meanings
and feel that the text has meant more to me.

Good books should be read over and over and over again - until one gets
what was said & what was left unsaid - extracting every last
ounce of meaning from the few lines - On some books, more the
more precious for that quality - so will we read the
more we read to us. To show yourself the value of such reading -
Try a simple experiment - Take a play of Shakespeare or a poem
of Browning - or any piece of good literature that you remember liking -
Read it over slowly and carefully once a week for a month -
I think you will feel that done to it after that time.

How shall we know what to read? ~~One should~~ ^{One should}
~~select many for himself~~ ^{select a good resolution}
is to avoid so much that is obviously meaningless - possibly
We should read to amuse ourselves and to divert ourselves - a
goal in itself - a source of pleasure would make a wonderful diversion
and help us take our mind off daily care - but we should
not make the reading a steady diet -

We should not let the physically healthy if we can only

What we have enjoyed reading we ought to keep about the home. It is
~~scholarly~~ pleasant to browse again in remembered pages. More important
they will be available to our children as they grow up. A child will
read what he finds on his parent's shelves - (Picked up a copy of -
Arnold Zuck's his novel about Jewish emigration. "Oh I just found it
this morning") If he finds the conservative, polemical, particularly
embroidered with mental illness & sex & books of religious cant
etc. will be his diet - He will find that much of a higher order - he
will learn to enjoy them

We often underestimate ^{the} effect of home conditioning - True Abe Zuck
walked miles for books because he found none in his home - But
any child will try at least to achieve the level of culture his
parent demands

In the connection I have often felt one ought to renew the practice
of reading aloud. To-day we need picture books & child books
alphabet & more again - I suppose the happy memory of Gillman
yet that child has almost absolutely ~~does~~ not know
how to read or want to read -

As you see there is selection - as for child - Select by
reading good little together. Help child appreciate style &
beauty of language - qualities which often get neglected
when little is read aloud. Read poetry to them (Patsy liked
it - "There were a green - 'many had a little lamb'") I believe
even when what a child appears can not read yet it
is often not read is said but how it is said that is
most important.

Finally, we ought ^{to be} reading material about our people - I
do not mean such so-called Jewish books as "MOM" & "What makes
Jewry Run" But books about Jewish history & Jewish life, &
Jewish life -

For instance here are some popular ones -

Hardly do suggest it - but books of Jewish history & Jewish life

This delicious bowl "200 million" being with it with blessing -
also pleasant dinner ^{but} also much to "dead end" lot. -
enough & money.

~~Dead end, can not know, would it be used -~~

What we shall choose is up to us -

A wonderful, as city, a future is idea await us of us last
made to get choices



Last year 12,551 new ~~books~~ ^{titles} were published in various series,
of which the majority to new publications, it is noted that 40% were
just to new titles new series, a further 10% to new series.

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