PREACHING ETHICS IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY: Three North American Reform Rabbis Speak Out

JASON FENSTER

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Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
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Advisor: Dr. Carole Balin

This thesis investigates how Rabbis Emil G. Hirsch, Maurice N. Eisendrath, and Stephen S. Wise spoke about ethics and justice from the pulpit. They each played a critical role in making social justice a pillar of the Reform movement and are fitting subjects for consideration. In studying how they preached about the most important social justice issues of their time, we begin to understand their impact and can derive principles to guide today's rabbis as we preach on ethics and justice.

This thesis has an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and three appendices. The introduction lays the groundwork, explaining the process for developing the driving question, the reason for selecting these three preachers, and the structural framework of the thesis. Each chapter opens with a brief biography of the rabbi, a description of his career on and off the pulpit, and intermittent remarks on social and political conditions during the period in which he preached in a congregation. For Hirsch (Chapter 1) and Eisendrath (Chapter 2), I investigate, in detail, one sermon that is emblematic of each rabbi's preaching style and consider the major themes and homiletical strategies in their ethical and social justice preaching. Chapter 3, focusing on Wise considers, more broadly, the religious foundations of his preaching and the many topics he spoke on in his distinguished career. The conclusion draws lessons from their shared themes and from each rabbi's unique style. The appendices each contain, in full, the focus sermon in each chapter.

The majority of the source material comes from printed volumes of sermons in addition to some archival material. Biographical, historical, and cultural information come from surveys of American Jewish history and books and biographies about the rabbis and their congregations.

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INTRODUCTION

Why This Topic?

I did not realize it then, but, as a teenager, I was a disciple of Emil G. Hirsch.[1] The 1885 Pittsburgh Platform spoke to what I understood to be Judaism. I, too, recognized "in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish people for its mission during its national life in Palestine," and "accept[ed] as binding only its moral laws . . ." (Paragraph III).[2] Moreover, I felt a deep conviction about the Jewish responsibility to support the downtrodden, as articulated by the American Reform forefathers:

> In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.[3] (Paragraph VIII)

When I studied the Bible, I tried to identify core ethical principles within it and then contemplated how to enact them. Because of the convictions of my family, my synagogue community, and my rabbi, who was a passionate advocate for social justice, I felt a moral obligation, grounded in Jewish belief, to pursue justice and create a society rooted in ethics.

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[1] As we will see in the following chapter, Hirsch played a key role in drafting the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform.
[2] Central Conference of American Rabbis, "Declaration of Principles," *1885 Pittsburgh Conference,* Pittsburgh, 1985. Accessed October 13, 2016. https://www.ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/declaration-principles/.
[3] Ibid.

Over time, however, I began to ask why the word *mitzvah,* sacred commandment, has come to be translated into English as "good deed" in both informal and academic settings.[4] But the texts do not simply call us to perform altruistic niceties; they actually **obligate** us to act according to a system of Jewish ethics. So when, I wondered, did the shift in meaning occur? Did lay people or clergy drive it? How did it become ubiquitous?

For the purposes of this thesis, I selected to investigate the answers to these questions through the genre of sermons. As I am interested in how Jews-in-the-pews understand what Judaism says about ethics and justice, sermons seemed like a logical place to start. After all, as rabbis know, the best opportunity to reach the greatest number of congregants occurs during regular Shabbat, festival, and holiday worship, and the sermon is the rabbi's best opportunity to convey a message of Jewish ethics and justice.

Summary of the Project

This project is an analysis of the sermons of Rabbis Emil G. Hirsch, Maurice N. Eisendrath, and Stephen S. Wise. I contextualize their words by providing some historical background and considering their activities on behalf of social justice in the secular world.

The doyenne of American Jewish history, Jonathan Sarna, credits three rabbis for laying the groundwork for social action in the American Reform movement. As he puts

[4] For example: *Encyclopedia Judaica*: "In common usage *mitzvah* has taken on the meaning of a good deed." (Aaron Rothkoff, "Mitzvah," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Second Edition, vol. 14, ed. Fred Skolnik, et.al. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 372.); in Ephraim Urbach's *The Sages* he considers words that have "acquired different meaning and concepts" and defines mitzvah as "'precept', 'good deed.'" (Efraim Urbach, *The Sages*: *Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1987), 4.

it, Reform Jews carried on "the 'prophetic' legacy of such venerated Reform rabbis as Emil G. Hirsch and Stephen S. Wise…[and] Eisendrath, [who] for one, placed particular emphasis on issues like world peace, civil rights, and the population explosion."[5] This triumvirate lived and breathed Jewish ethics. They used words to speak truth to power and performed Jewish values through actions meant to lift up the most vulnerable of their day.

Hirsch, as we will see, set the movement on a course toward social justice by building an ideological foundation connecting Jewish tradition and ethical values. In the next generation, Wise and then Eisendrath took on this mantle, bringing Jewish ethics to bear on the most compelling social issues of their day. These rabbis were exceptional in their respective ages and have since inspired generations of Reform rabbis, including me, to join justice movements.

Structure of the Thesis

Each chapter opens with a brief biography of the rabbi, a description of his career on and off the pulpit, and intermittent remarks on social and political conditions during the period in which he preached in a congregation. For Hirsch and Eisendrath, I investigate, in detail, one sermon that is emblematic of each rabbi's preaching style and consider the major themes and homiletical strategies in their ethical and social justice preaching. Because of Wise's extensive activism, I use the chapter to consider the religious foundations of his preaching and the many topics he spoke on in his distinguished career.

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[5] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 289.

Key Question

How do leading Reform rabbis, Emil G. Hirsch, Maurice N. Eisendrath, and Stephen S. Wise, preach a message of ethics and social justice from the pulpit?

I hope that by investigating their sermons, I can understand these rabbis in context and discover strategies to guide today's rabbis to preach on ethics and justice.

CHAPTER 1: Emil G. Hirsch

Biography and Background

Biography and Career

Emil Gustav Hirsch was born on May 22, 1851 in Luxembourg. His father, Rabbi Samuel Hirsch, was an early reformer and the rabbi of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. He immigrated to the United States in 1866 when his father was hired as the rabbi of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia. In the United States, Hirsch graduated from the University of Pennsylvania[6] and returned to Europe to attend the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (College for the Scientific Study of Judaism) and the University of Berlin and the University of Liepzig for graduate studies. At the Hochschule, which "served as the intellectual focus for Liberal Jews,"[7] faculty and students applied a modern academic lens to the study of Judaism. It was a preeminent institution for the burgeoning Reform movement. Notably, Hirsch and Felix Adler, the would-be founder of Ethical Culture Society, were classmates at the Hochschule. The two shared a focus on ethics and social justice, but differed strongly on the role of religion in the maintenance of those ethical ideals.

While Hirsch was an impressive student, he learned about religious ideology from his father. Rabbi Samuel Hirsch was a revered scholar and philosopher who "participated actively in the Reform Movement"[8] and described "Judaism as a religion of humanity."[9]

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[6] Where he played on the football team!
[7] Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 191.
[8] Ibid., 68.
[9] Gerson B. Levi, introduction to *My Religion*, by Emil Gustav Hirsch (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 12.

This tendency to see Jews in a larger context foreshadows the universalistic ethos that would emerge in his son's career.

Hirsch began his pulpit career in congregations in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Louisville before eventually accepting a position at Chicago Sinai Congregation. He arrived there in 1880, succeeding Kaufman Kohler who moved to New York City to succeed David Einhorn.[10] Hirsch started his service to Sinai Congregation in 1880 and preached there until the Thanksgiving before his death in January 1923.[11]

Preaching at Sinai Congregation

Hirsch was an outlier in his generation. Preaching on social issues was uncommon for rabbis in the late nineteenth-century,[12] but Hirsch's fearlessness and insightful analysis of contemporary social issues earned him great acclaim at a preacher. He oversaw immense growth at Sinai Congregation and, according to Michael Meyer, "his extraordinary oratorical talent regularly filled its immense sanctuary with 2,000 listeners."[13] The congregation was, in general comprised of German Jews from the wealthier classes of Chicago, including Julius Rosenwald, owner and leader of Sears-Roebuck (making his preaching on progressive economics all the more relevant and provocative).[14] In his history of Chicago Sinai Congregation, Tobias Brinkmann writes

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[10] The early American Reform rabbinate was a bit of a family affair; both Kohler and Hirsch married daughters of Einhorn. Hirsch revered his father-in-law and wrote and spoke about Einhorn in his sermons and delivered addresses celebrating and commemorating Einhorn's work.
[11] Levi, introduction, 16.
[12] Meyer writes: "One looks in vain for social criticism in Jewish sermons delivered during the twenty years after the American Civil War" (287).
[13] Ibid., 272.
[14] Tobias Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai: A Jewish Congregation in Chicago* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 124-5.

that even Christians came to hear Hirsch's sermons for their "sophisticated and often sharp take on the social affairs."[15] He became such an important figure that the *Chicago Tribune* began reporting on his message from the pulpit.

Sinai was a congregation that "prided itself on being radical."[16] They held Shabbat services on Sunday, and the sermon played the key role in the service. In the first years of Hirsch's career, he would write out each word of his sermons, but as he became more comfortable from the pulpit, he began speaking, at times, from mere outlines. Thus, the text of those sermons were either written down after he preached or were written out stenographically.[17]

In the introduction to *My Religion*, Hirsch's son-in-law, Gerson B. Levi, writes that Hirsch "was proud of the fact that at Temple Sinai prayer played a very secondary role to the sermon. Liturgical celebration, to his mind, was considerably less important than aiding the sick and the motherless."[18] As we will see in his writings, he prioritized ethics and living out Jewish values in his rabbinate.

Hirsch as a Progressive, Social Advocate

Hirsch is recognized as a key figure in making social justice central to the ideology of the American Reform Movement. In 1885, Kohler brought rabbis from across the country to a conference in Pittsburgh to lay out a plan for the nascent Reform Movement. The platform they created highlighted the importance of personal ethics, but, as Meyer describes, Hirsch insisted "that his colleagues take note of contemporary social

[15] Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai*, 170.
[16] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 275.
[17] Levi, introduction, 21-2.
[18] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 275.

injustice [and had he not] it is unlikely they would have done so."[19] Because of Hirsch's influence, the eighth plank of the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform reads:

> In full accordance with the spirit of the Mosaic legislation, which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.[20]

Hirsch insisted that the new American Reform movement be engaged in actualizing the ethical values it preached. It must not be only high-minded intellectualism; it must be engaged in works and in addressing contemporary social problems, especially those of an economic nature, present in society. With this paragraph, Hirsch placed social justice at the center of Reform identity. Sarna describes the importance of this moment as follows: "This social justice motif—the Jewish equivalent of the Protestant Social Gospel—became…ever more influential within Reform circles over the ensuing decades."[21]

Hirsch did not just talk the talk; he walked the walk. He was involved in, if not a leader of, many social service organizations and charities in Chicago. He inspired others to work for more effective handling of charitable giving in Chicago and helped found organizations to secure homes for orphans and to support the education of new immigrants' children. Moreover, Hirsch served on the board, and was later named president, of the Chicago Public Library and served on the State Board of Charities and

[19] Ibid., 287.
[20] Ibid., 269.
[21] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 151.

Correction. These positions gave him the opportunity to work with progressive reformers throughout the city, including those who helped found the NAACP.[22]

Hirsch was a proponent of women's suffrage and, at a time when women's role in Jewish space was still quite restricted,[23] he remarkably invited Jane Addams, a famous social reformer and suffragist in Chicago, to speak from the pulpit.[24] Given his alliance with Addams, one of the leading proponents of a juvenile court system that would treat children appropriately, it is not surprising to hear Hirsch decrying those who called for harsher punishments and a vengeful justice system.

In addition to his work in and around Chicago, Hirsch played an important role in the intellectual pursuits of American Judaism. In 1891, Hirsch co-founded the newspaper the *Reform Advocate* and edited the publication for 30 years. The journal, still in print today, presented articles on Reform Jewish thinking and scholarly content on the scientific study of Judaism. Hirsch also used the publication, at times, to print and disseminate his sermons. Hirsch also served as the editor of the Bible department of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, contributing articles to the department of Rabbinics and Ethics.

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[22] Tobias Brinkmann, "Emil G. Hirsch and Chicago Sinai Congregation." Faith in the City. Accessed November 7, 2016. http://faith.galecia.com/essays/emil-g-hirsch-and-chicago-sinai-congregation.

[23] Tobias Brinkman notes in *Sundays at Sinai* that in the mid-1890s Sinai was among the first congregations to give women full membership in the congregation. Most other Reform congregations, he notes, did not begin this practice until after 1920 (*Sundays at Sinai*, 223).

[24] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 285.

Historical Context

America

Hirsch's leadership in turning the Reform movement toward social justice came at a particularly charged period in American history. At the turn of the twentieth century, the American progressive movement, along with a corollary religious movement known as Protestant Social Gospel, was on the rise. Christian preachers began to glean teachings from the Hebrew Prophets to convey a message of universalistic, religious responsibility to attend to the needs of the vulnerable in contemporary society. Meyer provides excellent analysis of the relationship between Jewish clergy and their Christian counterparts during this period:

> While preachers of the Social Gospel held up Jesus as their principal model of social reformer and were not always friendly to the Jews, their attention to the message of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah made Jewish Reformers feel that liberal Christianity and Reform Judaism were now drawing on common values for a common American cause. In their eyes Social Gospel was not something they were importing from Christianity. The contrary was true.[25]

With this in mind, we should not be surprised that all of the preachers in this study mention Jesus from the pulpit. As Christians tried to recapture the prophets for their community, so, too, Hirsch, Wise, and Eisendrath latched on to Jesus as a model of Jewish social activism, reviving the words and legacy of the Jewish prophetic voice.

In this context, Reform rabbis were the primary drivers toward social activism. It was a top-down movement, not a clergy reaction to bubbling sentiments in the congregation. Meyer wonders if clergy felt a dissonance between their religious calls to support the downtrodden and their congregants' high social status and positions of

[25] Ibid., 288.

relative power. He believes rabbis found this to be a crucial opportunity to share a prophetic message:

> Perhaps also the prophetic role was the rabbi's endeavor to forcefully reassert his own status against the wealthy businessmen who dominated his congregation and whose values reflected the capitalist ethos. In any case, during the early years, it was the Central Conference of American Rabbis that presented the Reform position on matters of social justice.[26]

Not only did the CCAR lead this charge, but Hirsch, Wise, and Eisendrath occupied crucial positions of institutional and moral leadership to make social justice the hallmark of the Reform Movement.

Chicago

Waves of immigration during the last few decades of the nineteenth-century made Chicago "the fastest-growing large city in the world."[27] The Jewish community, in particular, saw massive growth. When Hirsch arrived to Chicago in 1880, the Jewish population was roughly 10,000; by his last few years at Sinai, the number had surged to 300,000. These Jewish immigrants brought with them traditions of Socialism and Jewish traditionalism, forcing synagogues to make important choices about their ideology and agenda.[28]

New industry demanded a larger workforce, and the city's growth was spurred by an influx of immigrants and laborers. Against this backdrop, Hirsch comes on to the scene. He enters his pulpit among an emergent social and religious progressivism while facing growing wealth disparity and clashes between workers and owners of industry.

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[26] Ibid.
[27] Brinkmann, *Sundays at Sinai*, 124.
[28] Ibid., 123.

Sermon Example: "A Sukkoth Sermon: New Ethics for New Economics*" (Sunday, October 19, 1902)*[29]

Before looking at the larger body of Hirsch's work, I will focus on one of Hirsch's sermons that is indicative of his style and approach. The analysis of the sermon will lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of how Hirsch conveyed a message of Jewish ethics to his congregation.

This sermon, which dovetails with "The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion" (from the *My Religion* series[30]), is representative of Hirsch's work. He marks himself as a part of the learned, intellectual class, firmly situates himself and his congregation in an American context calling on American notions of ethics, lifts up his voice as a moral beacon for contemporary social issues, and uses Jewish source material as a frame for his remarks and not as "proof text" throughout. The sermon considers the dire ethical problems of modern economic systems, which he uses as a foundation for explaining the importance of a contemporary, lived, omnipresent vision of social ethics.

Hirsch opens with the image of *Sukkot*. Using poetic imagery, he paints a picture of a harvest scene with "the patriarch of the family and his sons and daughters touching elbows with the bondsman and the man servant" (111). He describes the joy of the

[29] Emil G. Hirsch, *The Jewish Preacher: Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch*. ed. Myron A. Hirsch. (Naples, FL: Collage Books, 2003), 111-130. The full text of this sermon appears in Appendix A.

[30] Hirsch ended his career with an extended sermon series entitled *My Religion*. In his sermonic swansong, preached from 1920-1 and published posthumously in 1925, he laid out his vision of Judaism, with a particular emphasis on ethics and theology.

harvest as derived from their "common work" (112). To Hirsch, the *lulav* and the *sukkah* are symbols that recall a patriarchal agricultural social formation.

Such imagery functions as a setting for Hirsch's message. He returns to it only at the end of the sermon, thereby using the Biblical descriptions of Sukkot as a framework for his discussion of economic and social theories. In fact, Hirsch does not at all come back to Jewish texts, either Rabbinic or Biblical, to support the ideas he presents. On the one hand, it is possible that he believed the sanctuary-setting and his title as rabbi (and a beloved one at that) gave him sufficient Jewish credibility. On the other hand, he was likely acutely attuned to his congregation: social and economic theories may have had far more relevance and been far more familiar to his congregants than classical Jewish sources. After all, his congregation was generally wealthy and elite, and working to assimilate themselves into the majority culture,[31] let alone the non-Jews who chose to come to hear Hirsch preach.

After introducing the general theme, Hirsch spells out the history of the shift from a nomadic, agrarian way of life to a feudal society. He describes how, in eighteenth-century France, new ideas of individualism and liberty freed humanity from a hierarchical and debasing system. The problem, Hirsch argues, is that in the years since, unchecked individualism has caused its own set of challenges. With a new system of social organization comes new problems yet to be addressed. The issue, as Hirsch sees it, is that the twentieth-century has seen another shift in the organization of society, and individualism can no longer be the operating motivation for humanity. Having identified

[31] For example, Brinkmann shares an anecdote of a number of congregants choosing to send their children to a Unitarian church for Sunday School (*Sundays at Sinai*, 210).

the problem, he offers a proposition: "[L]iberty and individualism…must give way in turn to the socialized interdependence of activities…" (113).

Hirsch turns then to the topic of individualism. He lays the groundwork by describing two different systems: the individual liberty of the French Revolution and the industrial individualism of capitalism. First, he describes how the French Revolution and the newfound preeminence of the individual "turned to make man a God because the church and the state…had conspired to make of man a slave" (114). New social structures, founded on ideas of liberty and equality, allowed such a shift to take place. Second, he discusses Adam Smith and capitalism. Capitalism, he argues, replaces social harmony with competition and selfishness. The individualism borne from capitalism drives a person to greed and the need to assert himself against, not with, other people. Hirsch argues that the introduction of a new technology, steam power, fed upon the worst aspects of capitalism, shedding light on its flaws and re-enslaving the individual. Levying a sharp critique against the economics of the English school, he maintains that powerful men motivated by greed dehumanized others. Hirsch then suggests that unions are the poor man's antidote to this corrupt economic system, but ultimately concludes that even they are wanting, unable to overcome the larger market forces of greed and technology. He closes this section with further social analysis, noting a transition in economic and social systems. He argues that neither English school capitalism nor French individualism is sufficient for dealing with a growing and changing America. There is thus a new problem on the rise: the lack of theories to explain the contemporary economic situation.

In all, Hirsch devotes roughly ten pages of this twenty-page sermon to historical and economic analysis, a common feature of his work. Before moving into his moral

message (which we will see in the following pages), he lays the groundwork in scholarship. In fact, he peppers many of his more theological/philosophical sermons with academic citations. As usual, in this sermon, he demonstrates in depth knowledge of a rather esoteric subject. Were there to be congregants listening with professional expertise in this area, he could easily hold his own.

To Hirsch, ethics is the solution to the society's woes. "We shall only come out of this state of war [economic turmoil]," he claims, "when we learn a few simple principles of ethics" (122). His vision of ethics is all-pervasive: "Ethics in business, Sunday School and bargain sale" (122). Perhaps anticipating the skepticism of his congregation, he deflects his point with self-deprecating humor and with strong rhetoric: "Such a thought can only germinate in the cranky brain of a crank rabbi" (122). And he follows up with the comment: "And between making a hole on the links and talking nonsense to the nonsensical girl, they [vulgar businessmen] may also comfort themselves that ethics and economics lie on different planes" (122).

Notably, when he employs sharper rhetoric, it is rarely aimed directly at the community.[32] So, for instance, he uses the gentler third person plural "they" above, rather than the harsher second person, accusatory "you." In this way, members of the congregation who behave in this manner will have to count themselves as such. At other points, he draws himself into the sermons, as when he says: "And ethics is not merely that negative twaddle about goodness. If it be, I am sorry I am ethical" (123). Most often,

[32] We also notice the sexism in his last statement, and try to recognize that he is the product of his age.

he speaks about a generic "you" or leaves the object of his excoriation undefined so the listener can invite him or herself into the strawman argument he constructs:

> Ethics teaches life; and if ethics has no voice for the living, if religion is merely for the dead then the world is doomed to death, and men are cursed to perdition. Yea, the deepest thinkers of the day have recognized that ethics and economics shall not be divorced, and where they are, there is trouble and there is mischief (123).

In both of these cases, he preempts potential arguments as he makes a claim for the substantial ethical system he wants to build. To Hirsch, ethics is not merely altruistic good deeds; it is far more systematic than that. It must be lived, not relegated to old, dead ideas. For Hirsch, ethics is not gibberish children learn by rote like a Shakespearean sonnet, with no comprehension of its meaning. Surprisingly, he neither offers a Jewish proof text nor identifies a Jewish ethical idea. Instead, he only hints that Judaism and Jewish life are not deadened, inactive ideas for the congregation. Unlike Shakespeare, it must become a living language that can speak to the people of his day.

Before explaining the principles of his new ethics of economics, he returns to the opening: He advocates for a "higher type of social organization, no longer individualistic but cooperative under the plan of combination and mutual helpfulness" (124). He reminds the community of his mission and then guides them through four "plain ethical principles" (124):

> The first plain principle is that human life is more valuable than property…The standard of life must be maintained…And the third point: Property must be differentiated into various classes…Labor and capital must both carry the burden of responsibility to deal with each other in fidelity (124-5).

In the context of a Jewish worship service, listening to a rabbi speak from the pulpit, the values he calls upon are particular to the congregation's sense of being American, not of

their being Jewish. Once again, Hirsch does not provide a Jewish textual basis, rather he appeals to American values that draw on images and examples from politics and contemporary news stories. So, for instance, he argues that the hunt for cheap labor detracts from considerations of quality of life. He does not want people to be a mere cog in a grand capitalist machine; people cannot just be property and he says "the cheapest labor is not compatible with the highest dignity of American civilization" (125).

Ever seeking to make his arguments relevant to his flock, this preacher focuses on contemporary social issues. In the fourth section, he expresses frustration with the process for contractual negotiations between labor and the economic elite. In the last image before he moves to his closing, he brings up the Pennsylvania Railroad company and the Coal Strike of 1902:

> If they would apply [ethical principles] in the coal district, we would not have strikes. If they would learn that human life is more valuable than property, we might have peace. If they would not try to have the cheapest labor control the American system, we would have concord (128).

His paragraph about the strike serves as a fitting end to this section of the sermon. He opened with the argument that ethics and economics are one and that ethics are living and relevant to the modern man. Here, he brings that idea to fruition by discussing a specific circumstance. It is important to note that, though the majority of the sermon focuses on economics in general, he provides a practical example to supplement his lengthy theoretical and philosophical exploration. He explains earlier that ethics have to be lived, so he concludes with a how-to on implementing his vision.

The sermon ends similar to the way it began. Although *Sukkot* is not explicitly relevant to his topic, it affords a Jewish lens to ethics. Hirsch calls again on images of *Sukkot* and agrarian life to put a coda on his sermon. He paints an illustration of "the final

Sukkoth Day" (128), giving messianic undertones to his closing. He intimates Deuteronomy 16:11 ["thou and thy son and thy daughter, thy man servant and thy maid servant, the stranger within thy gates and the Levite, the widow and the orphan…" (128-9)], which is actually about *Shavuot* but gives a fitting, universalistic conclusion. No longer quoting Deuteronomy, he envisions a time when all people "shall be brought together in a union not on the one hand of labor and on the other of capital, but a union of labor and capital, and all men allowed the right of their humanity" (129). He also quotes Isaiah 2:4 ["The sword will be turned into the plowshare, and the lance will be turned into a pruning hook, and every man will sit under his own fig tree." (129)] and Isaiah 56:10-12 ["The watchmen are blind they are asleep…Come let us drink, let us have a good time. As it is today, so it will be tomorrow." (129)] In the second Isaiah citation he adds in his own modern spin, comparing greedy, lazy watchmen to those in contemporary society always seeking to gain over the other. He then uses these images to offer one more condemnation of English school economics and, like the prophet, warns against the perils of following the wrong path and worshipping the wrong gods (or economic theories). He closes with a blessing and a message of hope. Like the *etrog* of *Sukkot*, it is "by the small things [that] men are judged and society is built" (130).

Hirsch clearly has a deep knowledge of text and an ability to exegete well, and it is interesting to note that he reserves such language for the opening and closing of the sermon, as if it is the expected or proper to speak religiously in those moments.

Notably, the last line of the sermon is "Bless us; bless this land especially. Amen" (130). Despite the closing transition back to Jewish sources and images, lest his

congregation forgets, he reiterates that his message is an American one, relevant and central to their lives as people of commerce in this land.[33]

General Themes

This sermon, preached midway through his career at Chicago Sinai Congregation, is a useful entry into Hirsch's work. Throughout his career, Hirsch contemplates where ethics derive, what purpose they play in contemporary life, and how people or communities might live out their values. In these sermons, he expresses his perspective on the nature of Judaism and Jewish history, particularly as they relate to ethics. Furthermore, we learn about his attitude toward text and traditional expressions of Judaism. Finally, Hirsch's sermons, as I will show, comment on the links between being Jewish and being American.

Hirsch's Ethics

At the most basic level, Hirsch believes that the nature of humanity is to work toward social relationships strengthened by feelings of responsibility toward one another. The basis of his argument is one of universal attitude toward ethics, only loosely presented with Jewish undertones. In a number of sermons, he compares the nature of human beings and animals, as in the following excerpts:

- "'Truth' with a capital 'T', is the essential thing. What is that? It is the consciousness that you are, as men, destined to something better than the animals are" ("What is Truth," [1920-1] in *My Religion*, 92).
- "and man is higher than animals, which is what engenders the call for justice" ("Alone with Thee, My God," [no date given] in *My Religion*, 334).

[33] The use of "land" to close the sermon also resonates with the agricultural themes of *Sukkot,* though he does not make an explicit connection between the Biblical Israelite festival and the land of America.

- "The man is a moral being from the beginning when he is man. The anthropoid is not—the simian is not…a social being means a moral being" ("The Theology of the Jewish Reform Movement" [1897], in *The Jewish Preacher,* 107).
- "That is the positive statement that Judaism has to advance.[34] And by our history we have the right, the duty, the responsibility of being leaders in this regenerated positive movement towards making men - the highest and the lowest among men - men, not beasts; men, not machines; men, not beasts of prey, but brothers, co-operators" ("Yes" [1902], in *The Jewish Preacher,* 66).

This distinction between humanity and the animal kingdom is central to Hirsch's understanding of morality and forms the foundation of the message he shares with his congregation. In "What is Truth," from the *My Religion* series, he mentions evolution and references Darwin. To Hirsch, to be human is to be above and have greater purpose than animals. The developmental essence of humanity is the ability to be in social relationships, and, through those social relationships, humans incur a moral responsibility to one another. As he says in late in the *My Religion* series in the sermon "The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion:" "Man is dependent upon all men, that he owes social duty because his whole life is conditioned by social relationships."[35]

It is crucial to point out that the basis of this call is not Jewish for Hirsch. It is a fact of nature that humans are social beings, and all humans, regardless of faith or ethnicity require a system of morality and justice to guide humankind's social structures.[36] This message, then, is a universal one. Hirsch does not say that his attitude

[34] Notably, though he describes a "positive statement about Judaism," his discourse leading up to this point was about morality and did not include any textual citations.
[35] Hirsch, "The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion," in *My Religion*, 132.
[36] We see the influence of Darwinism here. While earlier Reformers were skeptical of Darwin, it was a scientific reality for Hirsch. His attitude about the importance of

toward morality only applies to a Jewish context or the Jewish people. As Reform Jews in America try to find their place, Hirsch lays out a vision of ethics and morality that places his community in relationship to all other communities. His ethical sense is not inward facing or restricted to Jewish time and space. Hirsch's ethics rest at the base of what it means to be human.

The ultimate goal in Hirsch's ethical system is to establish a higher level of cooperation and interdependence among people. This attitude persists throughout his career. He mentions it in our focus sermon from 1902, when he envisions "the higher type of social organization, no longer individualistic but cooperative under the plan of combination and mutual helpfulness,"[37] and in more explicitly messianic language in the *My Religion* series at the end of his career:

> God's kingdom can only come about through our co-operation. Every one of us has to build that new world of ours. Every one is called upon to prepare for the coming of a new heaven and the spreading of a new earth.[38]

Religion and Ethics

Jewish Ethics

While his basic understanding of ethics is rooted in a universal system, Hirsch identifies a special role for Judaism. He believes that Judaism lays out not only a system but also a compelling call for justice in social relations. The Jews' special role is to be priests of justice and righteousness. In "Organization and Division of Labor—How Far

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morality for building social systems, paired with his belief that Judaism is inherently rooted in ethics, prove to him the reason for the survival and necessity of Jewish social ethics (for more on this, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 273-5).

[37] Hirsch, "New Ethics for New Economics," 124.

[38] Hirsch, "My Kingdom is Not of This World," in *My Religion*, 75.

Are We the Chosen People?" (1899), Hirsch sets out to prove this claim. In another Darwinian move, Hirsch shares his argument about the historical necessity of Jewish morality:

> In the organization of the humanities, it was necessary that the principle announced to Moses by Jethro should be applied -- division of labor and assignment of duty. Thus came to the Roman, law, to the Greek, beauty, and to the Jew, righteousness and justice. For that end the Jew was chosen -- chosen not miraculously, not because any inherent merit was in him, not because he had the right to this high position but simply because in the economy of mankind, it was necessary that there be a historically developing organism to discharge this function so important to the health and the prosperity and the morality and the humanity of all that drew breath on God's spinning globe.[39]

Whereas the Romans had Virgil, the Greeks, Homer, the Jews had Moses, Isaiah, Maimonides, and Einhorn.[40] Jews have a specific obligation to live out the values of those moral leaders who came before them. He makes this point by polemicizing against Christianity and Ethical Culture (see below). Justice is Israel's mission, as embodied most openly by the Biblical Prophets.

Christian Polemic

Hirsch positions Judaism as the source of ethical religion. The first sermon in *My Religion* is largely devoted to proving that Jesus's ideas, and the ideas that developed into Christianity, are inherently Jewish. Despite the Church's attempts to draw a dichotomy between Jesus's righteousness and Judaism, Hirsch brings numerous examples to show that Jesus was actually just a good Jew, not a righteous revolutionary. His argument is nicely summarized here:

> There is no originality in the teaching of Jesus, there is not a single new note that he struck which had been silent before in true Israel. Much of

[39] Hirsch, "Organization and Division of Labor: How Far are we the Chosen People?" (February 5, 1899), in *The Jewish Preacher*, 210.
[40] He clearly has great reverence for his father-in-law and theological predecessor.

> what he taught was anticipated by the prophets of old…[they] are echoes of Jewish principles and are but new statements of old Jewish viewpoints.[41]

He also decries the purported Christian motif of love. He contrasts a religion of love with a religion of justice. In proving the "truth" of Judaism, he argues, "Love makes the Pale of Russia, love makes the dungeon of the Inquisition…"[42] While love may sound universal and appealing, their notion of love is the cause of pain and anguish across the world; therefore, Judaism's focus on justice should prevail: "Let them preach love and toleration, we will—every Jew will fight for justice."[43]

Hirsch's emphasis on other religions bleeds into the proof texts he offers. In the collection of sermons in *My Religion*, he employs the Gospels throughout as the operative "text."[44] It seems as though Hirsch assumes familiarity with Christian texts among his congregants; perhaps they were more conversant in them than Jewish sources. For example, with little to no exposition, he discusses the Sermon on the Mount in two sermons. [45] Is it possible that this is a polemic, an attempt to dissuade his flock from choosing Christianity by proving the historical superiority of Judaism? Did the rise of Social Gospel and the ancillary coopting of the Hebrew prophets make Judaism seem superfluous? Discourse against Christianity might win back his congregants and make Jewish religious life seem relevant at Chicago Sinai Congregation and beyond.

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[41] Hirsch, "My Religion and the Religion of Jesus," in *My Religion*, 35.
[42] Hirsch, "Alone with Thee, My God!," 335.
[43] Ibid., 336.
[44] Sermons in *My Religion* begin with a Title and then a text but the volume does not explain how those texts were used or presented in the worship service. Four of the eleven sermons printed in the series have either Matthew or John as the "text" for the sermon.
[45] "My Religion and the Religion of Jesus" and "Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion Do?" in *My Religion*.

Ethical Culture Polemic

Besides Christianity, Hirsch levels an attack on Ethical Culture, the movement started by his classmate, Felix Adler.[46] In a sermon dating from 1901, rather than arguing against a different religion, he argues plainly for religion. While there is not a pithy line to lay out Hirsch's critique of Adler, the message he shares is that ethics must be grounded in a divine Being. Ethical Culture may have high-minded ideals, but it lacks both a system and a God, which allow Jews to lead fuller lives.[47]

Stylistically, Hirsch sets up either/or scenarios, and makes it clear to the listener that the winner is Judaism in every case. So, for instance, he asks congregants to choose between the religion of Jesus **or** "My Religion" of justice and morality. With all of his focus on Christianity, it seems that Hirsch felt like he had to make a compelling case for choosing to be Jewish. Moreover, following in the footsteps of practitioners of Wissenschaft des Judentums, he argues that the antiquity of Jewish morality gives it authority. He assures his congregation of the authenticity of his position and the veracity and usefulness of Judaism. These elements bolster pride in Jewish heritage.

Use of Jewish Text

While Hirsch displays a facility with a range of Jewish texts, and his educational background further supports his erudition, he does not tend to cite Jewish sources regularly in his sermons. Rather, he speaks broadly about Judaism and the Jewish

[46] Sarna describes Adler's Ethical Culture movement as: "Renouncing belief in a theistic God and in the particularities of the Jewish religion, he advocated in their place a universalistic faith focused on ethics and the teachings of world religions" (p.132). Adler believed that Judaism was a dying religion, and Hirsch vehemently disagreed.
[47] Hirsch, "He Who Knows Most, Doubts Most," (November 17, 1901) in *The Jewish Preacher*, 52.

religion. He will, at times, intersperse textual ideas, but he rarely cites them specifically. They are not proof texts but a feature of a larger argument to support his claims about the Jewish religion. For example, in his 1920 sermon "Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion Do?" (from the *My Religion* series), this is the penultimate paragraph:

> God does not decree the death of the sinner. Our own Bible states God does not desire the death of the sinner but that he retreat from the evil ways. Let us be done with the theory that we must torture in order to find protection. Let us go out and cure and prevent and lift up with the inspiration of love upon us, with pity in our hearts, with the knowledge that these are our fellow beings, though they have broken God's law, perhaps, and man's law.[48]

He flows into and out of Ezekiel 33:11 [Say to them: As I live—declares the Eternal God—it is not My desire that the wicked shall die, but that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, that you may not die, O House of Israel!] as if it is almost an aside to his larger point. He does not make a big show of the text and uses it as if it is a cultural touchstone. He does not bring in extra interpretive tools or spend time on exegesis. It is simply a piece of the ethical call he issues to the congregation. It is also important to note that here, and in other instances as described in "New Ethics for New Economics," he uses Biblical text at the openings and closings of his sermons.

In Hirsch's discussion of Jewish ideas, he exhibits many characteristics of classical Reform, particularly in his focus on the Jewish spirit, rather than the Jewish law. In "Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion Do?," he discusses the law of retaliation. He compares Jewish codes to its Persian and Babylonian counterparts, suggesting that the Jewish idea of "an eye for an eye" is made milder by Jewish tradition.

[48] Hirsch, "Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion Do?," 206.

While a retaliatory law is ubiquitous in ancient legal codes, Judaism tempers it, as Hirsch claims: "It is true that *this is* an invention of the Jewish spirit; it is true that the Jewish spirit of humanity modified that old law in many details."[49] He goes on to describe a Rabbinic countermeasure to direct retaliation, but he describes it in an historical sense, again without citation. He holds halakhic pronouncements at an arm's length, choosing instead the Jewish spirit that calls for compassion and peace as the operative idea for his modern congregation.

More than twenty years earlier, he makes a similar, Reform claim:

> This is the Jewish God. Whatever else there may be to that idea, this is the fundamental essence, this is the kernel around which the husk has grown. The husk changes, but throughout the ages, ever since prophet spoke, the diadem of our God had the jewels of righteousness and of justice.[50]

Hirsch picks up on a key metaphor of the early Reformers, focusing on the ethical kernel, not the disposable husk of legalism that grew around it. Unlike the Rabbis, who layered unnecessary law upon unnecessary law upon Judaism's ethical ideas, he is interested in the "diadem" of the Prophets. He tries to distance himself from the Judaism of the Talmud and the Rabbis: "The Jewish morality of the Talmud -- not our morality, which is really of a finer texture, of a finer sympathy than was the morality of the Talmud."[51] But he does allow that the Rabbis built their legal system rooted in some semblance of morality. He is trying to both lift up all of what Judaism is and has been and create a modern Judaism that does not rely on the Talmud's strictures. Judaism is, was, and always will be a faith rooted in justice, as epitomized by the Prophets.

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[49] Ibid., 196-7.
[50] Hirsch, "The Theology of the Jewish Reform Movement," 108.
[51] Hirsch, "My Religion and the Religion of Jesus," 38.

Hirsch typically opts for the universalistic themes found in the Prophets, who, after all, were mouthpieces of justice and righteousness. When he speaks about the Prophets, he does not tend to cite or quote those texts directly; rather, he speaks in generalities about the thematic underpinnings or broad ideas that come from those texts. This enables him to avoid the Prophets' comments related to the Temple cult and Jewish particularism. Below are a few examples of how he uses the ideas of the Prophets, without specific quotations, to build his message of ethics. These quotations are presented from his earliest to latest writing.

- "Prophets of Judaism descend to the depths of the human heart, and from thence outward they throw the light of their find there upon the heavens and upon the depths of life and of being" ("The Theology of the Jewish Reform Movement," 95-6);
- "Judaism is not a mere religion. It has a mission, and all self-intoxication of prayer, all fasting, all Lord knows what else, is at best but religious and as such not a fulfillment of Judaism. All these agencies, prayer, song, ceremony, Sabbath festival - Have only the one purpose of awakening within the heart and in mind the thought, and in the hand, the will to do, not to believe, but to do righteousness and justice on earth;" ("Organization and Division of Labor: How Far are we the Chosen People?," 221);
- "But there is another content to the phrase 'God of Israel" which cannot be too often expatiated upon. It was Israel that through the prophets recognized that God could not be worshiped except through righteousness and justice. Ethical is the monotheism of Judaism...Israel was to God no more than the sons of the Kushiyim; the Philistines as well had God led to their destiny. But Israel was to make his God consciousness an ethical force. Amos censures his people for neglect of social righteousness, while addicted to ritual rectitude...Impatient is this God of Israel of social unrighteousness. He will not suffer the religion which, while observing the Sabbath and new moon, exploits the necessities of the common people…" (God of Israel, in *My Religion*, 307).

The last quotation, in particular, is worthy of further discussion. He mentions the prophet Amos by name, but does not quote any specific text. Rather, he picks up on the main theme of Amos's prophecy. And that is enough for Hirsch. The text itself is not as

important as the ability to ground himself and then pivot back to ethics and social responsibility; he is more interested in the ideas that grow from text than in the texts themselves.

He uses the same strategy even when talking about Rabbinic texts. He will, for instance, open with "the Rabbis said" and then paraphrase a Rabbinic teaching, but never indicate precisely where the text comes from, nor does he quote directly. As we see in the following quote from the 1920 sermon "My Religion and Dogmatic Christianity," the second in the *My Religion* series, the Rabbis serve the same function as the Prophets; they affirm a Judaism that has always had at its core an ethical message:

> The early Rabbis, shortly after the period of the destruction of the Temple already announced that though sacrifices had passed away, justice and love shall take their place. Peace and justice will work the same effect as was imputed to the bloody sacrifices…"[52]

Again, in line with the rest of the early reformers, he lays out a Judaism that focuses on a fundamental morality, not on ritual observances.

When Hirsch does use Jewish text, he almost never speaks in Hebrew. He says the word "*midrash*" in a few sermons and mentions Kaddish in one,[53] but when quoting text, he does so in the vernacular. This likely indicates a lack of basic Hebrew knowledge on the part of his congregants.

Ethics and Obligation

Hirsch notably never says the word *mitzvah* nor does he describe any specific obligation. In one sermon from 1901 he says:

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[52] Hirsch, "My Religion and Dogmatic Christianity," in *My Religion*, 60.
[53] Ibid., 52; "My Religion and the Religion of Jesus," 38-9; and "God of Israel," in *My Religion*, 301.

> Duty is uncomfortable. It is much easier to deal in crystallized dogmas; be those dogmas of commerce, dogmas of political economy or dogmas of religion. It is difficult to find your way through the mazes of duty to an ultimate inherent and in itself complete conception of the world and construction of life.[54]

While he may believe it necessary to work for the betterment of social relations, he does not specify what obligations this entails. Hirsch does, however, urge his listeners to take action, albeit in a vague sense.

- "I use the word 'my' advisedly. You are not responsible for my religion. I am responsible for that and if you differ from me, that is your privilege and I hope many of you will differ from me. You are not to be an echo of the pulpit, but please remember the pulpit is not an echo of the audience" ("My Religion and the Religion of Jesus," 45).
- "...It made him a worker in this world. The Jewish religion furthermore had a social idea, an ideal of justice, an ideal of such economic conditions that every human being had the opportunity to live out his or her humanity…we ought to strive for justice and so adjust our lives that out of our co-operation justice might flow forth like a river of water, and justice might be done in every place where men dwell and men come together" ("My Kingdom is Not of This World," 76-7).
- "Let us be done with the theory that we must torture in order to find protection. Let us go out and cure and prevent and lift up with the inspiration of love upon us, with pity in our hearts, with the knowledge that these are our fellow beings, though they have broken God's law, perhaps, and man's law" ("Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion Do?," 206).

His sermons do not dictate action, but he levies powerful arguments, leaving the congregation to do and think what it will. And, seeing as he regularly preached to a full sanctuary, one can imagine they found his message compelling.

For all that, however, there is an intimation of a mitzvah system in one of Hirsch's sermons. He does not suggest that God demands certain acts of human beings or that there is an innate power in the universe that requires particular action (especially

[54] Hirsch, "He Who Knows Most Doubts Most," 52-3.

because that theology would be an anachronism at this point), but he assuredly believes that religion should play a role in our day-to-day lives, even as the separation of church and state is in effect:

> Religion must be everywhere or it is nowhere. It must touch life at every point or it does not touch it at any point. This is the position taken by our religion. But this does not mean that religion shall, as an organized power, assume control and direction over the affairs of men, that it, as an ecclesiastical institution, shall meddle with the conscience and conduct of men-the political conduct, for instance, of men.[55]

He recognizes a critical balance. Religion cannot be coerced by the State, but the personal decision to be religious is vital; the moral ideas borne from religion must pervade every aspect of social and political life. Religion, for Hirsch, is essential, yet religion also does not have a commanding power. Even at the end of his career, Hirsch struggles to identify the balance between his commitment to ethics and his aversion to traditional forms of religious practice.

Americanism and Contemporary Focus

Hirsch, of course, focuses on what Judaism is and its teachings, but much of his writing relies instead on intellectual investigations within the American context. In "New Ethics for New Economics," we saw how Hirsch devoted the bulk of his sermon to an intellectual investigation of economic theories. Most of his sermons follow suit; he shows his erudition and facility with classical scholarship and modern theories. This is particularly evident in the following sermons: "The Theology of the Jewish Reform Movement," "Education of Orphans" (1891), "The New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion," and "Crime and Delinquency—What Should Religion

[55] Hirsch, "New Social Adjustment Suggested by the Implications of My Religion," 131.

Do?." The focus of Sinai Temple's services were the sermons, and Hirsch spoke in a way that was engaging to his congregation. He could not, for example, speak for pages on end about the Manchester school of economics if his congregation knew nothing about it. It is also likely that his congregation expected such an intellectual background in order to prove the quality of an argument. To speak about economics without an understanding of the prevailing theories would have left him seeming naïve; instead, Hirsch speaks in a way to indicate that his opinions are worthy of consideration.

As he builds a compelling case for himself as a thought-leader for his community, perhaps the most important feature of Hirsch's sermonic style is his focus on the United States: its values, Jews' role in it, and its contemporary social problems. He describes a Judaism deeply connected to America, one supporting the other. In "Organization and Division of Labor: How Far are we the Chosen People?" he tries to reconcile Jewish particularism with American Jews' integration into American society. As written above, he believes Jews are chosen to be priests of justice and righteousness. Thus, if America is chosen to be a priesthood of democracy, then Jews must play a central and crucial role in their native land.

This serves a few important functions. First, it is clear that Hirsch loves America, and, like the early American Reformers, sees it as the Promised Land and home of the Jewish people. Second, he knows that his congregants want to feel like part of American culture. With Sabbath services on Sundays and a message from the pulpit that connects Judaism to American life, he teaches his congregants, and perhaps the community at large, that Jews can and should be fully integrated into American civil and economic life. Further, he believes that Jewish ideas, when incorporated into political discourse, would

help improve America. Surprisingly, we see this in his universalistic messages. He believes Jews have a particular responsibility to insist on universal values. Third, it provides him a few rare moments of rebuke toward the community; while Judaism is compatible with Americanism, the latter should not replace the former. He still believes that Judaism has value, and he uses the pulpit to encourage his congregation to feel affinity toward and devotion to Judaism.

The following quotation is lengthy, but an interesting outlier in Hirsch's work. While he often speaks powerfully about his passion for Judaism or the need to enact social change, he rarely speaks so forcefully to his congregants. This sermon on Yom Kippur Eve[56] shows his commitment to Judaism in the face of assimilatory forces with words of rebuke:

> Take heed, your callousness, your social splendor, your mimicry and imitation of everything that the others do, legitimate or not, will not protect you. The storm is rising here too, and it is time that we shall prepare for the struggle that will come. You think that you can escape. No one escapes. Change your name, the record is established and known...Proclaim ethical culture! Has ethical culture anything better to give you than what we have, truth, justice, and peace? No, it has not, it has not. It has stolen our thunder, it is working wonders, but it is not just enough, not ethical enough to admit that these are the principles which came to the world not in Greece, not in Rome, not in Assyria, not in Florence, not in Berlin, not in Bombay, not where the Ganges rose, but out there where the Jordan threads its way between the mountains and empties its streams into the Dead Sea. From the cedar-capped hill-tops of Lebanon came this torrent sounding these truths. That is Judaism.[57]

Despite Hirsch's universalistic vision of ethics and morality, he believes strongly in the importance of Judaism, especially as opposed to assimilation or Ethical Culture, to sustain those ethics and as the originating source of those ethics.

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[56] This sermon is published in *My Religion*, but no date is given.
[57] Hirsch, "Alone with Thee, My God," 341-2.

And the ethics he espouses must be actualized to be worthwhile. As mentioned above, Hirsch was responsible for the eighth plank of the Pittsburgh Platform, calling for American Jews to combat contemporary social woes. He discusses labor rights, orphanage crises, a changing criminal justice system, economic disparities and the problems of capitalism. Hirsch tackles real-life, tangible issues that his congregants were likely reading in the newspaper. Hirsch's ethical worldview is not theoretical "twaddle about goodness,"[58] it is connected to the problems facing his city and his community. Above we saw a rare moment of rebuke, and here we see a rare moment of his proclaiming it a duty to work on behalf of the vulnerable:

> The duty thus, to appeal in behalf of orphans, is upon the man who occupies the pulpit; that all of us recognize. It is our obligation to provide for the fatherless. In this we are all agreed...we have no more sacred obligation than this, to come to the rescue of children; to help those who cannot help themselves, being left to battle with life when yet they are not strong enough to bear the brunt of the conflict.[59]

Hirsch lived out his message from the pulpit. He wanted his congregants to live out his vision of morality, and he led the way in his own actions.

Conclusion

1. *Hirsch develops a clear sense of where ethics come from and what they require.* He believes that humans are inherently social beings and through social relationships we maintain responsibilities toward each other. His vision is universal, but Judaism has a particularly powerful message as to how we should morally organize society.

[58] Hirsch, "New Ethics for a New Economics," 123.
[59] Hirsch, "The Education of Orphans" (1891), in *The Jewish Preacher*, 131-2.

2. *Hirsch typically uses Jewish texts merely as a framing device, speaks about Judaism thematically, and does not focus on textual exegesis.*

   He regularly uses Jewish texts and themes to open and close his sermons. He regularly speaks about Judaism, but rarely quotes text. When he does quote text, he never cites his sources. He is clearly conversant in the wide range of Jewish sources, but he is more focused on summary and digging to the ethical core rather than on the rabbinic husk.

3. *Hirsch believes that Judaism is essentially about ethics.*

   Focusing on the prophets, and rejecting rabbinic strictures, Hirsch argues that Judaism is the Ur-text for ethics. He believes that the purpose of Judaism is to bring righteousness and justice to the world.

4. *Hirsch focuses on intellectual investigation.*

   He devotes a great deal of his sermons to discussing contemporary theories and historical theoreticians and writers. This grounds his sermons and proves his intellectual authority to the congregation as he develops his propositions.

5. *Hirsch speaks to American values.*

   Not only does he speak in an intellectual language that meets his congregants needs, he also lifts up American democracy and the American context in which he and his congregants live.

6. *Hirsch deals with real-life, contemporary issues.*

   While he could engage in deep, intellectual study, Hirsch brought the message home to the realities of the political, social, and economic life of his congregants and his community. He does not shy away from contentious issues.

7. *Hirsch lives what he preaches.*

   While speaking about economic disparities and the need to support impoverished people, Hirsch serves on the city's welfare board. He does not just talk the talk; he walks the walk.

CHAPTER 2: Maurice N. Eisendrath

Biography and Background

Biography and Pulpit Career

Maurice Nathan Eisendrath was born in Chicago on July 10, 1902. His family was of German origin and involved members at Temple Emanu-El, a local Reform synagogue. He writes that he knew he wanted to become a rabbi at age six, which, in retrospect he identifies as unusual; Reform synagogues were, for the most part, not producing future clergy.[60] He described himself as having a "powerful social idealism…[he] wanted then most resolutely to be a 'do-gooder.'"[61] This passion drove him to the rabbinate. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Cincinnati in 1925 and was ordained by the Hebrew Union College in 1926. He spent a few years in West Virginia before becoming the rabbi of Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto in 1929. He remained in that pulpit until 1943, when he transitioned to the presidency of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.[62]

Not only did he believe that actively working toward social equality was important, he saw it as a key path to engaging in religious life and belief. Eisendrath credited Professor Moses Buttenweiser of HUC for helping him overcome difficulties building and sustaining a theology. Buttenweiser, he wrote, "restored my faith in 'that Power not ourselves which makes for righteousness' who, through unparalleled

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[60] Maurice N. Eisendrath, *Can Faith Survive?*: *The Thoughts and Afterthoughts of an American Rabbi* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964), 2-3.
[61] Ibid., 3.
[62] Alexander Schindler, Memorial Packet for Rabbi Maurice Nathan Eisendrath, November 12, 1973, Eisendrath Papers, Klau Library, New York, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

presentation of the moral passion of the Hebrew prophets awakened in me a new appreciation of Judaism…"[63] From early in his career, Eisendrath was drawn to the prophets and their call for moral living. Alexander Schindler, who followed Eisendrath as President of the UAHC, described his key role in bringing about social reform and in building and strengthening relations between Jews and non-Jews while serving at Holy Blossom.[64] Eisendrath hosted a radio program called "Forum of the Air" that helped him gain acclaim in Jewish and non-Jewish circles.[65]

Whether on his radio program or from the pulpit, Eisendrath had a particular focus on interreligious dialogue on social justice. Michael Meyer in *Response to Modernity* identifies Eisendrath as an important social reformer during his time in Toronto:

> There he gained a reputation as dynamic, articulate, and provocative. Never one to avoid a controversy, Eisendrath advocated absolute pacifism, a binational state in Palestine, and great Jewish appreciation of Jesus…his religion remained prophetic Judaism, his chief concerns social justice and world peace. For Eisendrath, a Judaism turned mainly inward was simply disloyal to its mission.[66]

In the end, Eisendrath wanted to create a Judaism committed to acting on the core values of the prophetic tradition. Speaking passionately about those values was insufficient for him; he also wanted his congregation (and eventually his movement) to be active in efforts to improve the lives of all people.[67]

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[63] Eisendrath, *Can Faith Survive?*, 5.
[64] Schindler, Memorial Packet.
[65] Some of his remarks from this program are included in his book, *The Never Failing Stream*.
[66] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 335.
[67] In the introduction to *Can Faith Survive?*, he quotes Solomon Freehof: "we go from deed to creed, from doing to believing" (6).

Eisendrath as President of the UAHC

While this study will focus on the sermons he delivered at Holy Blossom Temple, his career as the UAHC president further exemplifies his commitment to faith-based social justice work. In fact, in 1959, he was chosen as the Clergyman of the Year by the Religious Heritage of America.[68] In response to this honor, he spoke about the importance of integration, stating: "That's religion! The heart of religion concerns itself with man's relation to man."[69] That same year, at the UAHC Biennial, he received approval to found the Social Action Center in Washington, DC. The Center, now known as the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, opened in 1961 and became the Reform Movement's link to legislative advocacy teaching and speaking about "the moral and ethical attitudes relating to national and domestic concerns."[70] The new institution, and Eisendrath's personal commitment to social justice, raised the profile of moral and ethical concerns across the movement. Under his leadership, the Reform movement would go on to play an important legislative role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

Interreligious affairs were another hallmark of Eisendrath's presidency. Eisendrath not only sought to bring religious voices together for dialogue but focused on issues of moral importance, trying to leverage the collective power or religious leaders to speak in a unified religious voice. To that end, he organized and convened the first National Inter-Religious Conference on Peace in 1966.

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[68] Schindler, Memorial Packet.
[69] Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1984), 73.
[70] Schindler, Memorial Packet.

Eisendrath's Ethics in Context

Against this backdrop, Eisendrath's focus on morality and social justice in his preaching comes into clearer view. His sermons were intended to encourage his congregation to join him in his pursuit of justice and brotherhood. In the introduction to *The Never Failing Stream,* this is how he describes the goal for his homiletical work:

> If any word herein may help ever so slightly to rear a fairer Canada, "an Empire, mightier still" in righteousness and equity, a "statelier mansion" for our souls, a nobler fellowship between Christian and Jew, a loftier brotherhood of all men under the universal Fatherhood of the One God of us all…"[71]

He was a man committed to being actively engaged in social justice and rooted that belief in his understanding of Judaism and religious faith.

Of course, Eisendrath's ethical beliefs did not exist in a vacuum. During his years at Holy Blossom, the world went endured turmoil and significant social change. *The Never Failing Stream* was published in 1939 as a retrospective and celebration of his first ten years at Holy Blossom. Here is his summary of the world he wrote and spoke about:

> …this most eventful and troubling decade which was ushered in by the crashing, crushing economic debacle of 1929, which witnessed the attendant collapse of virtually all individual security and of all international confidence that followed the shattering of the League of Nations and the Collective System, which beheld likewise the rise of Hitlerism and all the terror and tragedy which that grim spectre[72] has spelled for the whole of humankind, now so precariously balanced on the brink of chaos.[73]

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[71] Maurice N. Eisendrath, *The Never Failing Stream* (Toronto: The Macmillans in Canada, 1939), xiv.
[72] Eisendrath employed the Canadian spelling of certain words.
[73] Eisendrath, *The Never Failing Stream*, xii.

In other words, his congregants lived through the economic collapse of the Great Depression. That being said, Jews tended to help each other during the Depression, which, according to historian Jonathan Sarna, "helps to explain why the Jewish unemployment rate stood at less than half the national average in major cities" in the United States.[74] Despite that fact, the Depression led to shifting Jewish attitudes toward economics, including support for more progressive economic policies, particularly those that supported unions. At the same time, as Sarna notes, "Jews at the time took pride in the fact that, despite their personal hardships, they participated in 'all civic efforts to relieve suffering in general.'"[75]

This was particularly true among Reform Jews, who, during this period, galvanized interest in social action. Along with Hirsch and Wise,[76] Eisendrath was becoming one of the great social justice heroes of the Jewish world and the new torchbearer for leadership on ethical issues.

The rise of Nazism in Europe also loomed large during this period. Although "the American press, and even some Jewish and Jewish-owned newspapers (like the *New York Times*), underreported German atrocities in the 1930s and 1940s and misinterpreted their significance,"[77] Eisendrath spoke from the pulpit on numerous occasions about the social, moral, and religious scourge of the Nazis. As we will see, Eisendrath focused on a

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[74] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 257. While Sarna is writing about American Judaism, Eisendrath notes that, especially in his early years, he still saw himself as an American rabbi, often turning to American themes in his sermons. While some of the social and economic issues had different nuances, he notes that many themes and experiences carried over.
[75] Ibid., 256.
[76] See Footnote 5.
[77] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 259.

message of brotherhood and unity; the Nazis' rise to power challenged that worldview and demanded his attention.

Eisendrath's time was also characterized as "an era of 'religious depression,'" in Sarna's words. It was "…marked by declining church attendance, as well as deepening 'secular' interest in universalism and the 'cosmopolitan spirit.'"[78] While Eisendrath remained universalistic in his views, he rooted them in religious language. He regarded religion as contributing to a sense of fellowship between peoples and secularism, in contrast to rampant capitalistic materialism that was driving people apart. His moral message of ethics, along with his ability to build relationships across race and religion, was undoubtedly an effective means of making religion relevant and compelling in this tumultuous climate. While we lack data about attendance at Holy Blossom for his sermons, the fact that he had a successful radio program seems to indicate an acceptance of his message and approach.

Sermon Example: "Pulpit and Politics" *(January 13, 1935)*[79]

While a number of Eisendrath's sermons consider specific ethical issues, his 1935 sermon, "Pulpit and Politics," is of particular interest here because he used it to explain his rationale for preachers generally addressing contemporary ethical issues. It provides a fascinating paradoxical viewpoint: he lays out his thinking on preaching from the pulpit while standing on the pulpit itself.

[78] Ibid., 226.
[79] Maurice N. Eisendrath, "Pulpit and Politics" (January 13, 1935), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 130-145. The full text of this sermon appears in Appendix B.

He begins with a personal story, describing his exasperation over being admonished to "stick to his task" as a rabbi (130) by speaking only about solemn, religious topics, and avoiding modern source material or contemporary issues. Flouting that convention, he then quotes a recent editorial that mentions this very topic. As he reads excerpts from the political piece, he interjects his own glib commentary. He includes a reference to the prophet Jeremiah, who was scorned in his own day for adopting a similar practice. While putting forth the editor's argument that preachers ought to stay away from social and economic issues, he carefully brings specific lines to the fore, which he will later return to as refrains to excoriate.

Eisendrath explains his intention to pick apart the specious argument conveyed in the article. He does not miss the opportunity to express his displeasure. After citing the last line, he says, "Which is sheer unadulterated nonsense…" (131). This is emblematic of his conversational oratorical style. He is not concerned about perfect grammar; rather, he makes assertive statements for homiletical effect. He continues to lob barbs at the editorial. He mockingly shares that he intends to use it as source material for the sermon "with abject apologies, of course, to an editor who will undoubtedly be gravely distressed by a preacher who would cull a text from a periodical rather than from the pages of the Scriptures…" (132).

Amid his initial attacks, he also hints at the type of preaching he wants to support. He says that during the war it was acceptable to preach on "the universal Fatherhood of God and the all-inclusive Brotherhood of Man" (132). He believed that message was finally understood, but it clearly must be revived. This line is hidden among stronger language, but, as we will see, this is an important refrain in Eisendrath's preaching.

Mentioning it here is an important signpost, reminding the listener of his intentions: he does not merely want to explain why preachers should address social issues, he also wants to lift up what he perceives as the basic truths of religion and humanity.

In the next section, Eisendrath argues for the importance of religion in contrast to the editor's attempts to limit it. To Eisendrath, religion and the Bible are intended to "upset things as they are" (133). While the writer wants preachers to stick to the Bible, without talking about politics, Eisendrath retorts, "Surely that would rule out nine-tenths of the prophetic literature and at least as much of the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of Jesus" (133). In fact, we expect to see the Prophets here. In keeping with the early Reformers, Eisendrath would often turn to the Prophets to uphold his social message. Notably, like Hirsch and Wise, Eisendrath would also include Jesus as proof of the progressive social message of religion. In fact, Eisendrath goes on to tell, in full detail, the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard from Matthew 20:1-16. The parable teaches that everyone who is admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven will receive the same reward, no matter when they come. It is, as Eisendrath tells the congregation, a radical, political message of social equality. He cites the article's antipathy to preaching politics and ties it to those who may have resisted Jesus in his time. Religion and religious people, according to Eisendrath, have always offered social and economic commentary: "I have not the slightest doubt that in Jesus' day as well, the leading editors sternly warned the Nazarene that such 'social and economic nostrums would have no permanent drawing power'" (135). He artfully ties together the ancient and modern arguments to make his point. He even hints at a message of rebuke to the congregation, saying that big

business and religious elders may have also resisted his message. The rebuke does not stand out, but it is indeed tucked into his message.

Eisendrath seemingly recognizes some risk in mentioning Jesus from the pulpit. He knows the historical importance, but qualifies his support: "I have merely dwelt upon the teachings of Jesus because the general sentiment of our environment would confine the Christian minister to the simple gospel, little realizing that that very gospel is…revolutionary and freighted with…political dynamite" (136). He tries to protect himself against criticism while giving credence to his ecumenical leanings.

While he opened this section with Jesus to prove that political preaching is engaging, he ends it with a Jewish message. According to Eisendrath, Jewish tradition insists "that religion must dominate the whole of life; that politics and economics must all be subject to its supreme and absolute command...Israel's religious leaders, her prophets and seers and rabbis and saints, were her only politicians" (136). He then narrows the lens from general pronouncements about Judaism to the specifics of the Exodus narrative and the role humans play in spurring economic and social change. Most of his exegesis comes from a book by Stanley High, *The Church in Politics*, published in 1930, a continuation of his use of modern source material.

In a style more like Wise than Hirsch, Eisendrath's writing does not contain distinct sections. Rather, his style is fluid—flowing from one idea to the next without a rigid structure. He employs a number of different strategies to explain his main conceit: religion must confront social issues if it is to remain relevant and ideologically consistent. While he only intimated this at the sermon's opening, his repetition of the earlier-quoted refrains from the article helps to structure the sermon into a whole.

He calls out the hypocrisies he sees in a culture that try to deny preachers permission to speak on social issues. Thorough in his argumentation, he resumes a conversational style, as in the following lengthy excerpt:

> for it is only because someone *has* other plans afoot; because someone profits from the status quo; it is only because someone fears that religion when it applies its so-called nostrums will radically upset the iniquitous order which he would have the pulpit smugly and suavely sustain; it is only because the few may indeed suffer because of the pulpit's espousal of the multitudes' historic rights—that sophisticates arise to repudiate the alleged 'fantastical theorizing of the pulpit' (137).

The repetition of "because" or "it is only because" rhetorically drives his point home. He rails against those with ulterior motives who would silence the prophetic preacher.

He persists in this line of argumentation by identifying hypocrisies and drawing dichotomies between acceptable and unacceptable preaching styles. By pinpointing these problems, he lays the groundwork for undermining the article's premise while setting up for a closing argument that will show the kind of preaching he finds necessary and appropriate.

Eisendrath recalls a time when those in power implored clergy to preach politics; those times when they wanted religion to support the status quo:

> is the preacher possessed of superior knowledge when he is called upon to pray for the Government and to call down upon its laws and edicts the sanction of the divine, but abysmally ignorant when he hazards the suggestion that there is something rotten in the state of his own particular social order (138)?

He discusses the war in 1914 and the expectation that preachers talk about politics and social issues in order to drum up support for the war. Had they not, they would have been condemned for the omission. If society expected preachers to address social issues in

wartime, how much the more so in peacetime? Eisendrath, in particular, focuses on the social issue of economic security, a matter of particular concern during the 1930s:

> Preachers, who were hailed as the welcome allies of statesmen when we were at war, are assailed as 'political partisans' when, in times of peace, they would save their fellow-citizens at home from the ravages of an economic struggle in which the masses are doomed to bitter and galling defeat from the very start (138-9).

This problem sets up a dichotomy for Eisendrath. His reproaches those in power, arguing that whether they get their "back slapped or…toes stepped upon" (139) is what determines their opinion of the appropriateness of political preaching. For Eisendrath, this is an opportunity to rebuke those in the pews. Those in positions of formal, governmental power and "the proprietor of the sweat shop or the distiller of liquor" (139) only want to hear a message that is pleasing to them. Eisendrath will not abide this.

He then returns to the article to move to his next argument: balancing, in my words, right versus rite. The author wrote that clergy should limit their preaching to social issues "to the legitimate defence of the church's religious freedom" (139). In response, Eisendrath engages in an exegetical study of this idea: "Of what does religious freedom consist?" In another counter argument, he asserts that religious freedom should not be restricted to appointing clergy and deciding ritual. As he puts it, does "religious freedom demand the ordering of life in such a way that the will of God, rather than the whim of man, shall rule our social and economic destiny?" (140). Like Wise, Eisendrath does not shirk from directly mentioning God and God's will. While he may not use the specific language of *mitzvah* or obligation, he explicitly mentions the Name.

With the will of God at play, Eisendrath lays out what he perceives as appropriate religious behavior and a fitting worldview: "For neither Christians nor Jews can comport

themselves in accordance with their religious precepts as long as political and economic arrangements remain as they are today" (140). He then composes yet another list of examples contrasting religious rites with moral rights, with a focus once again on the prophets and Jesus. The section closes with Eisendrath's powerful statement about the need for preaching on social and economic issues:

> And yet those who would bring the message of an Amos and a Jeremiah or a Jesus to these suffering multitudes are supposed merely to persuade them to comport themselves in accordance with their religious precepts and to remain mum, to utter not a single word of protest against an economic system that conspires to create such gross and blasphemous iniquities (141).

In the sermon's finale, Eisendrath provides his most explicit vision of preaching. By synthesizing the messages in the preceding pages, he puts forth what he believes to be the purpose of religion and, through it, the responsibility of preachers: "if religion is to survive at all…then it must storm the very citadels of political power and economic might with its spiritual preachment and moral protest until society no longer be organized for the empoverishment [sic] of the many and the enrichment of the few" (141). The principal conceit of the sermon is the inextricable link between religion and social issues, and, to that end, he presents his vision for society with a nod – albeit vague – to Jewish tradition: "The average man, on the contrary, requires, and according to Judaism deserves at least the bare necessities, if not most of the comforts of life, ere his spirit can fulfill itself" (142).

Even in this clarion call, he remains a quintessential debater, protecting against potential detractors. He makes clear that arguing political issues does not mean supporting political parties. To Eisendrath, preachers should not support particular parties

which are, at best, part-moral and part-immoral, they "should speak out bravely and without equivocation" (142) about moral issues.

Having asserted the importance of preaching a message of social and economic morality, he still has to prove that preachers have the requisite knowledge to address those issues. His solution is that clergy, while potentially not experts in economics, are experts in the field of ethics:

> Though ministers and rabbis might conceivably err in their judgment on those intricate affairs, they are not likely to make any mistake in their *ethical* and *moral* evaluation, and it is from this standpoint that the pulpit has not merely the right but the duty to condemn any economic system…if it fails to work for the happiness of its millions of poverty-stricken and downtrodden denizens (143).

In a message resonant with Wise, Eisendrath argues that clergy ought to speak out more often, not less, about politics and public life. Religious messages must be pervasive and not reserved only for the pew; they must enter into the political realm if they are going to have an important impact on creating a more just society. Again, not leaving anything to the imagination, Eisendrath enumerates those issues of moral importance that religion should address in the public sphere: "a more equitable distribution of wealth, a diminution of the long and drudging hours of toil, a living wage for all, security in illness and old-age, an end to all alms and a beginning of justice for all" (144).

Eisendrath closes the sermon by returning once again to the social and political messages of Moses and the Prophets (Jesus is notably absent from this final list). He ends with a poem that reiterates his message of appropriate religious behavior being tied not to rites but to moral behavior that affirms the universal brotherhood of man. He does not mention the poem's author in the sermon; it is written by John Greenleaf Whittier, a

Quaker poet whose work is found in many Christian hymnals. Even in this closing moment, Eisendrath insists on an ecumenical message.

General Themes

Universalism and brotherhood are the primary features of Eisendrath's sermons, and they are fundamental to his beliefs about Judaism and religion. He supports this idea through his use of religious texts and in his discourse on the nature of religion. Like our other preachers, he is insistent that religion requires that we actualize a moral vision in our daily lives. He conveys this idea through language of commandment and in occasional rebuke of the community. Eisendrath carefully crafts his preaching to engage the listener through his use of the first person and a number of sermonic devices that he returns to from the pulpit.

Universalism

Eisendrath roots his message of social justice in universalism. In sermon after sermon, he returns to the word "Brotherhood" and the idea that all of humanity has a "universal Father." It is the basis of his ethics, and it lays at core of his understanding of Judaism. While Eisendrath does not repeat particular Jewish texts in sermons, his universalism does span across his preaching, both in his theoretical conceptions of morality and his calls to action. At times, the concept is key to driving a sermon forward, and, in other instances, it is a passing remark, as if it is already shared by his congregation.

In his 1933 sermon "Science—Savior or Frankenstein?"[80] Eisendrath uses the idea of brotherhood to fundamentally shift the message of the sermon. Until this point, he has inquired about the benefits and costs of scientific discovery. Eisendrath's universal message is the synthesis: "...if we enter once more the Temple of true Religion which centuries ago envisaged a Universal Father, because thereby it could better the dream of a World Brotherhood to be; if this vision we can catch, then, but only then, will we be saved."[81] From there, he quotes Isaiah 42:1 ["Behold Mankind, Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth"[82]], the first time that explicit religious language appears in the sermon. With Isaiah and with brotherhood, Eisendrath moves the sermon from theoretical considerations of the risks and benefits of newly-emerging technologies to a closing religious, moralistic message. Moral necessity places the onus for using science for the good of human kind squarely on the shoulders of people who must find "the perfect union of Science and Religion…with Religion consecrating the revelations of Science."[83] Brotherhood does not dominate the content of the sermon; rather, it frames the essential, moralizing message.

In stark contrast, he devotes virtually all of his 1935 sermon "Forgotten Men"[84] to the idea of brotherhood. He opens with the various particularistic sufferings of the Jewish people but then asks his congregation to consider the sufferings of other peoples.

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[80] Eisendrath, "Science—Savior or Frankenstein" (March 19, 1933), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 66-82.
[81] Ibid., 79.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., 80.
[84] Eisendrath, "Forgotten Men" (February 24, 1935), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 174-197.

Eisendrath goads his people to have empathy for those beyond their co-religionists by employing language of brotherhood:

> ...we might learn that there is requisite today not alone a clarion call to summon the non-Jewish world to manifest a larger measure of forbearance toward the Jew, but that, in addition to this sorely needed step, the whole household of Israel must likewise be challenged to behold the plight of uncounted millions of our fellow-men and be goaded thereby into taking heroic leadership in the eternal quest for a larger and more inclusive brotherhood.[85]

Their suffering calls the Jewish people to be agents of unity among all peoples.

Here, Eisendrath thoroughly draws the congregation's attention to other beleaguered peoples throughout time and history. He moves from the general and theoretical (e.g. "the tragedy of one family is no greater because it may have seven children instead of five"[86]) to the more specific (e.g. "Then of course this is India…talk of starvation and famine and utter destitution"[87]). Brotherhood comes up time and again in the sermon, notably as part of the introduction to the extended anecdote on caring for black people in America and Canada. While he is mindful of the particular sufferings of the Jewish people, his key message is to move past our own experience of desperation to consider the needs of our fellow humans.

Use of Jewish and Christian Texts

Eisendrath uses a wide range of Jewish texts in sermons, with an affinity for the Biblical Prophets, given their ability to speak out and act on issues of moral importance. He tends to quote texts from Torah and, occasionally, from Psalms as well. While

[85] Ibid., 181.
[86] Ibid., 182.
[87] Ibid., 184.

Genesis 1:27 ["In His own image and likeness, God created Man"[88]] is foundational for his vision of brotherhood, he does not limit himself to that language alone.

Rabbinic texts play less of a role for Eisendrath than they do for Hirsch but more than in Wise's sermons. He mentions the history of Judaism as one that maintains the need for ethical social and economic relationships. He believes that the rabbis supported this system, but he does not bring specific texts into his words from the pulpit. He tells Hillel's on-one-foot story (*BT Shabbat, 31a*),[89] but he does not quote rabbinic sources elsewhere.[90] On the other hand, he is less apologetic about Jewish text than Hirsch. He does not set about critiquing or defending Jewish textual sources; instead, they are a standard, interwoven part of the content and message of his sermons.

He weaves a variety of texts together to demonstrate the ubiquity of "brotherhood" in religious tradition. In one instance, he quotes Psalms 8:6 ["Thou hast made Man but little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honour"[91]] and the prayer *Elohai Neshama* ["The soul which Thou hast given unto me came pure from Thee. Thou hast created it. Thou hast formed it. Thou has breathed it into me"[92]] to set the stage for his ultimate call: "What Jew, therefore, can fail to see the image of the Divine in every fellow-mortal that lives and breathes and has his being upon

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[88] Eisendrath, "Where Jew and Christian Meet" (March 13, 1938) in *The Never Failing Stream*, 19.
[89] Ibid., 18.
[90] There are no other Rabbinic citations in *Never Failing Stream*, but he may use Rabbinic texts in other sermons from his career at Holy Blossom. Nevertheless, their absence here is notable.
[91] Ibid., 19.
[92] Ibid.

this earth?"[93] Once accepted, according to Eisendrath, "we meet alike in our mutual love of humanity"[94] among groups of disparate faith, race, and national affinities.

Eisendrath also draws on Genesis 1:27 in a sermon about contraception,[95] employing it as a counterpoint to Genesis 1:22, which contains the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply." For him, moral law needs to ground our perspective and direct humanity, and the most hallowed religious truth is:

> the unqualified, uncompromising belief in the inviolate sanctity of every human personality into which God has breathed the breath of life. "In His image and likeness, God created man; male and female created He them", we read in our Hebrew Scriptures. "Inasmuch as ye do it unto the least of these, my creatures, ye do it unto me," Jesus chanted in similar vein.[96]

Importantly, in an effort to appeal to a broader audience, we see that Eisendrath does not rely on a single religious text to prove his argument in favor of universalism. Furthermore, his use of Christian scripture here functions to persuade non-Jews of the veracity of his argument.

Eisendrath enacts his central conviction of the equality of all peoples by peppering his sermons with non-Jewish sources. Like Hirsch and Wise, he perceives of Jesus's teachings as deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and text. Unlike Hirsch, he does not use that as ammunition for rejecting Christianity, or, like Wise, to rebuke Christians to return to the prophetic religion of Jesus; instead, Eisendrath seeks out Christian teachings, parables, and texts to support his call for social justice and brotherhood.

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[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid., 20.
[95] Eisendrath, "Children—By Chance or By Choice?" (November 15, 1936), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 148-171.
[96] Ibid., 152-3.

In his sermon on clergy, Eisendrath slips in Christian language, this time from the Lord's Prayer: "[Clergy] seek so valiantly to summon us, by precept and example, to our high-born part as children of our Father which art in Heaven."[97] The texts he uses, both Jewish and Christian, are in service of his universal message.

The Nature of Judaism and Religion

Besides his use of Jewish and non-Jewish scripture, Eisendrath's preaching addresses Judaism in particular and religion in general. Hirsch's sermon about chosenness was linked to "Justice and Righteousness;" Wise writes that religion must actualize a prophetic message of morality. Eisendrath believes that the special role of Judaism is to insist upon universalism. Here is how he describes Judaism:

> ...I mean the faith which dares to believe in a universal Father above who can be worshipped only by an all-loving brotherhood below, until that faith which dares to dream that every human soul is a divine partner with God in the never completed task of creation and must therefore be regarded as of supreme worth and inherent value; until that faith which dares to seek an era of righteousness and everlasting peace, be at last fulfilled, the Jew will be chosen still to carry out this will of God.[98]

His particularistic claim about Judaism is like that of Hirsch: the Jewish people must work toward a universalistic vision of humanity—Judaism has a particular responsibility to be universal in nature. The Jew is chosen to unite the world in worship that manifests itself by establishing peace among disparate peoples.

This is all to say, Eisendrath does not regard brotherhood as particular to Jewish faith and teaching. Rather, he believes that universalism is the mission of religion writ

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[97] Eisendrath, "Without the Benefit of Clergy" (January 31, 1937), in *The Never Failing Stream,* 127.
[98] Eisendrath, "Who is 'The Chosen People'?" (December 10, 1933), in *The Never Failing Stream,* 220-1.

large. Thus, while his 1937 sermon "Without Benefit of Clergy"[99] is on the surface about the importance of religious leaders, its primary message is that religion ought to affect our daily lives, not just on Sunday (or Saturday). After describing ancient and contemporary resistance toward religion he boldly maintains that "[r]eligion, with its sublime vision of justice, equity, brotherhood and peace, is the one and only hope for human salvation today."[100]

Ultimately, Eisendrath envisions a collective religious attitude on the part of both Jews and non-Jews, which, he believes, will bring about a more peaceful and just world. Here are just a few additional examples:

- "Not exclusively chosen, but together with all others who seek, in such religious faith and spiritual purpose, to find sucrease for the ills of mankind…" ("Who is the 'Chosen People'?," 221).
- "Again we are told that we need no religion…What is more likely to solve this blasphemous paradox of our poverty-stricken prosperity…than a thorough understanding and practice of that simple sense of social responsibility, mutual obligation and fellowship so graphically enunciated long years ago by religion…" ("Without the Benefit of Clergy," 117-8).
- "who can deny that our goal is ever the same…'Our Father which art in heaven', the Christian prays; not 'our Father which art in Canada' or 'in the United States'" "Where Jew and Christian Meet," 14-5).

Living Religious Ideals

Right vs. Rite

As we saw in "Pulpit and Politics," Eisendrath believes that religion is also a path for living out this vision of brotherhood. Religion is not just about formalized language, ritual, and "outer trappings."[101] With language reminiscent of Wise, he criticizes those who believe that religion is "not *a part of life*, but rather *apart from life*"[102] and

[99] Eisendrath, "Without the Benefit of Clergy," 108-128.
[100] Ibid., 118.
[101] Ibid., 112.
[102] Ibid., 111.

denounces surface-level ritual observances that are coupled with behaviors or opinions that deny the humanity of others. In "Where Jew and Christian Meet" he describes law as a key category for shared values. Whether the intricacies of "pots and pans scrupulously marked for milk or meat"[103] or the idea that one "can gain immortal life…only by counting the beads of a rosary in a particular kind of way,"[104] both religions insist more fervently on "*God's Will and Law,* commanding righteous conduct and the loving care, one man of his neighbor, as the loftiest worship…"[105] Religion is about living out his vision of brotherhood more than particularistic dogmas or rites.

His sharpest critique is for clergy who he believes betray these values. As he narrows focus to a particular issue, in this case contraception, his language comes across as more biting. Eisendrath describes the consequences of insisting that children be born into social circumstances that will not support them and may even condemn them to a life of want and misery by rejecting the option for contraception. How then, he wonders, could clergy try to use the command to "be fruitful and multiply" to perpetuate these problems? Here is an excerpt of his opinion of those clergy people: "Such persons, even though they be clad in priestly garments, some of us would call the foremost atheists of all times."[106] For Eisendrath, religion, true worship, and following God's Will mean insisting on the dignity of every person and heeding calls to love and care for the other.

Commandment and Moral Living

Eisendrath occasionally uses the language of commandment to describe the ideal life of a Jew. In "Pulpit and Politics" above, he refers to the religious command to be

[103] Eisendrath, "Where Jew and Christian Meet," 17.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 18.
[106] Eisendrath, "Children—By Chance or Choice?," 155.

moral in social and economic dealings, and in his contraception sermon he says, "No text, no law, no commandment, no institution, therefore, is quite so important as this treasured human personality, this precious child of God, the goal, the end, the sublime fruitage of all the long centuries of Nature's travail."[107] Commandment is Jewish and it exists, but he never goes as far as to say that we (or you or I) are specifically commanded to do X, Y, or Z. Additionally, he does not lay out any consequence for disobeying a commandment. Instead, the idea of commandment is a general Jewish notion about moral living and acting on a vision of brotherhood.

When he uses synonyms to commandment, such as duty, requirement, obligation, and responsibility, they, too, are generic calls to morality:

- "No special prerogatives are ours, but only a sterner, more challenging responsibilities. Not to glorify a people, but to glorify a God. Not as against other men, but for them…[to] join hands with every kindred spirit to bring nigh the kingdom of heaven on earth" ("Who is 'The Chosen People'?," 221).
- "But faith was not enough for Moses. A *code of conduct* was required, a way of life, a programme of moral action" ("World without Jews" [November 20, 1938], in *The Never Failing* Stream, 312).

Notably, these quotations both come from sermons about Nazism. He illustrates the special importance of Judaism as a religion of morality that leads to action. The second quote leads into a discussion of the history of modern, moral legal codes borne from the Ten Commandments; Israel's gift to humankind is that it helps to perpetuate morality. This is not as critical to his message as it was to Hirsch's; he does not believe that Judaism has a monopoly on ethics. More similar to Wise, Eisendrath's Judaism is a religion particularly focused on morality and, as a fact, Jews act on that morality. Then, unlike Wise's thundering Prophetic Judaism, Eisendrath does not lay out expectations.

[107] Ibid., 153.

He presents ideas of commandment to suggest how Jews ought to act, as if inviting them to join him in moral brotherhood.

Eisendrath regards the history of Judaism as an essentially moralizing force. He says in one sermon that the Hebrew sages "were not ascetics, but prophets of righteousness pleading for more and yet more of the bounty of earth to be shared more equitably, each man with his neighbour."[108] Again, he does not say: therefore you must also be a prophet of righteousness; rather, he tells that the congregation that this is what Judaism was about at its earliest stages, implicitly calling them to similar attitudes and opinions.

Those opinions, as we have seen time and again, are insufficient for the Judaism he preaches. Eisendrath insists that Judaism is about acting on those values and that a religious life is inherently a moral life:

> I for one grow weary unto death with those who tediously prate, "You know he's so terribly religious", when they have in mind someone who loudly and conspicuously pours out his prayers, garbed in all the paraphernalia of the past, and at the same time cheats his neighbour of his due. And equally weary am I of those who assert, "He's not at all religious", when they are speaking of someone who devotes his every thought and effort to alleviating the plight of his downtrodden fellow-men, but who may, if he be a Jew, take a street car to the synagogue on "Shabbos"...[109]

He does not just tell us that right is more important than rite. He shares an anecdote and says outright that moral behavior is just as, if not more, Jewish than ritual observances. This is his vision of Judaism and the kind of community he hopes to create in his congregation. In "Nation, Race or Religion" (February 11, 1934) he gives an apt

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[108] Eisendrath, "The Gold Standard" (February 18, 1934), in *The Never Failing Stream,* 92.
[109] Eisendrath, "Without Benefit of Clergy," 112.

description of his Judaism that we can see throughout the rest of his work: "the Jew must become again a religious fellowship. Not religion as creed, not even as a ceremonial, but religion as dedication to the highest good and as consecration to the service of all mankind—in fealty to such aims alone are we Jews."[110] He repeatedly tells the congregation that to live and act Jewishly means to dedicate oneself to caring for and supporting other people.

Rebuke and the Inclusive "We"

As he calls the congregation to action, Eisendrath occasionally rebukes the community. In a style closer to Hirsch than to Wise, he cautiously wades into the waters of criticizing the congregation. He does not accuse with "you;" rather, he says "we." The "we" is inviting—it can paint with a wide brush to say "this is what 'we' believe" implicitly saying that those who do not agree ought to get on board. It can also be used to insinuate collective responsibility without an accusatory tone, as if to say, "we are all responsible," and not, "*you* are to blame for this issue." He uses this strategy in a number of sermons but it is most impactful in "Forgotten Men."

When he speaks about both explicit and implicit racism and ethnocentrism in the sermon, he uses "we" to paint himself as part of the problem, not above it. Similar to conversations today about privilege, he recognizes his own role in perpetuating the problems he cites. In one section, he talks about foreign laborers, their poor wages, and miserable living and working conditions. He summarizes by asking, "Well, what *do* we

[110] Eisendrath, "Nation, Race or Religion?" (February 11, 1934), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 240.

owe to these lowly and frequently despised foreigners?"[111] He goes on to further criticize the general attitude toward immigrants:

> Surpassingly strange it has always seemed to me how eagerly we will listen to the most abominable English speeches, when delivered by some well-groomed aristocrat from foreign lands, but have little but contempt for the push-cart pedlar or the coal-heaver or lumber-jack, whose heart is ahunger for the fellowship which this golden land once appeared to offer him from far across the sea.[112]

Again, he uses "we." While he seems more distant from this particular "we," he asks questions about the larger culture without using the second person to put the congregation in a defensive position.

The most compelling part of "Forgotten Men" is when he talks about the degraded status of black people in Canada. After listing the various injustices and disadvantages they face, he turns his attention to his community:

> But no one can be imputed the blame except to ourselves, who refuse to permit these people a decent economic subsistence by our own pharisaic drawing in of the hem of our own garments should a negro be given a position higher than that of a bell-boy or boot-black…And who is that public [that perpetuates these problems]? You and I, and all our associates, for how many of us are willing to give the negro a chance by patronizing shops that would hire him, by employing him ourselves in our stores, our factories, or our home, to say nothing of our unwillingness to entrust our children to a coloured policeman or the delivering of our mail to a coloured postman? ..."[113]

Once more, he says that he too is part of the problem. He calls everyone to task, himself included. By publicly recognizing his own role in perpetuating injustice, his "we" invites the congregation to a similar accounting of their own actions and souls. He makes it safer

[111] Eisendrath, "Forgotten Men," 185.
[112] Ibid., 187.
[113] Ibid., 193-4.

to enter into the conversation and to consider what it will mean to live and act, not just believe, his message of brotherhood.

Speaking out as a Jew

Eisendrath writes about the important role of synagogue members to speak out on issues of moral importance. His book *Can Faith Survive?* includes reflections and some background information on sermons and speeches he delivered throughout his career. He includes one chapter that is not about sermons but is instead about his core values. The chapter is entitled "What's Jewish about Jewish Values?" He writes,

> Many Jews, despite their liberalism at the voting booths, live out their days in a euphoric nirvana of escape and creature comforts...most synagogues have not found the courage or energy to challenge their members to practice what their prayer books profess and to summon them to the high ground of moral purpose and genuine Jewish commitment.[114]

His call to moral purpose does not only exist in biographical reflections. We saw him actualize this principle in "Forgotten Men" with his critique of the congregation. He believes that synagogue members must be audacious, and he exhorts people in the pews to live out the fundamental truths and ethical teachings that are core to the Jewish tradition. His strategy is to try and do so in a way that will invite, not alienate, the congregation, so they may begin to enter into difficult, potentially uncomfortable conversations that will ultimately help create his world of brotherhood.

[114] Eisendrath, *Can Faith Survive?*, 29.

Contemporary Focus

Source Material

In one sermon Eisendrath notably cites a Central Conference of American Rabbis' policy supporting the availability of and access to contraceptives and information.[115] In the sermons studied here, he never specifically mentions Reform. Clearly, his content is progressive, but using CCAR policy as proof text helps see how he is connected to the Movement and concerned with building a vision of modern Reform Judaism.

This content from the CCAR is not a surprising find in his sermons, and not just because he will go on to be the President of the UAHC. Modern and real-life source material plays an important role in Eisendrath's sermons. For example, "Pulpit and Politics" focuses, almost exclusively, on an editorial. In other sermons, too, he brings in other writers and poets to bolster his message.

Eisendrath's contemporary source material and focus on contemporary issues differs from the other preachers in this study. Hirsch was trying to make his Judaism compatible with Americanism for a community struggling to piece together those identities, and his focus on intellectual content was one way that he grounded his ideas to prove their validity. Wise's Americanism was inextricably linked to his Judaism. His intellectual and secular source material mostly functioned independently from Jewish content. Eisendrath seems less concerned with harmonizing being Jewish with being Canadian. He seamlessly moves between Jewish content and areligious stories and illustrations to support his ultimate message of brotherhood.

[115] Eisendrath, "Children—by Chance or Choice?," 156.

Social Issues

Eisendrath addresses topics that are relevant to larger communal and national conversations. He includes a chapter in *Can Faith Survive?* on "Children—by Chance or Choice?" He writes, "When these words were spoken, feelings had reached fever pitch in Canada and I was vehemently denounced as encouraging immorality, promoting promiscuity, and destroying the sanctity of holy matrimony and family life."[116] He also notes that when he delivered this sermon there was an ongoing trial prosecuting a woman for disseminating information about birth control. Eisendrath, like Wise, chooses to tackle pressing issues of immediate relevance to the congregation.

We see his focus on specific, modern, relevant issues in other sermons as well. In "Forgotten Men," in addition to his specific calls for congregants to alleviate the plight of black people in Canada, he also discusses what he sees as an hypocrisy in stated Canadian identity and Canadian legislation related to immigration. Canada, he says, prides itself on being open and welcoming to immigrants, but the 1923 Chinese Immigration Act "provided that no Chinese should be allowed to enter Canada as an immigrant," save a few exceptions for the benefit of the government and big business.[117] He does not merely speak in generalities about inclusiveness; he identifies legislation that runs counter to such values. Eisendrath ensures the congregation understands that his religious convictions have contemporary relevance.

In 1936, he wrote a sermon denouncing capital punishment just weeks before the highly publicized execution of Bruno Hauptmann. Hauptmann was accused, convicted, and ultimately executed for kidnapping and murdering Charles and Anne Morrow

[116] Eisendrath, "Children by Chance or Choice?," in *Can Faith Survive?* 153.
[117] Eisendrath, "Forgotten Men," 189.

Lindbergh's baby, and Eisendrath believed he should not die at the hand of the State.[118] He writes, in retrospect, that this was a particularly extreme position, but he was glad that he stood by his values and spoke about it. Eisendrath is not afraid to speak out about issues of modern relevance, especially when those issues are a matter of his most deeply-held values.

Sermonic Devices

Listing

Eisendrath writes long sentences, stringing together ideas to build intensity toward a powerful conclusion. To extract a single sentence out of context misses the masterful way he interweaves ideas on a broader scale. We have noticed how he constructs long lists of claims to prove an argument. Instead of a Biblical merism, which provides two extremes to portray an inclusive sense of everything in between, Eisendrath includes all of the intermediate steps. These lists serve a number of purposes. First, they signal to the listener that the given topic is important to Eisendrath. If a listener's mind should wander, Eisendrath brings it back on track by enumerating examples, texts, or justifications for a given point. Second, the lists convey the intellectual integrity and thoroughness of his argument. To disprove it would require consideration of any number of presented proofs.

We can find examples of such lists, of varying length and detail, in nearly every sermon. Here, we will look at a few examples. "World Without Jews" is one of his sermon's on Nazism, written in 1938. He opens by talking about the various people who have tried to harm the Jewish people and the Nazis' desire to create a Germany free of

[118] Eisendrath, "Thou Shalt Not Kill—Period," in *Can Faith Survive?*, 166-77.

Jews. He sets that topic aside for a moment to consider what it would be like to have no Jews:

> ...there is little use in stressing the magnificent gifts which the children of Israel have bequeathed to the whole of humankind, gifts which include the concept of monotheism, which teaches not alone the unity of God, but likewise proclaims that unified cosmic law by which all creation moves, and forms the fundamental tenet of all contemporary science; the concept of that which the Lord requires of us as being not mere confession or creed, but social conduct and moral righteousness: "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God" [Micah 6:8]; the concept of Man as but "little lower than the angels"[Psalms 8:6], not just a thing of earth, but "made in the image and likeness of the Lord"[Genesis 1:27]; the concept of the whole of humankind as being of one Flesh and one Blood; not black or yellow or red or white; not Nordic or Negro or Semite or Aryan, but just plain Man, each individual blended alike of dust and divinity.[119]

The message is clear: Jews have given much to the world and without Jews the world would be worse off and lacking in moral character. We see similar strategies in sermons about economics, contraception, religious practice, and race. In fact, the sermon "Forgotten Men" is itself a meta-list, detailing the different peoples and communities that have been shunted aside by majority culture or by powerful international forces.

Anecdotes, Stories, and, Parables

His sermons about economics and materialism includes a few paragraphs about seeing a rise in suicides during the Depression and his difficult pastoral role in those moments. He closes that section by saying, "All this I have seen—and you have seen it too, as men and women have surrendered their entire lives to the foremost deity of our modern pantheon, the gilded god of Gold. Now do you catch the burden of my message?... "[120] The anecdotes make his ideas accessible, inviting the congregation an

[119] Eisendrath, "World Without Jews," 310.
[120] Eisendrath, "The Gold Standard," 100.

exploration of his ideas. “Forgotten Men” concludes with a moving story about a racist, white family coming to accept and befriend their new black neighbors after a period of hate and intolerance.[121] Again, the story brings to life the ideas of brotherhood and the call to act in ways that comport with his belief system.

Eisendrath also shares parables that frame the moral message of a sermon. For example, “Where Jew and Christian Meet” opens with a parable of a goldfish who lives alone in a small aquarium. A new fish is added to the tank and tries to tell the goldfish that there is a world beyond the one he knows. The goldfish cannot fathom this idea and declares war on the new fish who tries to change his worldview.[122] Eisendrath uses this story to indicate that he understands that we do not like to have our preconceptions challenged, especially spiritual ones. The story is also a good-humored attempt to help the congregation recognize how ridiculous it sounds to behave that way.

Sermon Endings

To close this chapter on Eisendrath, we can look into how he closes his sermons. He has two styles, which he sometimes uses in conjunction, to conclude his message. The less-often used is a list of “Let us” phrases. They appear in “Without Benefit of Clergy,”[123] “Forgotten Men,”[124] and “Nation, Race or Religion?”[125] As mentioned above, his lists are long to reproduce, but, suffice it to say, this refrain functions like a closing benediction. It gives him a chance to reiterate his message and, with a cohortative mood, urge his congregation to heed his words.

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[121] Eisendrath, “Forgotten Men,” 194-6.
[122] Eisendrath, “Where Jew and Christian Meet,” 2-3.
[123] Eisendrath, “Without Benefit of Clergy” 128.
[124] Eisendrath, “Forgotten Men,” 196-7.
[125] Eisendrath, “Nation, Race or Religion?,” 242.

But it is poetry that Eisendrath most commonly employs to conclude his sermons. Poetry comports with his affinity for Psalms, giving his sermons a liturgical feel, speaking holy words in addition to intellectual musings. The poems he selects provide a lyrical coda to his message. The poetry gives the listener the sense that everything, from religion to modern intellect to art is in service to his grander teachings and provides another modality to support the sermon.

Conclusion

1. *Eisendrath believes in universal brotherhood.*

   He believes that all of humanity shares "a universal Father above who can be worshipped only by an all-loving brotherhood below."[126] This is his core message, and he shares it regularly. Sometimes it is the focus of a sermon, and, at other times, he mentions it in passing. Eisendrath makes sure that anyone listening to him hears a message of universal brotherhood.

2. *Eisendrath employs a variety of religious texts to convey a message of universalism.*

   While he returns a few times to Genesis 1:27 and the belief that we are all created in God's image, Eisendrath draws from a variety of Biblical sources. He regularly mentions general prophetic themes, such as justice and righteousness, seldom quoting the texts verbatim. He also cites Christian texts and speaks favorably about building relationships with other religious communities. He believed in

[126] Eisendrath, "Who is 'The Chosen People'?," 220.

building relationships between different religious communities religion and expressed that belief in his sermons.

3. *Eisendrath believes the role of religion is to assert what is right, not the empty performance of rites.*

   Religion, at its best, builds toward his vision of brotherhood. He believes true faith expresses itself in working toward that ideal, not in dogmatic observances. He is not as iconoclastic as earlier Reformers, but still advocated for right over rite.

4. *Eisendrath uses language of commandment to describe a moral, Jewish life.*

   Though he is unspecific about what Jews are commanded to do, he speaks in general terms about the obligation to actualize Judaism's moral values.

5. *When he rebukes the congregation, Eisendrath includes himself in the moral failings.*

   He speaks passionately about society's problems and calls on his congregation to consider its role or complicity in those ills. Whenever he issues a rebuke, he includes himself as part of the problem, using "we" or "you and I," never solely "you." The first person invites the congregation to join him in acknowledgement and action rather than alienating them with accusatory language.

6. *Eisendrath uses modern source material and speaks about contemporary moral issues.*

   In order to build arguments compelling to his modern congregation, Eisendrath draws material from a variety of sources, not just biblical text or intellectual

scholarship. Furthermore, he does not shy away from contentious issues in his sermons. He brings a moral voice to relevant, political issues.

7. *Eisendrath regularly uses lists of proof texts, ideas, and examples in his sermons.*

   Eisendrath writes long lists to prove his point. The lists, and the patter that comes with it, ensure that the listener notices an important moment. The lists also indicate that he has thought through his argument thoroughly, trying to defend against potential criticisms.

8. *Eisendrath concludes his sermons in lyrically.*

   Nearly every sermon ends with a poem, providing another conduit for accessing the message. The poetry helps move from the sermon back into a liturgical mode.

CHAPTER 3: Stephen S. Wise

Biography and Background

Biography and Early Career

Stephen Samuel Wise was born in Budapest, Hungary on March 17, 1874. His father and grandfather were both rabbis, and his grandfather was the chief rabbi of Hungary "famed alike for orthodox piety and political liberalism."[127] Wise's family came to New York in 1875 when his father accepted a call to the pulpit of Rodeph Sholom.

Wise was always regarded as a good student with a particular affinity for English literature. He graduated with honors from Columbia University in 1892, and while in the field, he earned a Doctorate of Philosophy, wrote for the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and edited the Book of Judges for the Jewish Publication Society.

He was ordained in Vienna and studied in Oxford before returning to New York for his first pulpit job at B'nai Jeshurun, a Conservative synagogue. During this first rabbinic stint in New York, Wise was deeply troubled by the anti-Semitism he saw in Europe, particularly in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair. In the wake of that event, he developed a friendship with Theodor Herzl and became a key American advocate for the burgeoning Zionist movement.[128]

Wise left New York and spent six years as the rabbi of Temple Bethel in Portland, Oregon. There, he started his political involvement working on issues of governmental corruption and child labor, and "in 1903 he was appointed Commissioner of Child

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[127] Justine Wise Polier and James Waterman Wise, A Biographical Note to *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise*, by Stephen Wise (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1949), vii.
[128] Ibid., ix-x.

Labour for the State of Oregon."[129] His time in Oregon was foundational as well in his approach to preaching as he had a rare opportunity to experience a "free pulpit"— that is, without the need for approval from the synagogue's lay leaders. Additionally, while in Portland, he "emphatically allied himself with the Social Gospel movement,"[130] which, together with his affinity for the Prophets and liberal Judaism, shaped his work from the pulpit.

The Free Synagogue

In 1906, Wise returned to New York City when he was offered the position of head rabbi for Temple Emanu-El. Before officially accepting the post, he delivered a few trial sermons to the community. In his autobiography, he expressed disappointment at the reaction he received to his preaching: "I was greeted after preaching at Emanu-El by men and women, meaning to show their approval...as if I had wished to please, when in truth I had sought solely to awaken."[131] In other words, Wise did not wish to mollify and appease his congregation but to make them uncomfortable, like a prophet, raising up moral and social issues. In meetings with the hiring committee, he made a free pulpit a precondition for accepting the job. When the board rejected this proposal, Wise responded in a lengthy open letter, a brief excerpt of which provides details of his vision of the free pulpit:

> The Jewish minister, I repeat, does not speak ex cathedra, and his views are not supposed to have a binding force upon the congregation to which he ministers. He is to express his convictions on any subject that comes

[129] Ibid, x.
[130] Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 36.
[131] Stephen S. Wise, *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1949), 30.

> within the purview of religion and ethics, but these convictions do not purport to constitute a creed or dogma to which a congregation must in whole or in part subscribe.[132]

Rather than settling at Emanu-El, Wise founded his own congregation, which he called "The Free Synagogue."

Besides offering a free pulpit, Wise based his synagogue on democratic values. He eliminated the minimum dues system, rejected the then-accepted standard of assigned and bid-upon pews, and created opportunities for congregants to voice their opinions in institutional decision-making. Michael Meyer notes that while the Central Conference of American Rabbis officially encouraged this type of democratization in synagogues in 1911, during this period only four or five synagogues had implemented these policies.[133] In a similar vein, Jonathan Sarna identifies Wise as being on the vanguard of Jewish life. He draws a parallel between Wise's efforts in synagogue life and in the larger world:

> Few congregations followed Wise's lead to the letter (especially with respect to dues), but through the twentieth century the idea that the synagogue should both advance social justice outwardly and reflect the ideals of freedom inwardly became widely accepted in American Judaism, influencing synagogues across the spectrum of Jewish life.[134]

Wise wanted to democratize synagogues, because he believed congregations were key to revitalizing Judaism for the modern age. Jewish communities also needed to reconsider ritual life, even in the face of Orthodox intransigence. As a Reformer and a pragmatist, he was willing to find a middle ground that allowed his congregants to have a Jewish experience while remaining authentic to what they believed about Jewish tradition. For example, although he held a Saturday Sabbath as ideal, he recognized that

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[132] Ibid., 39.
[133] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 289.
[134] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 196.

the economic realities of American life rendered that unfeasible for the people he wished to serve. He therefore conducted Sabbath services on Sunday. In his autobiography, he reflected on the religious choices of the Free Synagogue:

> This was not meant to replace the traditional Sabbath service but to supplement it for those who could not take part in the seventh-day Sabbath service…What we sought to do was to substitute the living voice of the Hebrew Prophets for the little-understood reading of the Hebrew Pentateuchal or Torah Scroll.[135]

As a lover of Jewish practice, he expressed regret about moving away from Torah, but, as we will see, the prophets are central to his vision of Judaism.

Part of that prophetic call was the need to actualize core values of justice and equality. The Free Synagogue established a social service department that, according to Wise, was a hallmark of the synagogue. He planned to preach prophetic messages from the pulpit and wanted the congregation to have opportunities to enact those values. Other synagogues left social service work to the sisterhood, but he wanted service to be a vital component of congregational affiliation.[136] Jacob Schiff, the first chair of the department, shared Wise's view: "The word of God heard in the Synagogue becomes of value only if it is carried into everyday life. This is so well understood that it sounds like a commonplace to repeat it."[137]

Wise tried to be attuned to the social and economic realities of his congregants. The members of the Free Synagogue tended to be wealthier, uptown Jews. Wise entered New York's Jewish community as conflict emerged between the wealthy, German uptown Jews and the poorer, Eastern European, typically more Orthodox Jews

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[135] Wise, *Challenging Years*, 43.
[136] Ibid., 46.
[137] Ibid., 46-7.

downtown.[138] While Wise loved the Jewish people and wanted to find opportunities for unity, for financial and logistical reasons, he chose to locate his synagogue uptown. But feeling nonetheless connected to downtown Jews, he would occasionally preach at the Free Synagogue's downtown location at Clinton Hall.[139]

Wise wanted to bring a compelling, religious message to the German Jews, who were achieving a newfound comfort given their secure social stature. In his autobiography, Wise describes the typical congregant at the Free Synagogue:

> …the largest number of its adherents was made up of such as had not only been estranged but actually had come to feel repelled by the unvital character of temple and synagogue institutionalism...It was such Jews, quite a few members of the secular, withal spiritual, Society for Ethical Culture,[140] who the prophetic mood of the Free Synagogue recalled and regained for positive relation once again to the faith of their fathers.[141]

Wise as Rabbi Beyond the Free Synagogue

Wise's insistence on freedom of the pulpit is indicative of his attitude toward the rabbinate. Regarding himself in the tradition of other powerful, prophetic, iconoclastic Reform rabbis, he identified Hirsch and Einhorn as social justice luminaries who were also rabbinic outliers in their insistence on delivering moral messages from the pulpit. Of course, he sought to follow in their footsteps.[142] As Meyer puts it, "[Wise] greatly admired Emil G. Hirsch, not only for his commitment to social causes, but also as a

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[138] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice,* 59.
[139] Wise, *Challenging Years*, 47-9.
[140] See Footnote 46.
[141] Wise, *Challenging Years*, 43-4.
[142] Ibid., 44.

fellow despiser of the rabbinical mass."[143] Sarna, too, aptly describes Wise: "He marched to the beat of his own drummer."[144]

Wise refused to be limited or bound by other people's expectations. He believed that his vision of morality and the future of liberal Judaism was necessary for the continuity of Jewish communities and America writ large. To that end, in 1922, he founded the Jewish Institute of Religion as a rabbinical seminary to compete with Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College. He wanted to train Zionist rabbis with a moral, social consciousness that he found lacking in the Reform seminary.[145]

It is by virtue of that social conscience that most historians regard Wise as an exemplar of rabbinic social justice. Meyer notes, "Wise took second place to no Reform rabbi in his active advocacy of social justice, especially taking the side of workers against their exploitative employers."[146] Among many other issues, he preached on war and peace, Zionism, labor rights, women's suffrage, child labor, materialism, the growth of industry, and Hitler and Nazism. Wise was not only a prolific social justice preacher but a friend to some of the most important voices for justice of his generation, including Justice Louis Brandeis and Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.

Wise's Preaching

Wise's preaching had a great impact beyond the confines of the Free Synagogue. Wise preached most of his Sabbath sermons at Carnegie Hall,[147] where he "gave sermons

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[143] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 303.
[144] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 251.
[145] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 303.
[146] Ibid., 302.
[147] Though it was called the Free Synagogue, they did not have a building for worship, so they used Carnegie Hall. They held services for Sabbath day on Sunday.

for crowds of Jews and Christians" that numbered in the thousands.[148] Many of his sermons were transcribed, published, and sold in volumes of *The Free Synagogue Pulpit*. Most of the sermons in this study come from those volumes. Wise's sermons were also recorded on aluminum audio recording discs. The American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati has an impressive collection of these recordings in which can be heard Wise's thundering voice and impressive oratorical range.

Wise describes his attitude toward public speaking in *The Art of Speaking*, a chapter in his autobiography. He lists three principles for preaching: "(1) Have something to say. (2) Believe in what you are going to say. (3) Say it clearly and without fear."[149] Finally, he shares a message from the founder of American Reform Judaism, Rabbi Isaac Meir Wise (no relation): "When you start, begin. When you are finished, stop."[150]

Wise as distinct from Hirsch and Eisendrath

Upon first reading Wise's sermons, I tried to analyze them like Hirsch's. This meant critiquing Wise for not having as clear a philosophical basis as Hirsch on ethics and social justice. Hirsch explicitly sought to synthesize Judaism and morality and returned time and again to language to express this message to his congregants. To him, ethics, coupled with the core truths of Judaism, dictates the responsibility between people borne of the evolutionary human need for community. But Wise is not Hirsch. Wise does not set out to prove the Jewishness of ethics and morality. Hirsch already created a

[148] Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 302.
[149] Wise, *Challenging Years*, 62.
[150] Ibid., 62.

Reform ideology of attention to and care for the downtrodden; Wise benefits from Hirsch's efforts and charts a new path.

I also tried to analyze Wise's sermon's like Eisendrath's. This meant critiquing Wise for not using employing the metaphors of a Universal parent and an all-loving brotherhood to shape his stance on social issues. Eisendrath's core message is all about ethics rooted in universalism. But Wise is not Eisendrath. Wise's vision is far-reaching, and he does not rely on a single image to convey his deeply-held beliefs about building a just and righteous world.

While Wise lived chronologically between Hirsch and Eisendrath, his sermons are neither derived from those of Hirsch, nor do they set a foundation for those of Eisendrath. Wise is a different sort of preacher altogether from Hirsch and Eisendrath. While Hirsch and Eisendrath articulate a necessary link between ethics and Judaism, Wise is not interested in definitions. For Wise, preaching and lecturing are opportunities to address contemporary moral issues head on; his words are a vocal embodiment of the good works he engaged in everyday on behalf of the oppressed, weak, and needy.

Essentially, Wise is an American Prophet, deeply influenced by Social Gospel. He regarded the prophets as exemplary teachers of social activism – what he called "prophetism." They identified social issues and fearlessly spoke out about them, demanding fair and just treatment for the most vulnerable people in society. Simply put, Wise's sermons are calls to action.

Like the prophets of old, Wise identifies the most compelling social ills of the day and so admonished his listeners to work for peace, civil rights, women's rights, worker's rights, and against anti-Semitism (to name just a few of his prophetic passions). In nearly

every case, the topic of the sermon dictates its content, and, unlike other rabbis, he does not feel compelled to bring in Jewish source material to buttress his argument. To Wise, preaching itself is an ethical (and religious) act. Because explicating religious ideas is not necessary for him, the topic of religion is on the periphery or even absent from many of his sermons.

That is not to say that Wise believed Judaism is irrelevant. In fact, he does discuss religion in a handful of sermons. But for the most part, his belief that religion is an inherently moralizing force remains implicit. Rather than philosophize, he calls for immediate engagement to cure the ills of the day of both an economic and political nature.

Wise receives inspiration from both the Prophets' words and deeds. Like them, he addresses pressing social issues and forcefully rebukes people in power and calls out the sinful polity. He is a fearless preacher who performed courageous acts, and the Reform Movement would never be the same because of him. He sets the movement on a steady course of activism that speaks to contemporary political and social issues. Because Wise's words are inextricably linked to his specific era, his preaching does not always have the same timeless quality found in that of Hirsch and Eisendrath. Nonetheless, studying his collected works inspires us to work for justice no matter the time or place.

The Prophets

Wise roots his approach to Jewish living in, and regarded his call to the rabbinate as deriving from, the biographies and words of the Prophets. "Prophetism" was to him synonymous with righteousness. While he is not specific about the details of their effect on him, his open-ended understanding of "justice" gives him wide latitude to address a

host of social injustices in his own time. Before analyzing sermons that focus on those injustices, it is important to consider a handful of sermons in which Wise speaks generally about the responsibility he feels to carry on the prophetic legacy. Such sermons will inform our understanding of his issue-focused sermons.

"The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets" (1910)[151]

Wise's most in-depth consideration of the prophets comes in his 1910 sermon, "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets." In it, he describes the prophets' unique role in history and the foundations of his moral vision. Throughout the sermon he focuses on a generalized message of social justice and equity that he believes must pervade society.

Heeding Isaac Meir Wise's advice, Stephen Wise opens the sermon by clearly staking a claim about the Prophets' social message:

> The most important contribution of Israel to social teaching was the life of the Hebrew prophets...this earliest and mightiest of the world's groups of furtherers of social well-being, are Israel's contribution to the social message [and] ever dealt with loftiest wisdom with the problems of social need and equity.[152]

Fundamentally, the Prophets cared about addressing social injustices. Wise does not need to list specific issues or values, because, according to his reading, the Prophets did not either. What made them stand out in history was their relentless pursuit of the social good. They considered, with thoughtful intelligence, the most pressing needs of their day and sought to implement solutions that would improve the well-being of all peoples.

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[151] Stephen S. Wise, "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets," in *Free Synagogue Pulpit (FSP)*, vol. 2 (New York: Bloch Publish Company, 1910), 25-42. The full text of this sermon appears in Appendix C.
[152] Ibid., 25.

Wise does not need to rely on a particular value, like Eisendrath's universalism, when the prophetic example conveys a broad understanding of social justice.

Wise devotes himself both to the social message of the Prophets and the way they shared that message. He looks to the Prophets for guidance for how to enact the social change his faith requires. Their history instructs him in his preaching:

> The prophets spoke to their age, and therefore they speak to the ages. They addressed themselves not only to the common people, but to the mighty of the earth, kings, princes, noblemen. They not only pronounced abstract and unrelated principles, but applied these timeless principles to the problems of their times.[153]

Wise perceives of the Prophets as powerful, brave advocates who brought their moral voice to the most powerful people in their society. They spoke in broad terms about justice and used their oratorical skill to try to implement their ideals. Wise's collected sermons are a manifestation of these few sentences. He carries on their timeless legacy and becomes a giant in the world of Jewish and secular social justice specifically because of his vigilance on contemporary issues. Both in his preaching and in his work off the pulpit, Wise brought his moral conscience to bear on a wide range of issues. He built relationships with powerful people who had the capacity to affect change. Jewish communities regard him as a timeless figure because of the unique role he played in bringing awareness to social ills. Furthermore, he too pronounces abstract ideas of ethics, morality, and social justice in the attention he pays to the political and economic realities of his day. Wise carefully depicts the Prophets, and then he acts in accordance with that description.

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[153] Ibid., 26.

As he develops this message in the succeeding pages, he gives more specificity about who is to be the beneficiary of social justice. He teaches, "the most humane and merciful laws governed the conduct of the Jew toward his poorer, weaker brother, at a time when the wisest in a neighboring civilization were seriously mooting the plan of eliminating the unfit."[154] Wise characterizes Jewish teachings and the legacy of the Hebrew prophets as a countercultural effort to support the most vulnerable people in society. The dictates of Jewish justice command attention to and care for people whom secular society would cast aside. Later, we will see how Wise contrasts business with ethics, particularly his attention to wealthy, powerful people who take advantage of the working class. To be a prophet he must stand against the powerful who would seek to exploit the weak and marginalized despite the prevailing affinity for capitalism and the rapid growth of industry.

Wise's perspective on Judaism is not limited to the Prophets; he is also a Reformer and a disciple of Hirsch. His analysis of Deuteronomy 15:11 (…for the poor shall not cease from the land…) points toward Hirsch's eighth plank in the Pittsburgh Platform. Wise contends, "Better the minor heresy of unbelief in the word of Moses, for the poor shall not cease from the land, than the major heresy of belief in the carelessness of poverty and social injustice."[155] The kernel of Jewish tradition is ethics, with a particular responsibility to actualize the values in the street. Ritual[156] and reverence of biblical text are secondary to addressing social injustices. He believes that caring for the

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[154] Ibid., 31.
[155] Ibid., 33.
[156] He criticizes Orthodoxy's excessive focus on ritual observances throughout "Liberal Judaism," (*FSP,* vol. 6, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1920-1) 1, 9, 17, and 19, for example.

poor is a deeply religious act, more important than token fidelity to Biblical text. Therefore, when he preaches on a social issue, he does not need to include textual citations. The act of speaking out and working for the betterment of society is in itself a pious act.

Wise is even more explicit about this idea in his 1928 sermon "Finding Life Worth Living—Some Personal Testimony." The sermon reflects on his life's work up to that point, and he closes with these powerful words: "I have known the joy of battling for the Lord on the side of the everlasting causes of truth and righteousness--for Israel and mankind."[157] His work is consistent with the Prophets, and he characterizes it as a battle on God's behalf. He elevates the work of social justice to a new level of sanctity and holiness. In this way, Wise clearly marks himself as a man of religion. He does not flirt with godless Ethical Culture;[158] instead, the influence of the Prophets and Social Gospel strengthen his theistically-Jewish resolve.

Although he knows his message to be Jewishly rooted, he is seldom explicit about the Jewish foundations of his political opinions. Furthermore, the image of a rabbi preaching on the Sabbath to a Jewish congregation called the Free Synagogue may sufficiently Judaize his message. However, in his 1932 "Address at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service" for the Free Synagogue, Wise makes a rare connection between his prophetic values and the social issues he tackles:

> ...the passion to bring the moral genius of Israel to bear upon the solution of current questions, brought me one of life's chiefest [sic] joys, that of

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[157] Wise, "Finding Life Worth Living—*Some Personal Testimony*," in *FSP,* vol. 9, no.1, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1928-9), 12.
[158] Urofsky writes that some people confused Wise's social activism with Ethical culture, but Wise was explicit in his description of his work and the Free Synagogue as "unequivocally Jewish" (61).

> having a part...in the working out of the problems that have beset the America of my generation…I fought for equal suffrage…I fought for a warless world…I have had the joy in battling...for the abolition of child labor…[and]...seeking to better Judæo-Christian relations"[159]

Despite a focus on abstract ideas of ethics, morality, and justice in his treatment of those topics, Wise tells us outright that his efforts toward women's equality, peace, fair labor laws, and interreligious cooperation are not merely social issues. He performs the sacred act of bringing Jewish "moral genius" to solving critical contemporary issues. This unambiguous connection reminds us that Wise is not just an activist functioning in the secular sphere; Wise is a prophet whose work is inextricably tied to the religious tradition of Israel.

Wise does not limit this holy work to the rabbi who stands behind the pulpit. Wise extends the responsibility to emulate the Prophets to all of Israel:

> "The privileged burden of Israel is to fulfill the injunction which the prophet laid not upon one son of Israel but upon the heart of Israel…he shall bring forth justice according to truth: he shall not fail nor be abashed till he has set justice upon the earth.[160] Then shall justice flow like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.[161]

He brings the words of the Prophets to issue his call to the congregation. He does not cite the texts, because, as he said before, the values are timeless. To attribute them could distance the listener from the message. The quotations he chooses reflect his perspective on prophetic messages. They employ justice as an abstract concept and convey a powerful sense of the mission of Israel. This collective mission is essential to Wise. Given his relationships and the political clout he earned in his career, he could have

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[159] Wise, "Address at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service" (April 17, 1932), in *FSP,* vol. 9, nos.6-7-8, 92.
[160] Isaiah 42:3-4.
[161] Amos 5:24, Wise, "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets," 42.

conceivably left the pulpit to enact his prophetic values as a full-time activist or politician. Instead, Wise chose to remain a congregational rabbi. To bring justice to the world, he opted to work within the Jewish community, calling his congregants to take on the mantle of the prophets and join him in his efforts to address social injustice.

Wise issues the call, and he helps the congregation participate in the work. The Free Synagogue's social service department is yet another example of how Wise manifests his prophetic ideology. In his remarks at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service, he explains the genesis of the department: "A community of social service was...set up…because we alike felt that synagogue membership ought constrain them that have part therein to deal wisely and constructively with problems of human need and misery."[162] Wise is adamant that the congregation must also actualize prophetic ideals. To shirk that responsibility would undermine the Free Synagogue's principles and Wise's core understanding of Judaism and religion. He is intellectually consistent. He is the symbol of the prophet for the community; he identifies social problems, offers his wisdom, and enjoins the community to be a part of finding a solution. They, in turn, are called to be prophets themselves, living and actualizing the need for social justice and morality.

Wise's sermon "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets" and the corollary ideas of other sermons are crucial for a foundational understanding of Wise as an American Prophet. On and off the pulpit, he tries to emulate the Biblical Prophets in word and deed. They issue a general call for justice and morality in a countercultural effort to care for the vulnerable. Engaging in this work is a religious act, so much so that

[162] Wise, "Address at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service," 93.

it is unnecessary to continually reground his activism in religious precepts. They identify the most compelling social issues in their society and forcefully call the most powerful people to alleviate these problems. Wise believes it is all Israel's responsibility to carry on this tradition.

Ethical Issues

With this foundational understanding of Wise's reliance on the Prophets, we can turn to his issue-focused sermons. We know that he believes his advocacy and activism to be a manifestation of his religious convictions, even though he rarely expounds on religion and the roots of morality in these sermons. His preaching instead focuses on an erudite assessment of the issue and a clear declaration of the correct, moral way forward. Wise's social consciousness, expressed in deed and word, made him exceptional in his generation. As Urofsky claims: "Undoubtedly the most daring and dramatic part of Wise's career involved his willingness to participate in the hurly-burly of politics. It was unusual for a rabbi to speak out for labor and blacks and women, to call for social reform."[163] Wise's activity on behalf of social justice set him apart from his contemporaries and his sermons served as a beacon to engage others in his good works. The following pages investigate the key topics Wise addressed in his sermons with additional notes on his work beyond the pulpit on these issues. Both added up to make Wise an American Prophet.

[163] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 102.

Labor and Industry

Especially in the early twentieth-century, labor and union rights were an important and contentious topic. Many of the people at the Free Synagogue were from the upper class and many were either the leaders of or invested in major industries. Nonetheless, Wise was an unapologetic advocate on behalf of workers. In his 1919 sermon, "How Ought the Pulpit Deal with the Industrial Situation,"[164] he revisits a topic he discussed the previous week. He spoke about supporting unionizing steel workers and sharply criticized Judge Gary, owner of the United States Steel Corporation, for his refusal to meet with the workers. On this incident, Urofsky writes that Wise offered his services to support the union workers after he

> carefully reviewed the background of the steel strike...the long list of worker grievances, the terrible conditions of the mills, and the refusal of steel magnates to deal equitably with the men. The steel operators had their own organization, and fairness required that the workers be allowed to have their own union."[165]

Wise only chose to act after he studied the complexity of the issues at hand. After researching the topic, he applied his moral lens to this growing social crisis. The workers, he preaches, have the right to "shelter themselves under the banner of collective and organized relation to their employers."[166] The workers are weak and vulnerable when compared to the powerful, moneyed interests of their employers. Wise, the preacher-as-prophet, is obligated to intercede and decry the moral crisis that allows workers to be subjected to unfair treatment.

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[164] Stephen S. Wise, "How Ought the Pulpit Deal with the Industrial Situation," in *FSP,* vol. 5 (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918-9), 104-120.
[165] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 171.
[166] Wise, "How Ought the Pulpit Deal with the Industrial Situation," 112.

Unsurprisingly, in reaction, his congregants complained. In the interceding week, Wise had a meeting with the executive officers of the congregation. There were plans in the works to construct a new building; the lay leaders worried that if Wise offended Gary's wealthy supporters, they would pull their donations, leaving the building project for naught. Wise took to the pulpit to offer his response:

> Why are some of you so disturbed about an attack on Judge Gary? Why so sensitive in respect to my references to him? I know the reason perhaps as well as some of you. Because he is to many of you a symbol, because he is fighting your battle, the battle which you would fight on the morrow if you dared, the battle which you believe he will win for you without your help, because you imagine that if Garyism can win, unionism will be doomed and all workingmen's organizations be smothered (116).

Wise is sharp and direct. With his free pulpit and role as prophet under attack, he levies pointed, second-person critique at those in the congregation who would silence him. Wise identified a compelling issue, and, like the Prophets, he castigates those who undermine a moral solution – no matter the consequence to himself or his position.

His clash over the steel workers teaches us another important component of Wise's understanding of the Prophets: rebuke. While Hirsch and Eisendrath were cautious when criticizing the congregation, Wise has no qualms about chastising congregants for failing to meet his moral expectations. The Prophets, Jeremiah in particular,[167] were punished for their social commentary, and Wise knows that his words may result in financial loss for the congregation. In fact, when all was said and done, work did not begin on a building until 1941.[168] His morality is uncompromising; the pulpit must be a place for speaking out for justice and he, and the community, must live

[167] See, for example, Jeremiah 20, 37.
[168] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 361.

according to prophetic ideals. Even in the face of personal and institutional loss, Wise is determined to live his values, and he expects his congregants to follow suit. Importantly, he shares this message in his preaching. He does not save his prophetic ideals for the board room or for private conversations; it is a matter of public discourse.

Wise tackles questions of business differently in "The Ethics of Business,"[169] which he preaches in 1920. Instead of focusing on a particular situation, he speaks broadly about the realities of modern industry and its subjugation of the working class. The central conceit of the sermon is that we must join business to ethics if we are to have a fair and just society. Ethics is only of value if we integrate it into the fabric of economic life. To support his argument, Wise hints at Micah's famous line ["Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (6:8)] without mentioning the prophet by name:

> They are our fellow-beings, fellows as well as beings. To deal humanly with them is to do them justice. To do justice is the supreme thing, prior even to loving mercy, saith the Hebrew Prophet…The self-regarding attitude in the getting or the using of wealth is conscienceless and unjust. Man must he other-regarding, is the dictum of social ethics, in his efforts to acquire substance and in the manner and the method of his expenditure.[170]

The words of the Prophets are again the basis of his message. Wise accesses Micah's abstract call to justice and employs it to stake his claim about the moral necessities of social responsibility and fair treatment of the vulnerable, especially in business practices. Strengthened by this moral assurance, he condemns the living conditions in the tenements, demands fair wages and reasonable work hours, and rails against child labor laws.

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[169] Wise, "The Ethics of Business," in *FSP*, vol. 6, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1920-1), 25-44.
[170] Ibid., 36-7.

Wise ends the sermon by reminding the congregation that these issues are inherently religious. For Wise, ethics and religion are interchangeable terms. To deny ethics, he argues, is to blaspheme:

> until business be ethicized, democratized, religionized from beginning to end. It is true…that our worst atheism is that which says that God, religion, sympathy have not supreme jurisdiction in business as everywhere else. If religion is not to rule business, the rule of religion in the world is at an end.[171]

Just as when he referenced Micah, he does not need to explain why religion is ethical; it is an accepted truth for him. And here he even adds democracy to his list of forces for implementing social justice. Especially in relation to business dealings, Wise insists that we always rely on the ethical vision of the Prophets.

Wise also brought his prophetic message into the secular world. Labor issues were a preeminent concern throughout his career. Urofsky chronicles his activism at early stages of his time at the Free Synagogue, as when he spoke at the first protest meeting following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in 1911[172] up until the last few years of his career when he lobbied the House Labor Committee in 1944 to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission to prevent discrimination in hiring.[173]

Through advocacy and preaching on labor and industry, we learn more about Wise as an American Prophet. Wise rebukes the congregation when he identifies a compelling moral failing, even when it puts his other aspirations at risk. He returns again and again to the Prophets and uses their language to infuse religion, ethics, and

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[171] Ibid., 43.
[172] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 93.
[173] Ibid., 358.

democracy into the moral fabric of society so that political, economic, and social infrastructure can adequately support vulnerable populations.

Women's Rights

Wise believes that democracy, like ethics and religion, supports social justice by lifting the voices of those who might otherwise be marginalized. Wise sees himself as a defender of marginalized populations and in his effort to create a more just society, he is also an advocate for women's suffrage. In 1915, Wise delivered a sermon titled "Woman and Democracy"[174] where he compellingly expresses his support for women's voting rights. Notably, in January of that year, the House of Representative defeated a suffrage bill.[175] Wise does not mention the legislation, but the timing is conspicuous, further indicating Wise's attention to contemporary, political realities.

Wise's language is remarkably progressive for his time. He describes feminism not as a women's movement; rather it "should be known as the human movement, is nothing less than a mighty moral and religious awakening which is to effect a transformation in the status of womanhood."[176] Again, his assessment that suffrage is a social injustice is a sufficient rationale for declaring suffrage a moral issue, no further exposition is needed. Neither, in this case, is a discussion of religion; he does not include

[174] Wise, "Woman and Democracy," in *FSP*, vol. 3, (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1915), 139-158.
[175] "On Passage of H.J.Res. 1, Proposing to the State Legislatures a Woman's Suffrage Amendment to the Constitution (P.1483)—House Vote #238—Jan 12, 1915." GovTrack.us. Accessed January 16, 2017. https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/63-3/h238.
[176] Wise, "Woman and Democracy," 143.

any textual citations and does not mention religion. Wise's focus is on the issue at hand. He even adds that the vote is not an end unto itself:

> I do not conceive that equal suffrage is to be an ultimate trophy for womankind. It is to be no more than a tool through which woman can in citizenship express themselves and in part realize their lives…The woman's movement rests upon the cardinal truth that, inasmuch as life is a sacred thing and personality inviolable, woman ought to be as free as is man to determine the content of life for herself"[177]

Justice does not demand simple solutions; rather society must undergo significant changes to achieve fair and equal treatment of all people. Wise relies on his moral intuition and his thoughtful consideration of the issue.

This sermon, however, is not solely Wise's opportunity to expound on his ideas about feminism and suffrage; it is also a call to action. Whereas Wise directly condemns his opponents in "How Ought the Pulpit Deal with the Industrial Situation," this time he employs a gentler strategy. His first moment of rebuke resembles Eisendrath's use of "we:" "We believe in equal suffrage because we believe in the fundamental rightness of democracy, of the wisdom and rightfulness of which, however, multitudes of anti-suffragists remain unconvinced…"[178] Suffrage was still a contentious issue;[179] nonetheless, Wise says that "we" believe in voting rights. He uses "we" as a goad, driving anyone who might also believe in the "fundamental rightness of democracy" to join him in supporting equal suffrage.

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[177] Ibid., 144.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Neither Urofsky nor Wise (in his autobiography) write about the political tenor of congregation on this issue. However, in the aforementioned vote, of the 43 representatives from New York, only nine voted in favor of suffrage.

As the sermon goes on, he applies another form of rebuke, this time speaking in hypotheticals. He does not directly accuse anyone in the congregation, he leaves it to the men listening (as this passage is targeted at the men) to engage in critical self-reflection:

> How strange it is that men, who normally are very chivalrous, so chivalrous, forsooth, as to have given eight million women in this land the right to toil, some of them the privilege of toiling at night, have never dreamed of exempting woman from any customary burden of toil. The only burden from which some men would exempt all women is the burden of citizenship, which is no burden at all--a burden which can best help woman to bear those other industrial and economic burdens which rest upon her (152).

In offering this general critique of male privilege. "Some men" are not necessarily those in the pews, but surely he hopes they will heed his message in support of a mistreated segment of society. Wise's mission as a prophet is to call people to righteous action, and he utilizes different strategies depending on the setting.

This sermon has qualities that "speak to the ages." Wise's words ring true today as we continue to work toward fair and equitable treatment for women. Urofsky, however, cautions us not to exalt Wise as a flawless paragon of feminism. Despite his progressivism,

> he was, after all, a product of his times and environment…He called for equality for women, yet declared that women inherently were more moral than men, and therefore had to protect the moral standards of the nation…He was one of the first to speak out for allowing women to enter the rabbinate, yet never did anything to implement this idea.[180]

Wise was surely ahead of his time, but Urofsky reminds us that we also need to identify the blind spots we may have for preachers and prophets whom we revere. Wise's failings in retrospect do not diminish his greatness; rather, they remind us that he was a growing,

[180] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice,* 101.

evolving person. Wise was a prophet of his time, susceptible to the zeitgeist and misapprehensions of his generation.

War and Peace

While Wise considered himself a devoted advocate for peace, he can be faulted for wobbling on certain issues. As the United States entered the Great War, his patriotism and his reverence for President Wilson got the better of him. and he preached in favor of entering into the war. In his retrospective sermon at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service, Wise expresses regret: "The war came and, to my everlasting regret, I took sides. I gave my public and private support to what I still impenitently believe to have been the less guilty of the two groups of warring nations…"[181] It is remarkable and instructive to see such a passionate preacher admit to an error. Despite his fearlessness, Wise remains humble. Admitting an error furthers his credibility from the pulpit and makes him relatable.[182]

Most importantly, Wise gains credibility as a preacher because of his actions. Urofsky tells an incredible story about Wise's efforts for peace: "When in the spring of 1914 it appeared as if the United States might go to war with Mexico over the nation's internal affairs," Wise preached against the war and lobbied President Woodrow Wilson to avoid the conflict. As the conflict in Latin America escalated, Wise "accepted the offer of three Latin American countries to mediate, and the White House sent Wise a message that 'there will be no war.'"[183] Wise shows his deep commitment to peace while playing

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[181] Wise, "Address at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Service," 28.
[182] If only someone circumstances had provided him with a rebuke about women's equality!
[183] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 134

an important role in American and international affairs. He is a key leader and moral voice not just for the Free Synagogue but for the country as a whole.

After his regrettable decision to support American involvement in the Great War, Wise vowed never to support a war again. Urofsky understands this pledge in context: "The early thirties saw the rise of fascism, but also witnessed the growth of a widespread antiwar sentiment…No one, including Wise, realized at this time the lengths to which the Nazis would go."[184] After years of preaching and working with pacifist organizations, Wise only relented after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Urofsky continues, "He still despised war, but could no longer argue that any and all wars should be opposed."[185]

In the wake of the Great War, Wise advocated strongly for the League of Nations. In 1919, he preached a series of sermons on the Peace Conference in Paris.[186] In those sermons he returns to his general language of justice to ground his argument. Wise hoped that the aftermath of the war "would lead to a new world order based on justice and democracy,"[187] and he implores his congregation, "Let us remember that, if the League of Nations be not helped by America to come to pass, it is not President Wilson who will have been defeated, but America; not America, but the world, not mankind alone, but mankind's hope of peace and justice."[188] Peace, by virtue of its being tied to justice, is a moral necessity for the good of society.

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[184] Ibid., 309.
[185] Ibid., 311.
[186] These sermons all appear in Volume 5 of *FSP*.
[187] Ibid., 308.
[188] Wise, "The Nation's Treatment of its President and the League of Nations Once More," *FSP*, vol. 5, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918-9), 146.

To be an effective prophet, Wise must prove himself a legitimate social commentator. To that end, Wise devotes the better part of the sermon to an informative evaluation of political realities. He explains the relevant national and international actors and their motivations. Yet even in his political assessment, he always returns to his prophetic insistence of a world rooted in justice.

Civil Rights

Wise worked for civil rights throughout his career. In the wake of alarming reports of frequent lynchings in 1909, Wise was one of sixty national, progressive leaders to sign a letter calling for the end of Jim Crow laws and human rights abuses in the South. He was also one of only a few white ministers who would preach, let alone talk, about racial issues at the time. Wise also engaged in this work on an institutional level. He helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and he "saw to it that the American Jewish Congress defended not only Jewish rights, but the liberties of all persecuted groups…and that group became the first and most consistent national Jewish organization to ally itself with civil rights."[189]

Sadly, not much changed from 1909 until his 1940 sermon "*Native Son*—One Race Pleads for Another."[190] The sermon considers the now-classic, then-new-bestseller, *Native Son* by Richard Wright. Wise uses the book as source material to describe the horrible mistreatment of black people in the United States and to insist on the necessity of rightful, just Jewish action.

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[189] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 100.
[190] Stephen S. Wise, "*Native Son*—One Race Pleads for Another," May 12, 1940, from American Jewish Archives audio recording transcript.

> If only the Jews could forget their own fate, however bitter, and remember and try to better the fate of another, some alien race such as the Negro race. After all, we Jews as no other people, we know the heart of the oppressed…The indifference of the Jew, child of thirty-five centuries of civilization his own. The indifference…to the fate of the Negro race is deeply dishonoring to the Jews.[191]

Here, Wise employs yet another mode of prophetic rebuke: empathy and shame. He does not call upon a text or a prophetic ideal, or even justice and ethics; instead, he refers the congregation to their shared sense of history of oppression and encourages them to consider their capacity for empathy with another oppressed minority. He believed blacks and Jews had a shared destiny, and in light of the continued plight of "Negroes," he is ashamed that Jews have not been more determined advocates for equal treatment. Wise makes a compelling argument for a Jewish historical and cultural obligation to work for justice.

This sermon also touches on Wise's sense of being an American. America is supposed to be a promised land of justice and righteousness, but in the deplorable treatment of African Americans he sees a shocking repudiation of this so-called American belief. As he put it,

> And I felt, I confess to you, a double sense of guilt because I am not only an American, but I am an American Jew. I feel, curiously enough some of you may imagine, I feel a double obligation to every oppressed race and to every wronged man on earth for I am an American and I am a Jew.[192]

We already know that Wise feels a Jewish obligation to address racial inequality. His deep love of and high moral expectations for the United States are what make him a

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[191] Ibid.; At the time of the printing of this thesis, the American Jewish Archives has an audio recording of this excerpt in their online exhibit on Stephen S. Wise: http://americanjewisharchives.org/exhibits/gv/wise/index.html (click on the "On Justice" tab).
[192] Ibid.

compelling American Prophet. Wise identifies that his Jewish, prophetic values are also represented in American values. He is a prophet firmly located in his time and place, which allows his influence to reach beyond the confines of the synagogue walls.[193]

Anti-Semitism in America

American Anti-Semitism is another a double challenge for Wise. First, naturally, anti-Semitism is a direct threat to him and his community. Second, anti-Semitism is an affront to his just vision of American. Wise's prophetic values dictate that society must protect marginalized populations, and, surely, the Jews are an oft-victimized and marginalized corporate group. When preaching on the Peace Conference, he says that "the Jewish question is a moral barometer"[194] for societies in Europe; a nation that does not treat its Jews fairly is by definition unjust. Therefore, when America, the nation expected to be an exemplar of justice and righteousness, perpetuates this egregious injustice, it denies his loftiest ideals and hopes for America. As an American Prophet, he must speak out against this social injustice.

In the instances when he preaches on anti-Semitism, he bases his argument in American values, not in the need to protect his community. In 1913, when Leo Frank was accused of murdering a young, white girl in Georgia. Wise tells the congregation, "two Justices of the United States Supreme Court, two of the noblest leaders of the nation's thought have practically said that he was denied a fair trial."[195] Wise calls on the

[193] Or, in this case, Carnegie Hall.
[194] Wise, "The Jewish Question," in *FSP*¸ vol. 5, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1918-9), 53.
[195] Wise, "The Case of Leo Frank: A Last Appeal," *FSP*, vol. 3, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1915), 79.

Governor of Georgia to commute the death sentence given the clear anti-Semitic bias on display at the trial. Wise spends multiple pages trying to prove the intellectual honesty of his argument. He insists that he does not plead for clemency just because Frank is Jewish:

> I know that I do not plead for Frank because he is a Jew or because I am a Jew. I plead because of his rights as an American and because of my duty as an American, not as against Georgia but in behalf of Georgia, in order that there may be brought to pass that vindication of the rights of an American citizen without which all else would little avail, the right to due process of law at all times and under all circumstances.[196]

Wise knows that his reach extends beyond the Jewish community, and he worries other will perceive him as biased and ignore his argument. He therefore must be explicit about why he is preaching. He does not name American values as matter of political expediency; he earnestly believes that America is a beacon of justice and, like the prophets, calls on the nation to reach its moral potential.

He argues similarly in his preaching against Henry Ford's anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.[197] As he states in his 1920 sermon, "Henry Ford's Challenge and a Jew's Reply,"

> Henry Ford is seeking to introduce into American life a tendency that is divisive, disruptive and morally fateful. The American people will have none of him and his ways. When once the American people, lovers of fair-play and of justice, understand that Henry Ford is seeking to introduce the spirit of or that makes for pogromism into America, they will abhor and renounce him. Henry Ford needs to be reminded that America is not a matter of cheap engines but of a precious spirit. Henry Ford shall not be suffered to cheapen the spirit of America; he shall not be permitted to vulgarize and corrupt America s soul.[198]

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[196] Ibid., 81.

[197] "For ninety-one straight issues beginning on May 22, 1920, Ford's weekly newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, purported to describe an international Jewish conspiracy based on the notorious anti-Semitic forgery known as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*." (Sarna, *American Judaism*, 217)

[198] Wise, "Henry Ford's Challenge and a Jew's Reply," in *FSP,* vol. 6, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1920-1), 75.

Wise again identifies core American values to support his case. Fairness and justice grant Wise license to denounce what he deems morally reprehensible.

Nazism

Wise is particularly well-known for his activism against Hitler and Nazism. On March 27, 1933, he and the American Jewish Congress organized an anti-Hitler rally at Madison Square Garden. Over 55,000 gathered, and, as Edwin Black writes in his article in *Reform Judaism Magazine*, "simultaneous rallies were held in 70 other metropolitan areas in the U.S. and in Europe. Radio hookups broadcast the New York event to hundreds of cities throughout the world."[199]

In addition to his anti-Nazi work off the pulpit, Wise also preached regularly on the subject to his congregation. True to form, Wise characterized the Nazi threat in social justice terms:

> That demand of justice for the Jew must come from the heart as well as the lips of the Jew. Unless we ask justice, one of two results may follow. The world may come to believe that it does justice to the Jew and that would be an appalling blunder. Or else, the world may come to imagine that we are not concerned about injustice to us, as some Jews are not to bear shame be it said.[200]

This is a different style of preaching justice for Wise. Here, he calls on Jewish communities to demand justice not for a marginalized other, but for themselves. As a

[199] Edwin Black, "Could American Jews have acted sooner and done more to save European Jewry?" *Reform Judaism Magazine,* Fall 1999. Accessed January 12, 2017. http://reformjudaismmag.net/rjmag-90s/999eb.html
[200] Wise, "What Jews Owe the World: What the World Owes Jews!," October 30, 1938, from American Jewish Archives audio recording transcript.

prophet, he both condemns those who deny a world of justice and inspires the downtrodden to advocate on their own behalf.

As the Nazi threat grew, Wise's national reputation afforded him access to the State Department and, occasionally, to President Roosevelt. With that opportunity, Urofsky writes,

> Wise and his colleagues never ceased trying to get American political leaders to oppose publicly anti-Jewish measures in Germany. The [American Jewish] Congress organized a letter-writing campaign to senators and representatives and…met whenever possible with State Department officials try to elicit some positive response from the American government[201]

He tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to get President Roosevelt to intercede on behalf of Jews as news of Hitler's atrocities became more frequent.[202] He also advocated for Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and even welcomed a few into his own home.[203] This is yet another example of how, throughout his career, Wise preached powerfully from the pulpit and acted in accordance with his teachings and calls for justice.

Conclusion

Wise tries to emulate the Prophets in word and deed. He bases his religious ideology on the Prophets, and uses them as an example for his own advocacy and

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[201] Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice,* 270.
[202] Wise has also been criticized, namely by Elie Wiesel, for how he handled the Final Solution and his relationship with Roosevelt. Wise received reports in 1938 of the Nazis' plans, and he petitioned the State Department in private meetings to intercede. They asked him not to share the information with the press, promising to act, and he agreed. The State Department, in turn, surreptitiously ignored the reports. In retrospect, many condemned Wise for having information and waiting too long to share it with the public. Urofsky argues that no one actually knew how horrific the situation in Europe would become and that history should be more generous to Wise for his efforts during the Holocaust. For more on this see: Urofsky, *A Voice that Spoke for Justice*, 317-31).
[203] Ibid., 302-4.

activism. Through his preaching and his social justice work beyond the pulpit, Wise proves himself to be an American Prophet, bringing prophetic ideals to bear on the most compelling and important social justice issues of his day. Below are some of the key lessons we learn from Wise about what it means to be an American Prophet:

1. *Preaching and working for social justice are religious acts.*

   Wise does not need to cite Biblical texts in his sermons to prove the Jewishness of his cause. The legacy of the Prophets is acting for ethics and justice. When Wise battles for God in his efforts toward fair labor practices or civil equality, he believes it to be a sacred, religious task. Quoting biblical texts is unnecessary and he only chooses to do so when it is will sufficiently strengthen his argument.

2. *Address contemporary social injustices and protect the vulnerable.*

   The Prophets decried social ills that had a disproportionate effect on the downtrodden, the weak, and the vulnerable. Wise focuses on a host of important social justice issues at the times when they are relevant to larger, national conversations. He notices that the prophets use "justice" abstractly, so he too uses it as a catchall to justify his involvement in these issues.

3. *Bravely rebuke anyone who commits a social injustice.*

   The Prophets excoriated the most powerful people in their society, calling on them to use their power morally. They also condemn the ethical failings of regular people in an effort to create a more just world. Wise uses a variety of strategies, both aggressive and gentle, as he seeks a moral readjustment of society. Wise, like the Prophets, knows that he will likely face repercussions for his social critique, but he refuses to be silent on issues of social justice.

4. *Defend American society and American values.*

   Wise cares deeply about America and holds it up as a paradigm for justice and righteousness. To him, democracy is a value on equal footing with religion and ethics. He holds America accountable to his lofty expectations, and employs American values to support his justice work.

5. *Call others to action and practice what you preach.*

   Wise is an active advocate throughout his career. He does not just preach about justice and ethics, he seeks to enact those values on behalf of less fortunate Americans. His sermons include a call to action, and he creates internal supports, like the Free Synagogue's social service department, to help congregants also live his vision of morality.

CONCLUSION

The question of what it means to preach ethics from the pulpit feels more urgent than ever. The 2016 election cycle was fraught with contention and divisiveness, and many rabbis are wondering how to preach about ethics and justice.[204] With a President promising to enact religious tests for immigration, curtail a woman's right to choose, deport millions of undocumented immigrants, eliminate environmental regulations, create economic policies that will increase our nation's wealth disparity, emboldening white supremacist organizations, and already using rhetoric that targets racial and ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities, it is critical that religious leaders use their moral voice during what many anticipate to be difficult times.

The preachers in this study provide compelling examples of how to use the pulpit to address social needs in a powerful way. Surely, our circumstances are different, and IRS regulations now[205] prohibit religious organizations from endorsing candidates,[206] but

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[204] During the High Holy Days this past year, many articles were published by national and international news outlets wondering how rabbis should handle the election. Here are just a few of the articles: Julia Zauzmer, "On Rosh Hashanah, rabbis wrestle with whether to take on Donald Trump," *Washington Post*. September 30, 2016, Accessed October 14, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/09/30/on-rosh-hashanah-rabbis-wrestle-with-whether-to-take-on-donald-trump/; "Rabbis Consider Presidential Election in Yom Kippur Sermons," *National Public Radio*, October 11, 2016, Accessed October 11, 2016, http://www.npr.org/2016/10/11/497563949/rabbis-consider-presidential-election-in-yom-kippur-sermons; Allison Kaplan Sommer, "Is It Wrong for Rabbis to Talk Politics in Their Rosh Hashanah Sermons This Year?," *Ha'aretz*, October 2, 2016, Accessed October 14, 2016, http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.744614.

[205] The policy was enacted in 1960 via IRS Regulation 24 CFR 1.501(c)(3). Religious organizations are not allowed to endorse candidates, but they are allowed to advocate on legislative issues at any level of government.

[206] U.S. Department of the Treasury "Tax Guide for Churches and Religious Organizations" *Internal Revenue Service.* Accessed January 20, 2017. https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1828.pdf.

the principles that inform their preaching can help us discover what core principles we will need in the years ahead. Hirsch, Wise, and Eisendrath are, notably, exceptional in their generations. As we discussed, few other rabbis were as bold as they, but we too need bold leadership. We need clergy who will both address the ethical issues in our country and build Jewish communities that maintain the just, moral legacies of these foundational rabbis.

Collective Lessons

Common themes emerge from the work of these three illustrious preachers. In considering each theme, I will summarize the influence it had on the rabbis in this study and consider how we might apply that to preaching in our time.

Prophets

Social Gospel's emphasis on the Prophets looms large in the sermons of all three rabbis. They latch on to the Prophets' ethical message and use their words and examples to form a religious foundation for their preaching. The Prophets decried the prevalence of rite over right, and implored both those in power and the general public to act righteously on behalf of the downtrodden and marginalized. Based on the prophetic teachings, these rabbis all believed, as many still do, that Judaism is essentially about living a moral life and building ethical communities.

We, too, could bring about a resurgence of prophetic wisdom to enlighten our work on and off the *bimah*. As Wise said, "The prophets spoke to their age, and therefore they speak to the ages."[207] However, I am also interested in the role that Social Gospel

[207] Wise, "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets," 26.

played in the religious identities of Hirsch, Eisendrath, and Wise. They tapped into the religious mood of the country and gave it relevance in the Jewish community. What religious ideas are fomenting in America that could influence our ongoing work? One further avenue for exploration which would develop the research of this thesis would be to investigate how mindfulness and spirituality will continue to be integrated into Jewish communities and influence our attitude towards ethics and social justice.

Contemporary Focus

To apply the Prophets' ethical ideas, Hirsch, Eisendrath, and Wise addressed contemporary social issues and insisted that we infuse religion-as-ethics into the foundational structures of society. Hirsch added to the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform that Judaism must take notice of and seek to rectify the greatest moral challenges of its time, and they championed this pillar of Reform. All three preached on economic injustice and labor rights, to congregants that, in general, occupy economically secure positions in society. Both Wise and Eisendrath addressed racial issues and civil rights. They, like the prophets, did not shy away from the most important and compelling moral issues of their day.

Modern preachers must determine which social injustices are most in need of their ethical voice and bravely speak truth to power.

Creed and Deed

Not only were these rabbis prolific preachers of ethics, they lived their ideals beyond the pulpit. They shaped the identity of the Reform movement, making social justice a mainstay of its philosophy and practice. They were involved in communal

service organizations at local, state, national, and international levels. And they led movements that enacted critical policy and social changes across the country. Their actions gave legitimacy to the words they preached to the congregation on the Sabbath. Modern rabbis striving to find their own authentic moral voice could turn to Hirsch, Eisendrath, and Wise as models for developing an authentic moral voice based on ethics-in-action.

Thoughtful Preparation

In addition to being giants in the world of social justice, these rabbis were also intellectual heavy-weights. Their sermons are well-researched, referencing a broad range of academics, philosophers, authors, and contemporary thought-leaders. They vary their source material, turning to modern literature, personal stories, and anecdotes to convey their message.

They supplemented the reading and research that went into preparing these sermons with the thoughtful way they crafted their arguments. They all take time to consider counterarguments and address them from the pulpit. Wise even goes so far as to identify moral errors he made in his preaching.

These practices help make them effective preachers. Citing classical and contemporary source material proves their intellectual legitimacy to preach on a given topic, and addressing counterarguments indicates that they have considered the opinions of people in the congregation who might disagree. Especially during a time when rabbis are concerned about division within their communities, rabbis can learn from the thoughtful way our preachers prepared their sermons.

Rebuke and the "Inviting We"

Preaching ethics requires speaking difficult truths to people who may not want to hear them. When necessary, Hirsch, Eisendrath, and Wise rebuked the congregation for their ambivalence, acquiescence, or active participation in social injustice. Of the many strategies they used to condemn actions they found deplorable, I am most interested in the way that Wise and Eisendrath used the first-person.[208]

Eisendrath says "we" in order to empathize with the congregation during a moment of rebuke. He, too, is guilty of moral failings, and, most importantly, he is willing to admit it. By saying "we," he invites congregants to join him as he moves from confessing an error to remedying the social injustice of which they have been a part. To accuse might push them away; "we" draws them closer.

Wise, on the other hand, says "we" to assume shared values. When speaking about suffrage, he explains, "We believe in equal suffrage because we believe in the fundamental rightness of democracy…however, multitudes of anti-suffragists remain unconvinced…"[209] He cannot be sure that everyone in the congregation agrees with him, but he says "we" to dictate to the congregation what they should believe. If any of them are anti-suffragists, they are not a part of the "we" who are the authentic members of the community. As they listen to their rabbi preach from the pulpit, they are invited to join the "we" in correct, moral action.

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[208] In the sermons I studied for this project, Hirsch did not use this "we." He performed a similar feat by using a more distant "they." Instead of directly condemning the congregation, he spoke about an unmentioned other who was perpetuating some moral wrong. Congregants would know if they were guilty of the offense, but he did not directly attack them.

[209] Wise, "Woman and Democracy," 144.

Ethical preaching will on occasion require challenging the congregation to adjust their perspective. However preachers deliver rebuke from the pulpit, they must choose the moment and their language carefully. Hirsch, Eisendrath, and Wise's sermons provide varying approaches that modern preachers could use at these critical moments.

Individual lessons

While there are many similarities among these preachers, each also has distinguishing traits and strategies that set him apart.

Hirsch

Hirsch's sermons have a particular focus on establishing the deep, historical connection between Judaism and ethics. He characterizes Judaism as primarily about ethics and believes the Jewish people are called to be priests of justice and righteousness. The special responsibility of Jews to speak out and act for justice puts an ennobling spin on what it means to be "chosen." Rabbis today could benefit from his thoughtful attention to culling Jewish tradition and history to unearth ethical truths that form the foundation of our religious tradition.

Eisendrath

Eisendrath's sermons are notable because he develops an easily discernable, core message and reiterates it time and again. One could not sit at Holy Blossom Temple and not know that the rabbi believed that all of humanity shares a "universal Father above who can be worshipped only by an all-loving brotherhood below."[210] Eisendrath has a

[210] Eisendrath, "Who is 'The Chosen People'?," 220-1.

mission statement that serves as the connective tissue through all of his work. This is not to say that every rabbi must craft a singular message to deploy throughout their career, but, surely his devotion and fidelity to his most deeply held beliefs is inspiring.

Wise

While Hirsch and Eisendrath also acted off the pulpit, Wise's breadth of activist activity in the secular world is remarkable. He sets an inspiring example of leveraging a prophetic, moral voice for powerful action on behalf of communities in need. Wise bravely and unapologetically preached on a wide range of issues. He did not fear controversy, ever faithful to what he knew to be right and just. He also did not take pains trying to prove the Jewish authenticity of his arguments. Inheriting Hirsch's belief that Judaism is ethics, Wise knew that preaching on moral issues was innately and sufficiently Jewish.

A Final Thought

As we consider what it will mean to preach ethics in the twenty-first century, we can turn back to these towering figures for inspiration and guidance. Reading hundreds of pages of their sermons was inspiring, to say the least. More important than any turn-of-phrase or homiletical strategy, the most critical lesson I take away from this process is that they all chose to preach ethics. Whether speaking on contentious issues or facing a congregation inhospitable to their prophetic message, these rabbis opted to address the most important moral questions of their generations. I will likely never develop into a Hirsch, Eisendrath, or Wise, but I can allow their brave, powerful, ethical choices to

embolden me and my generation to carry on their legacy. And I am hopeful we can continue striving for their vision of wholeness, compassion, and justice.

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APPENDIX A: HIRSCH—"A Sukkoth Sermon: New Ethics for New Economics"

Emil G. Hirsch, *The Jewish Preacher: Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch*. ed. Myron A. Hirsch. (Naples, FL: Collage Books, 2003), 111-130.

This day, these symbols, this Sukkoth booth, take us back to distant ages and recall to our memory a form of social organization that has passed entirely away. If but modestly gifted with imagination we can paint to our mental vision the scenes that were yearly enacted on the soil of Palestine. The harvest was gathered; the owner of the field and his helpers had worked faithfully together, and now that the fruitage of their common labor was safely stored away in the wine cellar or granary; all of them that had a share in coaxing from the soil its wealth were bidden to the feast. There was the patriarch of the family and his sons and daughters touching elbows with the bondsman and the man servant. Yea, even such as had no share in bringing the golden grain to the threshing floor, or in carrying the bursting wine crates to the waiting wine presses, were invited to come. Gladness sounded from every heart, and joy was reflected from every eye. They had worked honestly, and therefore they could rejoice deeply in what their work, their common work, had brought to all of them.

This scene is taken from the agricultural life with society organized on the patriarchal basis. From that form of social inter-action to our present day of social distraction is a far cry indeed. And yet we cannot understand the motives of our day. We cannot hope for insight into the vexatious perplexities incidental to our modern social maladjustments unless we keep before our eyes the whole course of social evolution. From primitive gregariousness through the intervening stages of the nomadic clan scheme, and later the agricultural patriarchal type, then the despotism of a social structure

resting as it did partially in antiquity with the exception of Palestine, upon the foundation of human slavery. From this, on again through the feudal plan with its classes organized into guilds, and then to the modern day with its passion for social disentanglement, its enthusiasm for personal liberty, its blind belief in the equality of all men.

The latter period is about running to its close. Yea, it has done so to all practical intents and purposes. The Eastern clouds are painted red. Some read in that tint the omen of destruction; others standing on the higher peak of the outlook hold that the blushes in the Eastern sky are the promise of a better and a brighter day for humanity.

We have outgrown in successive efforts nomadic clan organization, the patriarchal agricultural form recalled by this booth, by this lulav, this Sukkoth day.

We have, thank God, learned that human society shall not be anchored to the shame and the pain of human slavery. We have also left behind the feudal type, its restrictions, but also, alas, its responsibilities. For over one hundred years we have reveled and boasted in the high flood of individualism, the gift to the human kind by the French Revolution, fathered by the French thinkers of the Eighteenth century. And now as the Twentieth century is stepping out boldly towards its ascent up the heights, we are slowly but painfully learning that liberty is not the last word, and equality is not the deepest accent. That again, from the individualism which intoxicated us when it burst out its passionate creed in protest to the lack of freedom in the social scheme of feudalism—that liberty and individualism—I say, must give way in turn now to the deeper socialized interdependence of activities, and of factors and forces in the social, economic industrial upworking [sic] and outworking of the human destiny.

I, of course, shall not weary you with a detailed account of nomadic clan social organization. I take it for granted you are familiar with its peculiar traits. Nor shall I dwell upon the agricultural patriarchalism, which is the type of social life that the bible in its institutions pictures before our eyes. I shall not go into details either as to the slave system of ancient Greece and Rome, philosophized about by Plato and Aristotle. I shall not waste time either in lecturing to you about the feudal system, or guilds, and what they did, and wherein their weaknesses lay. But I must—though it is a tale often told here—I must dwell upon certain features of the French Revolution and its creed. For that creed is prelude to our own attempts to lift humanity to a higher plane, and to meet problems that have arisen out of the dogmatism of French philosophy applied to economics and to industry. I have mentioned the sacramental words of the French Revolution—Liberty and Equality. They could so passionately insist upon liberty of the individual man because in their day liberty had been denied to man. They had been starved, and in their paroxysm of impending death they saw liberty, an aureole in glory, so that in their thinking no other word could hold its own. But the liberty which they proclaimed was the liberty of protest, and liberty as such is always protest. Hartman, the German philosopher, has never written a truer note than when he insists—in his treatise on ethics—upon that one great and grave consideration, that liberty is never absolute. Liberty from what, is the great and grave point, salient and emphatic. And so the French people that shouted Liberty meant liberty from the artificial restrictions of the social system and the political scheme in the mediaeval times.

In their philosophy, the French thinkers turned to make man a God because the church and the state, before their day, had conspired to make of man a slave. The

individual unhistorical man was central to the speculations of Diderot, and that unhistorical—therefore, also unnatural man—that nowhere lived and nowhere breathed—the universal man that nowhere had his home—this generalization and abstraction came to be the pivotal conception of the English economics.

Let man act in his own individual capacity, free from any other consideration except that which burns within him, and that is the desire to preserve himself, the desire to maintain himself, the passion to gain and to have. Let him act upon this, said Adam Smith and his followers, and out of this struggle with selfishness will leap social harmony. And thus they acted upon competition; they built commerce and industry upon individualized forces. They compelled a man to be a mechanical man—that is to say—a creature without nerves other than those of greed and the desire to maintain himself in order that through this independent but strenuous insistence upon his own humanity, might be lifted to the altitude of social peace and social well-being.

Adam Smith lived, of course, before the days of invention and the application of the steam power. That invention of which we rhapsodized when we were young, the glorious results of which constitute the main thesis of every high school composition we ever wrote—that steam power showed, if nothing else did, the inadequacy of Adam Smith's economics based on absolute and abstract individualism, or man ceased to be an individual under the draconic rule of steam. He was no longer a man; he became a hand; he became one of a mass, and was lost in that mass. Steam forced the gathering together of men into factories, and steam compelled the decentralization of labor to such an extent that the individual laborer ceased to be a whole man, and never did a whole thing. He became a little cog in the machine.

He became an inconsequential quantity. He had to keep up the pace with the man that worked before him, and see to it that he was quick enough so that the man behind him was not delayed. His soul was withered out of him. Adam Smith reasoned that man was an individual and that demon, steam, whose demoniac power we learned to chain, laughed to scorn the theories of Adam Smith. Not an individual, but a hand; not a man, but a mere tool; not a producer in the larger sense of the word, but merely a menial doing a little bit of a thing in monotonous reiteration without knowing why and without capacity of reasoning out where his work proved its social utility.

The invention of steam then, was the first power that laid breach into the dogmatism of the English school of reasoning that individualism and liberty were the final potency of the truest social form of life.

And another thing also sounded the death knell of Adam Smith's individualism. The struggle for existence became more intense. There was another assumption in Adam Smith's theories, which if it had been true might have legitimatized whatever conclusion was drawn therefrom. That was the other word, the other sacramental word of the French Revolution—Equality. Peasant the equal of Prince; Count no higher than clown; all are equal. A word of protest, legitimate in the vocabulary of the Revolution, but shorn of potency when the task had to be confronted to build-up society with the assumption that men are equal.

The economics of the English schools assumed that men were equal; and thus they spoke of the freedom of contract. Between equals the equation can easily be found in dealings that they have with each other; but are we equal? Is a capitalist, when he makes

a contract with a laborer, the equal of the laborer, or the laborer his equal? Are they on one level. Does the future mean for the one the same alternative as for the other?

However small your capital may be it is sufficient to keep hunger away from your modest home at least for a certain length of time; but he who has merely his hands to sell is always, if he is alone and unsupported, met by the alternative to accept terms or to face starvation. That Adam Smith's economics did not consider. But as steam forced men out of their individualism into the factories the men began to bethink themselves of the false basis of the system under which they worked, and they attempted to counteract the pernicious results of a false philosophy by combining, by sacrificing their absolute liberty at the shrine of unionized efforts. What have the unions done? They have created the possibility of putting labor on a footing of equality with capital. They give to the individual laborer a feeling of security. He is no longer confronted with the alternative: Accept even the dry pittance or else you must resolve to meet the pangs of starvation.

The unions have, in the second place, accomplished that market conditions shall be equalized throughout the world. You know, men of commerce as you are, what I mean by conditions of the market. You try to buy where it is cheapest and sell where it is dearest. And it is your policy to create conditions for buying cheaper, and for selling higher. Sound commercial philosophy. Yea, but the individual laborer cannot provide for the cheapest purchasing market nor for the dearest selling conditions, but the union may, and the unions have done this. Read any treatise on the effects of trade unionism, of England, of America or of Germany, and that is the point most strongly brought out. The economics of Smith would not tolerate trade unionism; but as steam had shown that Smith's system was not final, but preliminary, unionism urged the laborers to act upon

the newly created conception and try to make at least real the second principal of Adam Smith, the equality of the contracting parties under the social arrangement. Then came a stop. Capital itself learned that Adam Smith's competitive ideal was a colossus standing on clay feet. In ancient Greece they tell the story of a God consuming his own offspring. Competition consumes its own offspring.

And thus we have entered into the stage of even capitalistic organization and combination. Capital has learned that the orthodox economics of England did not provide for contingencies arising today in consequence of the wonderfully enlarged control that man has over nature. Had no steam been invented, individualism might perhaps have redeemed the faith of those that believed in it; had not electricity slaughtered time and annihilated distance, individualism might perhaps not have been found a flirt, smiling but unable or unwilling to turn the smile into love.

But here we are. Even our country is too small for us. Our country is too limited though within its borders we have the Arctic winter and the Tropic summer, and we have a variety of mineral and other productions of the ages stored away in the mountains. We have a multiplicity of soil that laughs at climate and robs famine of its terrors and the drought of its torture. And when one who ships wheat from this central gathering point would consult the horoscope of his commercial prospects, today he has to figure not merely upon what natural impediments may arise from the conditions of this country and the ocean's humor and caprice, but he has to cast his eye towards the Argentine Republic—a distant name, a mere sound a few decades ago, but within the next five years he has to calculate the speed of trains and the amount of cars at the disposal of the Trans-

Siberian Railroad. The whole world has come into competition, one with the other, because distance is no more, and climate is no more.

We are cosmopolitan in everything, and in consequence of this, a condition which Adam Smith never could dream of, a condition that those great economists that discuss strong matters when assembled for their lunch, because these conditions have arisen, capital itself has felt that individualism is inadequate to meet the new circumstances of a new age. Declaim against trusts as much as you may; they have come not through the malice of one Master genius of finance. They have come as things always come, I say as a theologian, by the decree of divinity—or, if you will not allow this, they have come in obedience to the necessity inherent in the evolution of the human race. Capital itself has ceased to be individualistic; it is under cooperation and it is under combination.

Those forces that I have merely sketched to you I could detain you for hours with detailed proof. Those forces which I have merely indicated have resulted in splitting the industrial world into two camps, and the third camp between the two, bearing the blow from one and suffering under the blindness of the other: Capital organized in combinations stupendous; labor organized too on an enlarging plan, and between the upper and nether millstone—society, humanity.

At this stage of the evolutionary process we have arrived. We are passing through a period of transition. Every period of transition is dangerous. And why? Because on the one hand we have not outgrown the theories of an antecedent day; and on the other hand we have not fully grasped the import of theories to fit the conditions that are even now upon us. Here we are, all operating still with the fetishism of individualistic economics.

We speak of the right of a man to sell his labor at whatever price he chooses. We say—and one of the ministers that went to New York, and would not allow himself to be fooled into staying in Chicago—Dr. Hillis said at a banquet of imbeciles from Chicago—" If millions of bayonets shall be marshalled to protect one man in his right to sell his labor as he chooses, the nation must order the levy or write its own epitaph as dead or dying." That is one theory—the echo of an individualism which practically has ceased to be in operation in factory, in foundry, in counting room and behind the cashier's desk in the bank. If we were still in an individual condition, if we could be—if steam had not been found, if electricity had not been discovered, if wireless telegraphy had not laughed at the jealousy of the ocean—we might still operate with this ideal, the ideal of individualism and then say Yea, man shall be an individual; he shall be free to do. But we are not, and the new economics have adjusted themselves to the new conditions.

On the other hand, labor is still operating with the old notion of equality and hence they insist that one man shall be considered as valuable as another man. They insist that the better organized brain shall not receive higher social reward or wage than that brain which is dull. They restrict him who is creative to take the snail pace of one who is merely not only not creative but is absolutely incompetent. Why this? Because they, on their part, still believe in the equality, which never was and which cannot be maintained in the new social organization.

Here then are the sins of the capitalist on the one hand and of the union laborer on the other. The capitalist has outgrown individualism in his own organization, but he still would deal with individual men and he still invokes the power of the state to make the individual man accept what terms they assume the individual laborer would elect. The

laboring men, on the other hand, rejecting the doctrine of labor of the individual, insist that individuals are nevertheless equal, forgetting that they are not. That in the social fabric there are distinctions and differences that must be considered, which cannot with impunity be ignored.

The immediate result of this want of logic and consistency, of the partial abandonment of the former creed, is a state of war. We shall only come out of this state of war when we learn a few simple principles of ethics. Ethics in business, Sunday School and bargain sale. Such a thought can only germinate in the cranky brain of a cranky rabbi. Indeed! Yea, that may be the comfortable assurance of the commercial travelling community, especially loudly and vulgarly emphasized when their palate is tickled by a few glasses of champaign, and their boiler is well fueled by a partridge or a prairie chicken. And between making a hole on the links and talking nonsense to the nonsensical girl, they may also comfort themselves that ethics and economics lie on different planes. The greatest thinkers of the day for the last fifty years have come to the conclusion that economics is ethics. And ethics is not merely that negative twaddle about goodness. If it be, I am sorry I am ethical.

Then you must buy your ethics at another stand. There you may get that inane, insipid, disgusting concoction of sweetness and of light that seems to be the whole story of life in the appeal to "be good, and be true, and be kind, and be noble."

That is not ethics. It is related to ethics as is the gibberish of a child just learning to speak to the style of Shakespeare. You might as well believe that your wonderful baby—and whose baby is not wonderful when he or she begins to say "Ba-ba-ba"—is talking the deepest philosophy, as to think that this twaddle about "goodness, and

sweetness, and light and love" is ethics. The trouble is we have deceived the world; the trouble is we have sold this soda water, insipid, disgusting beverage, for the wine of truth in all of our churches and in all of our Sunday Schools.

Ethics teaches life; and if ethics has no voice for the living, if religion is merely for the dead then the world is doomed to death, and men are cursed to perdition. Yea, the deepest thinkers of the day have recognized that ethics and economics shall not be divorced, and where they are, there is trouble and there is mischief, Before coming away from home this morning I picked up, to look up one point, a treatise written in German by a Professor of a German University. It is called "The Handbook of Economics" and as I turned the pages I just happened to strike upon that one paragraph relating to the attitude of the successful man towards the men who tell him that morality and not money is involved in the social struggle. So Professor Gustave Cohn as early as 1881, was of this opinion. American writers too, might be quoted to prove to you, my critics, that this is no cranky notion of mine. But I shall not detain you with those proofs, Take any modern treatise on economics—unless it be on the old exploded theory of Adam Smith—and you will find that against the distribution of production, of selling men and buying men, are treated as paragraphs in the bible of ethics and religion.

Now, a few simple, plain ethical principles we must remember if from this present state of war and of distress shall come the higher type of social organization, no longer individualistic but cooperative under the plan of combination and mutual helpfulness. The first plain principle is that human life is more valuable than property. You yourselves are agreed to that. When, in the coal region, they beat a man to death you all shout for the militia. You speak of violence, brutality and murder. When they dynamite a railroad you

exclaim, “Help, Cassias! Help, Cassias, Ceasar is sinking.” “President of the United States, send one hundred thousand soldiers.” This railroad dynamiting endangers life. The man murdered has lost his life. Railroads are sometimes dynamited on Wall street, and no one ever shouts for the militia to come. They are dynamited as effectually as when dynamite is put under the arch of a bridge. We lose property then, and we know property is not as sacred as human life. We must apply that to our economic adjustments. What does that mean? That the standard of life must be high and must be maintained. It is not true that men can be sold as goods are; it is not true that demand and supply alone arrange the price of life, human life. The standard of life must be maintained. You have also agreed to that, my friends. You have—at least our nation has—for thirty years now without interruption acted upon the theory that cheap labor is not conducive to national welfare. It is the only excuse for our barbaric tariff. Cheap labor does not comport and is not compatible with American citizenship. You have excluded the Chinese. Why? With what right in the world have you done so? They cheapen labor! Adam Smith rise to protest. In your system, cheap labor is the very acme of financial and economic prosperity. But the American nation says “No.” Not the cheapest labor is basic to national prosperity.

No, you say the nation has also agreed that life is more valuable than property, and that the cheapest labor is not compatible with the highest dignity of American civilization. The standard of life must be maintained, and therefore no man has the right any longer to sell his labor at a price which lowers the standard of life. We must be socialized. As yet we have a brutal system of driving that home to us; as yet the bayonet and club—brutal and nasty ways—but as we apply ethics, brutality will give way to

conviction, and men will see that they are not in morals permitted to sell themselves; that they must have an eye to the conditions of their class—their social class. They must socialize themselves, for human life is more valuable than property.

And the third point: Property must be differentiated into various classes. Property is sacred. Misunderstand me not. God grant that for once I may be understood truthfully. Let the slanderer be struck dumb when he leaves this house if he says I have uttered word or syllable against the sanctity of property. Property is the tribute that nature pays to man as its king.

This kind of property, especially when the whole nation is dependent upon its use, is not private property in the sense in which my beautiful sermons are my private property. This kind of property belongs to all, and hence must be under a different plan of administration than what is the conventional, natural private property. Abuse of this property must not be tolerated, and non-use equally an infraction of the law. We shall get there. Have you watched the trend of public opinion the last few months? Newspapers that were capitalistic to the core—Adam Smith's worshippers—as never in England or in Europe, have turned completely, and not because they were afraid of the masses.

I know some men who breathe their thoughts and confidences into the ears of the American nation who are not cowards. They would not care for the masses or the asses. They are not moved by pelf or self. They have come to the conclusion that certain classes of property are not private property, and they have been advocating even violent measures to bring to society what is her own—the privilege to use what nature has produced and to pay him who applies the machinery a fair equivalent for his genius, for

the risk he has taken and for the capital he has invested. We shall get there twenty years from now; a plain ethical principle.

A fourth one, and with that I shall be done. You say that capital has responsibility; there is something on which society through court can fasten to compel compliance with the law, but you say that labor has no responsibilities. They have the same measure of responsibility.

How shall we arrange that? The State shall be the guardian and insist that as capitalistic combinations shall be incorporated so combination of labor shall be incorporated. That will give a guaranty of good faith. It will give something to hold on to; it will take away the subterfuge that you can make contracts with irresponsible parties.

Another thing, our labor leaders must learn the ethical value of responsibility. They must recognize that no longer can they insist upon the equality of men unless they also concede the liberty of men, which equality and liberty go hand in hand together in the French Creed, and if they abandon one they must abandon the other. The union shall guard the weakest without doing injustice to the strongest. And then when we have come that far we shall have social peace.

You say “compulsory arbitration;” a contradiction in terms. No friends, it is not at all. There is a procedure of compulsory arbitration. If you believe I owe you a dollar and I deny the debt; you hire a lawyer, who will charge you more than the dollar; he will take your case to the court, and the court sits in judgment. That is arbitration, compulsory arbitration, and I have to submit to the decision. If the court says I owe you a dollar, the court will see to it that you get the dollar. Once upon a time these transactions were individual, private privileges. Even murder was at one time an affair which the State did

not concern itself about. Men could compound felonies; they could compound murders. In Europe every transaction is under the eye of the state. It was as much of a revolution, when people were forced to arbitrate their debt accounts compulsorily, as it is today to arbitrate the difficulties between capital and labor under compulsory arbitration. We shall get there.

Now we have found a way that is almost legalized, thanks to that glorious man who is in the presidential chair of America. We have found an ethical way to arbitrate difficulties. That precedent will become gradually legalized, and we shall come out of the territory state. The torch before us is ethics. Neither union or trust is the ultimate, but marshalled conscience is. We have lost personality; we must bring it back.

I see another plan of organization. Hitherto our unions have been horizontal; we must get them vertical. They are now horizontal because only their own class is in the union. They should be vertical, and the employers would be in the union as well as the employees. That is the democratic plan of social organization, not my hallucination.

The Pennsylvania Railroad Company has applied that even now, and, if they would apply that in the coal district, we would not have strikes. If they would learn that human life is more valuable than property, we might have peace. If they would not try to have cheapest labor control the American system, we would have concord.

The transition period is upon us. Manchester economics have suffered bankruptcy. We are in the age of socialized activity. We shall proceed along those paths until at the final Sukkoth Day, again, thou and thy son and thy daughter, thy man servant and thy maid servant, the stranger within thy gates and the Levite, the widow and the orphan shall be brought together in a union not on the one hand of labor and on the other

of capital, but a union of labor and capital, and all men allowed the right of their humanity; the responsibilities of their manhood will have what we have lost, the joy of life.

When that Sukkoth day comes, which is not distant, the sword will be turned into the plowshare, and the lance will be turned into a pruning hook, and every man will sit under his own fig tree. Ah, says Isaiah, “The watchmen are blind; where they, like the watchdog, should bark, they are asleep.” Each man today runs his own race, wanting more, more and more; and others say, “Come, let us drink , let us have a good time. As it is today, so it will be tomorrow.”

But it will not be so tomorrow, unless the watchmen can bark and give the signal of danger, and their cry be heeded. Go on, ye Manchester idolaters. Go on in your stupendous blindness, for nothing will save you. Then tomorrow, good God offended! The heavens will be red, and the earth will be red, and as out of the struggle of the French Revolution, after a night of terrors came a purged, new generation. We shall have to pass through the valley of decision and drink from the bitter cup of Divine wrath in order to get what we might get of our own accord; the baptism of peace and the instruction of a social conscience telling us that no man lives for himself alone, and that no man can use life or property to the injury of his fellow men. Tomorrow will not be as it is today; it will be a night of horrors, and it will not be a dawn of peace. Come then, peace to all; be thou the Sukkoth of plenty and of joy for all men on earth. Teach us through the smallness of thy fruit of Esrog that not the large things are valuable but that by the small things men are judged and society is built. Come, Peace! Tarry not. Bless us; bless this land especially. Amen.

APPENDIX B: EISENDRATH—"Pulpit and Politics"

Maurice N. Eisendrath, "Pulpit and Politics" (January 13, 1935), in *The Never Failing Stream*, 130-145.

Ever since my ordination as a rabbi I have had dinned into my ears the solemn admonition that politics has no place in the pulpit and that the preacher, like the shoemaker, should "stick to his last". So frequently I have heard this sometimes friendly, but sometimes threatening counsel that I ought by this time to have developed a complete immunity to any further surprise at its repetition still today. And yet, I have been somewhat shocked of late to read even in the usually enlightened columns of one of our more sophisticated publications frequent acerbations concerning the fact, to quote in illustration just one example "that there has been a widespread tendency of ministers in the last two or three years to import into their religious teaching a quantity of somewhat hastily improvised economic dogma for which they have received no basis either in the theological structure of their historic Church or in the general educational process of their training for the ministry. That this tendency is contrary to the best interests of religion we have consistently maintained", continues this erudite and usually intelligent editor, much to the delectation, I am sure, of the influential elders and trustees of our more important churches and synagogues, for they too have "consistently maintained" that very thing. "Fortunately, however," this journalist rejoices, "there is much less fantastic theorizing about the social structure in the average pulpit today than there was a year ago; there is, we think, correspondingly more stress upon the duty of the individual church-goer to comport himself in his economic relations, as in other walks of life, in accordance with the Christian precepts—as against the doctrine that the Christian life is impossible under

capitalism and that the prime duty of a Christian is therefore to overthrow that type of economic organization."

It seems to me that in these words is crystallized that historic misconception of religion which has maintained from the time that similar editors tore up the manuscripts of Jeremiah down to the present hour, that misconception which alone prevents religion from becoming a vital and transforming force in our own lives and in the life of society as a whole. "This change for the better", continues the editor, "is probably due in part to the discovery that social and economic nostrums have no permanent drawing power in the pulpit—for Canadians do not take kindly to political actions urged upon them from the pulpit except when that action is directed to the legitimate defence of their religious freedom. Nor are they inclined—and this is important", our editor stresses, "to allow to their religious pastors anything much in the way of superior knowledge or wisdom when it comes to political action, so that the minister who engages, as a minister, in a cause which involves political action always in the long run impairs his own authority."

Which is sheer unadulterated nonsense even though it has been written by one of Canada's most brilliant journalists. But just because these words have been penned by so estimable and intelligent a gentleman, I feel it imperative to preach upon a theme that I thought became obsolete—well, at least two decades ago when quite in consonance with this editor's suggestion, the ministers and rabbis throughout the world sought to advise their "individual church-goers just how to comport themselves" in the trenches and upon the battle-front, in the submarine and in the aeroplane; just "how to comport themselves in accordance with their *religious* precept" of the universal Fatherhood of God and the all-inclusive Brotherhood of Man. Yes I thought, that this time-frazzled notion was

buried with its millions of pathetic victims in Flanders Field, to be resurrected perhaps by bigots and fanatics and the selfish apostles of vested interests, but quite irretrievably forgotten by the liberal and sophisticated leaders of our day. How bitter my disappointment to find this same old noxious doctrine revived once more. And because the case for the complete divorce of the pulpit from politics have never been more lucidly or logically stated that in this particular editorial, I shall take it as my text for this address, with abject apologies, of course, to an editor who will undoubtedly be gravely distressed by a preacher who would cull a text from a periodical rather than from the pages of the Scriptures to which his gaze ought to be exclusively riveted. Yes, indeed, it is to the Bible that the preacher should go, says not merely this particular editor, but likewise hosts of our best, and most prominent citizens, who sanctimoniously plead that we return to our Scriptures and to that "good old religion: which has such a steadying and salutary effect upon those who would upset things as they are.

The Communists have another word for it. They call it "the opiate of the people". And it is just such an opiate and sedative which many a church elder and synagogue trustee and otherwise excellent editors would seemingly prescribe. But they have all missed the essence and true purpose of religion and of that pulpit which would proclaim the living word of God.

What do they have in mind when they say that "social and economic nostrums have no permanent drawing power in the pulpit"? Surely that would rule out nine-tenths of the prophetic literature and at least as much of the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of Jesus. If ever there was "fantastic theorizing about the social structure", it was when Jesus affirmed that it were "as difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of

heaven as it were for a camel to pass through the needle's eye." Surely the humble rabbi of Nazareth, a mere stripling, let us remember, of barely thirty years, was far from possessing that "superior economic knowledge or political wisdom" which some would regard as the prerequisite for maintaining the minister's authority. And yet he had the temerity to prescribe the fundamental principles upon which he believed the entire economic system should be based. Surely none who knows aught of his Gospels needs to be reminded of that graphic parable of the labourers in the vineyard, although for the sake of those of my own co-religionists who have not yet developed a proper appreciation of the nobler portions of the New Testament, the story merits repetition even in its entirety:

"The kingdom of heaven", runs the parable, "is like a householder who went out early in the morning to seek labourers to work in his vineyard. And when he had made an agreement with the labourers for a shilling a day, he sent them into the vineyard. Then about nine o'clock he went out and saw others standing in the market place. To these also he said, 'You too go into the vineyard and whatever is right I will give to you.' So they went. Again about twelve and about three o'clock he went out and did the same. Then about five o'clock he saw others standing about. And he said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all day long?' They replied, 'Because no one has hired us.' So he said, 'You also go into the vineyard.' Now when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, 'Call the labourers and pay them their wages. Begin with the last and end with the first to go to work.' And when those came who had begun at five o'clock, they each received a shilling. And when the first came, they expected to receive more, but they also each received a shilling. And when they received it, they began to grumble against their employer saying, 'Those who came last have worked only one hour

and you have put them on the same wage as we who bore the burden and the scorching heat of day.' But he said" 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not make an agreement with me for one shilling? Take your money and go. It is my will to give this last comer just as much as you. Are you jealous because I am generous?'"

Equal pay for unequal labor! Is any economic doctrine seemingly so fantastic—at least from our contemporary point of view? And I have not the slightest doubt that in Jesus' day as well, the leading editors sternly warned the Nazarene that such "social and economic nostrums would have no permanent drawing power." But strangely enough they did, much to the wrath and anxiety of the big business men and religious elders of the time. More and more the masses followed him as they would follow any preacher today who would dare to preach so sublime and challenging a doctrine, for, as Reinhold Neibuhr has so logically pointed out, "for everyone that disavows his religion because some ancient dogma outrages his intelligence, scores become irreligious because the social impotence of religion outrages their conscience."

Would the pulpit, then which presume to speak in the name of Christianity, have no part in seeking "to overthrow that type of economic organization" which permits wealth to accrue from the mere possession of a scrap of paper and toilers to starve who labour from dawn to dusk to guarantee ever rising profits to the holders of gilt-edge securities; which witness the few storing up their grains and their goods, eating, drinking and making merry while the multitude sink ever nearer to utter destitution and premature death; which beholds in the orange groves of the West and in the cotton fields of the South, greedy landowners exploiting the gnawing hunger of helpless wives and children so that their husbands and fathers are constrained to underbid their fellow workers for the

hire of a day or an hour? The most cursory glance into the teachings of him whose name too many nominal Christians take in vain reveals how little reactionary financiers and scolding editors know of the true nature of their own religion, and how ridiculous it were to try to separate the pulpit from the political problems of our time.

And of course the same truth applies with even great cogency in Judaism. I have merely dwelt upon the teachings of Jesus because the general sentiment of our environment would confine the Christian minister to the simple gospel, little realizing that that very gospel is more revolutionary and freighted with more political dynamite than even the Soviets have as yet dare to introduce into their economic structure.

But surely anyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with our Hebrew past knows how specious is this oft-iterated suggestion that the rabbi must keep his pulpit free of politics. If Jewish tradition teaches us anything at all, it teaches us that religion must dominate the whole of life; that politics and economics must all be subject to its supreme and absolute command. No pious Jew of the past would have suggested that the rabbi should not mix in politics, because he knew that in Judaism politics and religion were one and indivisible, and that Israel's religious leaders, her prophets and seers and rabbis and saints, were her only politicians.

"Long indeed", as Stanley High in his excellent and challenging book on *The Church and Politics* puts it "is the list of Israel's religious politicians. It begins in the book of Exodus and runs through the books of all the prophets, wherein without exception religion and politics are inseparably allied. The God who had revealed himself to Moses and brought His people out of Egypt did not abandon them when they undertook to establish themselves in the Promised Land. It seldom occurred to anyone

that His divine leadership did not extend over the social-relationships and institutions of His people." In fact, as High so astutely points out, "such an idea arose only when someone, out of harmony with God's plan, desired to set *plans of his own* afoot."

And that is the sole reason for this contemporary plaint concerning the pulpit and politics, for it is only because some *has* other plans afoot; because someone profits from the *status quo*; it is only because someone fears that religion when it applies it so-called nostrums will radically upset the iniquitous order which he would have the pulpit smugly and suavely sustain; it is only because the few may indeed suffer because of the pulpit's espousal of the multitudes' historic rights—that sophisticates arise to repudiate the alleged "fantastic theorizing of the pulpit".

For is it not strange that scarcely anyone arises to fulminate against the political proclivities of the pulpit when it acts as a bulwark for the *status quo* and as a strong defence against all change? Who objects to the social and economic preachment of the Synagogue and Church as long as it ministers and rabbis tell their respective congregants to be content with their lot in this best of all possible worlds? Tell me, is the preacher possessed of superior knowledge when he is called upon to pray for the Government and to call down upon its laws and edicts the sanction of the divine, but abysmally ignorant when he hazards the suggestion that there is something rotten in the state of his own particular social order?

And who, as Stanley High further inquires, ever objected to our synagogues and churches going into politics in the year 1914, and dedicating every ounce of religious energy to the winning of the war? Then, even those Canadians who, we are told, "do not take kindly to political action urged upon them from the pulpit", would virtually have

ostracized any pastor who did not plunge into the political mêlée, who would have dared even to remain silent upon this momentous issue. Instead the clergy appeared in the most unexpected and extraordinary of places—on the stages of theaters, on political platforms, in cantonments, at gatherings of all sorts and description. And yet no one was alarmed; no one, expected perhaps a few mad pacifists, complained. Pulpits range with appeals for support of all manner of government measures and with vehement denunciation of the nation's foes. And no one cried out that the preachers were going beyond their sacred religious precincts.

But today when the ministers and the rabbi seek once again to enter the political arena and to advocate governmental policies that will prevent another such slaughter from sweeping down upon the earth, they are roundly condemned. Preachers, who were hailed as the welcome allies of statesmen when we were at war, are assailed as "political partisans" when, in times of peace, they would save their fellow-citizens at home from the ravages of an economic struggle in which the masses are doomed to bitter and galling defeat from the very start. But, may I assure you, preachers whose political co-operation was so welcome in the herculean tasks of battle are never again going to be intimidated from engaging in the divine crusade to salvage their society and to redeem their fellow-men from the sorrow and suffering of economic unrighteousness and inequity. They have now grown wise enough to realize that this whole inane propaganda to keep politics out of the pulpits resolves itself, upon closer inspection, into the simple question of whether "one has one's back slapped or one's toes stepped upon." If it is the former, then the preacher is permitted to discourse upon political issues to his heart's content. If, however, it is the latter; if the proprietor of the sweat shop or the distiller of liquor, or the clipper of

unlimited coupons sits in the front pew, then socialism and prohibition and income tax are political issues which are beyond the scope of the holy house of God. Such is the paradox which all this cry of keeping the pulpit clear of politics really is. *Hypocrisy* were perhaps an apter word than paradox, for how else can we designate this popular prohibition against the pulpit's espousal of political action, except at such times as that action is pleasing to those who pay the piper, or rather, I should say, pay the preacher; except when that action is directed, as our editor so generously grants, "to the legitimate defence of the church's religious freedom"?

But of what does religious freedom consist? Is it to be found only in the right of the Church to appoint its own bishops and priests and of the Synagogue to arrange its own liturgy and ritual? Or does religious freedom demand the ordering of life in such a way that the will of God, rather than the whim of man, shall rule our social and economic destiny?

For neither Christians nor Jews can comport themselves in accordance with their religious precepts as long as political and economic arrangements remain as they are today. Oh, to be sure, Christians can lustily sing hymns and Jews can scrupulously avoid eating ham, but they cannot very easily be Christians of the caliber of Jesus nor Jews of the character of Moses, for as Dr. Clayton Morrison, editor of *The Christian Century Magazine*, so irrefutably puts it, "Our secular society as it is now organized damns men's souls faster than religion can save them", or as that most distinguished scientist, Professor Whitehead stated it: "As society is now constituted, a literal adherence to the moral precepts scattered throughout the Scriptures would mean sudden death."

Surely if the essence of both Judaism and Christianity is to enable man to live more abundantly, then something more than pious platitudes will have to flow forth from synagogues and churches, with regard to our whole economic structure. Holy books and pulpit prayers are of little avail to help our youth, fresh from the colleges and universities and as yet unable to find a useful place in society's life—youths who may only find that place in the bread lines or walking the streets looking vainly for work. Unctuous incantations will hardly make possible happy marriages and beautiful homes when the spectre of poverty and insecurity compels lovers to find secret avenues of fulfilling their inborn and God-given desires for the joyous companionship which the world so callously denies them. Self-abnegation and walking humbly with God can bring little solace to one whose family, whose precious children starve because one has toiled arduously and long to produce such superabundance that the fruitage of one's labour must be destroyed before one's hungry eyes. And yet those who would bring the message of an Amos and a Jeremiah or a Jesus to these suffering multitudes are supposed merely to persuade them to comport themselves in accordance with their religious precepts and to remain mum, to utter not a single word of protest against an economic system that conspires to create such gross and blasphemous inequities It is to indulge in "political theorizing", to "impair one's spiritual authority", even to suggest that such a state of affairs is not divinely ordained, and to be, with devout resignation, borne.

But I say unto these glib rabbinic and ministerial counsellors, that if religion is to survive at all; if it would teach men to comport themselves in accordance with anything of any worth whatsoever, then it must storm the very citadels of political power and economic might with its spiritual preachment and moral protest until society be no longer

organized for the empoverishment of the many and the enrichment of the few. For it is utterly futile to suppose that the spiritual life can flourish in such an environment; to suppose that individual souls can be regenerated and society saved as long as the multitudes are forced to exist amid such insecurity and squalor as desecrate by fare the major portions of the earth. As Carlyle once asked: “If the lamp of the body has gone out, how shall the soul be lighted?” The saint, or the uniquely endowed individual, may find blessing in poverty and joy in deprivation. The average man, on the contrary, requires, and according to Judaism, most assuredly deserves at least the bare necessities, if not most of the comforts of life, ere his spirit can fulfill itself.

This does not mean that the pulpit should sponsor this or that political party, for there may be some elements that are good and some that are had in than all. The Church or the Synagogue dares not align itself with forces that may be but partly moral and partly immoral, partly ethical and partly expedient. But most assuredly the Church should speak out bravely and without equivocation upon those specific issues which at the moment may be before the people awaiting their intelligent decision and heroic action. And lest someone arises to remind us that pastors possess “no superior wisdom when it comes to political action”", then let us by all means admit the contention. There is no preacher who possesses infallible and divinely inspired knowledge of free trade or tariff barriers, of national banking or securities’ acts, of unemployment insurance or business codes. But he knows at least as much concerning the complicated matters as does the average legislator. The fact that a man has studied the intricacies of the law, or has risen to the top of his particular industry or trade, does not render him a surer guide through the tangled underbrush of economic problems than the minister or rabbi who devotes his every

leisure hour to a painstaking study of these very factors which are so seriously denying the values for which his pulpit stands.

But fundamentally this is not a matter of precise knowledge at all. Though ministers and rabbis might conceivably err in their judgment on those intricate affairs, they are not likely to make any mistake in their *ethical* and *moral* evaluation, and it is from this standpoint that the pulpit has not merely the right but the duty to condemn any economic system, yes, even the presumably divinely ordained capitalism, if it rails to work for the happiness of its millions of poverty-stricken and downtrodden denizens. So long have Church and Synagogue basked in the sunshine of this very capitalism and enjoyed the patronage of the State; so long has religion been "a kind of house-pet in the courts of power and in the palaces of princes, in the directors' rooms of big business, in the cabinets of statesmen and in the counting-houses of bourgeois merchants"; so long has it thus abjectly served rather than imperiously commanded selfish finance and political power, that nothing short of a moral revolution is required to disentangle it from the public idolatry by which it has been too long profaned.

And to achieve such a moral revolution *not less* must religion have to say about politics and public life, but *more, infinitely more.* No longer can it be limited to a solemn Sunday service with the weekdays left quite scrupulously beyond its sway. No longer dare its political activity be limited to the blessing of battle and the blasting of booze, but every policy of State it must carefully scrutinize by the light of its ethical ideals. Church and Synagogue must enter heroically the lists of politics and swing their support to those who all through the storm of contumely and abuse have carried high that banner upon which there have been inscribed these challenging policies: a more equitable distribution

of wealth, a diminution of the long and drudging hours of toil, a living wage for all, security in illness and old-age, an end to all alms and a beginning of justice to all. This is the political platform upon which religion must too stand to which it must openly and officially give its blessings. But it dare not give it only when those who advance this creed are “respectable”, as it were, and “safe”. Rather to those tried and tested in the battel for human rights, to those who have been outcast and scorned for their fealty to these flaming truths, to those alone must the pulpit grant its most vigorous support. And today especially as our distraught generation stands at the crossroads, not knowing for certain which way to turn; as Dictatorship of the Right or of the Left may each entreat us to follow its siren-like lure, the pulpit dare not be recreant to its sacred duty, but must fearlessly help the multitudes to choose the moral pathway of God.

To this task as, during the days immediately ahead, the issues become more clear and the time for decision draws nigh, the pulpit must tum and seek to guide mankind along the road that leads, not to the aggrandizement of the few nor even to the prosperity of our own people alone, but to the enrichment of all humanity, and the fulfilment of our common religious ideals. For in conclusion, may I say quite frankly to those within our own fold who would use the Synagogue as an escape from life, as an anaesthetic chamber wherein to hill their social conscience to sleep, to them would I say that either this pulpit is right in mixing even in the very dregs of the political life, seeking to purge it of its filth, to purify and to ennoble it, to lead it to loftier programmes and pursuits; either it is right in so doing or the whole of Judaism is a woeful error and the prophets of our past were insidious deceivers. For one cannot call himself after the name of Moses or Amos or

Jeremiah and fail, even through political action, to battle for the rights of man and for the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness on earth. Hath not the poet truly chanted:

> “To worship rightly, is to love each other;
> Each smile, a hymn; each kindly deed, a prayer.
> Follow, with reverent step, the great example
> Of them whose holy work was “doing good”,
> So shall the wide earth seem our Father's temple,
> Each loving life, a psalm of gratitude.

APPENDIX C: WISE—"The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets"

Stephen S. Wise, "The Social Message of the Hebrew Prophets," in *Free Synagogue Pulpit*, vol. 2 (New York: Bloch Publish Company, 1910), 25-42.

The most important contribution of Israel to social teaching was the life of the Hebrew prophets. The lives of these tribunes of the people,—quoting Renan's fine phrase,—this earliest and mightiest of the world's groups of furtherers of social well-being, are Israel's contribution to the social message. "The Law and the Prophets" alike ever dealt with loftiest wisdom with the problem of social need and equity. Each of the prophets emphasized some aspect of social wrong and injustice, and made some decisive contribution to the elucidation of the social ideal,—Amos, for example, crying out against fraud and heedless hurt to the poor, and Isaiah laying bare in unforgettable words "the essential deadliness of land monopoly." A recent recital of Israel's chief gifts to the world by a distinguished biblical scholar included the belief in a realizable ideal, the sense of social justice, the passion for humanity, and faith in the coming of the Messianic day of man. All these are of the essence of Hebrew prophetic faith and teaching. The perennial value of the teaching of the prophets is pointed out by George Adam Smith, who reminds us that they not only aroused their own age to consciousness of sin and to deep penitence, but also every succeeding age to which, as to the age of Savanarola, their words were brought home with power and directness.

It is well for us to bear in mind the conditions under which the social message of the prophets was uttered. The prophetic discourses were not spoken to women's clubs, nor in the hope of shaking the imperturbable self-complacency of ministerial meetings. The message of the prophets was spoken by men and to men, and, when it

was necessary, was hurled and thundered at men. The Hebrew prophets proved that their warrant came straight from God by what they demanded of man and for man. The prophets spoke to their age, and therefore they speak to the ages. They addressed themselves not only to the common people, but to the mighty of the earth, kings, princes, noblemen. They not only pronounced abstract and unrelated principles, but applied these timeless principles to the problems of their times. It is a blunder to contrast Jesus with the Hebrew prophets in respect of the application of principles, for Jesus went to the length of applying the lash, not only laying down abstract principles, but laying on the very concrete scourge.

The message of the Hebrew prophets, true to the genius of the faith which begot them and which they in turn regenerated, was pre-eminently social, Because It was social it has lived for nearly three thousand years, and it will survive until it shall have wrought itself into the life of the ages. This was not the only message of the prophets, but their most memorable utterances were those conscience-cries, the echoes of which still lay bare our social iniquities. These conscience-cries move Renan to apostrophize his age: "Go back to the sources of Christianity; take up the words of the inspired socialists, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah; put them into the mouths of your priests; be a revolutionary in the spirit of these Anavim, and you will make the church again the guide and controller of human society, while curing Europe of its moral and social diseases."

The social message of the Hebrew prophets profoundly affected the life, and may be said to have been reaffirmed by the teaching, of Jesus of Nazareth. In their implicit social insistence, the doctrines of Jesus were of a piece with the utterances of the earlier

prophets whom he constantly cites. Better, far better for Christianity, if the social message of the prophets, the influence of which is clearly traceable in the words of Jesus, had remained the dominant element in the scheme of Christian doctrine! As long as Christianity remained the religion of Jesus, it had, in the words of Leslie Stephen, "An uncomfortable dash of socialism in its early stages, but has now become an excellent bulwark to the rights of property." As *long* as Christianity remained the social gospel of Jesus, the Jewish prophet, it took men captive. But when it had been Hellenized and Romanized and Paganized into the abatement, if not abandonment, of the social emphases of Judean prophetism, it was captured by the world.

If it be true that a handful of men who misunderstood Jesus crucified his body, it is truer still that his followers have crucified the body,—and the soul,—of his teachings for nearly two thousand years. The early Jesusism brought its disciples to martyrdom. But after the later practice of the communion of the good had succeeded to the earlier principle of community in goods, the daring aspirations of the victims of the catacombs were displaced by the ambitious spires of cathedrals. This is the conviction of true teachers of Christianity in our own day; such as Gladden, who declares that Jesus failed and was crucified, first his body by his enemies and then his spirit by his friends. The same thought underlies the word of that discerning critic of the church, R. J. Campbell: "Christianity was conquered by becoming respectable. It did indeed mount the throne of the Caesars, but only to replace secular by ecclesiastical tyranny."

The message of the prophets was social because, as we have said, Israel's was a social ideal. Judaism was ever a social religion, regulator of social living, a

religion that primarily endeavored to guide and direct the life of men, of man as a social being, of man in every human relation. Ezekiel and the Isaiah of the exile corrected the tendency of Judaism to be exclusively a religion of men rather than of man by their splendid emphasis on the need of perfecting relations between God and the individual, by their appeals to the individual to fix upon himself the blame for the unhappy trials of his people, to find within his own purified heart a source of regenerative peace.

Solemnly do I protest against the injustice of teaching, as is constantly taught by overzealous partisans; "In truth, we cannot understand Christianity at all, until we see it in operation in society. One man alone cannot give an idea of what it is. As some one has said, one man and God will give us all that is essential to any other religion, but Christianity requires for its operation at least two men and God." It is to the implication of this utterance that every self-respecting Jew must vigorously object. What of the religion of Israel? Can one man and God give us all that is essential to it? If so be, Jesus was woefully mistaken. For when he was asked to define the essence of Judaism,—that is to give the most commandments of the Law,—he referred to those two heavenly utterances recorded in the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, which urged man's love of God and man's love of man.

So that Judaism, quite as much as Christianity, requires for its operation at least two men and God, if the testimony of the Old Testament, as borne out by the citations in the New, is to be accepted. We may be moved to agree with the interpreter of the Hebrew prophets: "the great thing is to be sure of our individual relation to God." But, it may be asked, need there be any conflict between man's

certitude of right relation to God and his furtherance of the social ideal. How can a man be sure of the rightness of his relation to God unless he have succeeded in achieving right relations to man? The relation of the individual to God can best be tested by his relation to his fellows. Without being disposed to quibble touching this, one is tempted to observe in passing that in one sense it is true that God and one man would give us all that is essential in Judaism,—God and man, not one man but the oneness of man. Even as we look forward to the advent of the Messiah not in the coming of one man but in the becoming one of all men, not through the death of one for all but through the life of all for one another.

Relevant to our contention that Judaism's most distinctive contribution was to the social ideal, we note, following the precedent of the Rabbis, that seven of the ten commandments are social in character and outreaching, including the Sabbath injunction and the commandment to hallow and maintain inviolate the family relation. To have established the family as the cellular or organic unit was in itself no inconsiderable contribution on the part of Israel to the social ideal. Again, history records no finer attempt to ensure that balance which we know under the name of social equity than the Mosaic inauguration of the Sabbath or weekly rest-day. What though the Sabbath-enactment of Israel was phrased in the text of ancient myth, its purpose was made unmistakably clear in the verse which prescribed rest for the servant and the cattle. Granted that Judea borrowed the Sabbath conception from Babylonia, Israel's "marvelous power of transfiguration in the act of imitation" was herein illustrated at its highest. The Sabbath, which Emerson surprisingly counts as one of Christendom's gifts to the world, the Sabbath of Israel was an institution antipodally

removed from the Babylonian *dies nefas* upon the model of which we are urged to believe that it was founded. The Jewish Sabbath was to be a day of rest for all, and, in the universality of its provisions for rest, alike for master and man, it forecasted the higher and more equitable relation of fraternity which must needs ultimately supplant the earlier and lower magisterial relation.

Parenthetically it may be observed that nothing could be more tragic for Israel than that the insistence upon the letter of the seventh-day Sabbath by Israel should result in the actual Sabbathlessness of the Sabbath-giving Jew. Two injustices must be averted. The State must not compel the Jew to do violence to his convictions in working on his Sabbath-day by reason of its Sabbath-laws, save when such inhibition is imperative and inevitable. On the other hand, the Jew must not drift into the physical and moral suicide of Sabbathlessness under the pressure of temptation to utilize every opportunity for economic advantage. Bearing upon Israel's notable provisions for the social weal, a recent writer pictures the striking contrast between the jubilee of the Mosaic law which re-distributed land and other properties and the Queen's Jubilee,—a day's rest, gilt carriages, and a going back to shop and factory on the day after with a headache.

Reverting for another moment to the claim that Christianity alone requires God and two men for its operation, what, it may be asked, of the attitude of the Jew alike in theory and in practice to the poor. For this constitutes a very significant test of the reality of Israel's contribution to the social ideal. For one thing, the most humane and merciful laws governed the conduct of the Jew toward his poorer, weaker brother, at a time when the wisest in a neighboring civilization were seriously

mooting the plan of eliminating the unfit. Poor-law and poor-house abuses did not and could not arise among a people, who viewed the poor man not as a necessary evil but as one to be dealt with considerately and compassionately. And this benignant treatment of the poor in Israel was in inevitable fulfillment of the law which bade relief "that thy brother may live with thee."

The two very grave evils, which menace present-day philanthropy, were averted by Israel with memorable wisdom, and, it may be added, with enlightened statemanship. The pauperization of the poor was impossible among a people, who like Israel regarded the instincts of charity as in fulfillment of the dictates of justice. And the prescribed methods of help in ancient Israel were in keeping with the exalted spirit, which could barely differentiate charity from justice, which truly divined that philanthropy could obtain only among the potentially equal. Thus the enfeebling dole was not needed in a land, which permitted the poor to glean in the fields and thus assured opportunity for self-respect and self-help.

But the most significant contribution of Israel to the social ideal was the implicit faith that poverty is not ineluctable, that there need not for all time be a fixed poor class amid the population. Again and again it has been pointed out by impartial students of the ancient Hebrew polity that, while the utmost humaneness is prescribed in all relations between those who have and those who have not, none the less the Mosaic legislation "does not seem to contemplate any settled class of poor in the land but only such as are reduced by loss or accident to sudden impoverishment…so that in point of fact, no pauper class existed or could exist

among the Israelites. A 'submerged tenth' was not possible in the land of promise."

Assuming for a moment the correctness of the current interpretation of the verse in Deuteronomy, "For the poor shall not cease out of the land," still it is not implied, that there need be any considerable class of poor, any permanently and incurably poor majority or even minority of the population. But, the question may be put, is the verse of Deuteronomy to be interpreted as a blandly uncomplaining prophecy of ceaseless, cureless poverty, which were tantamount to the admission of the permanent reign of evil and wrong in the world. May we not place the emphasis somewhat differently,—reading: "Even though the poor should not cease from the land, still would I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open wide thy hand to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy within thy land." And this interpretation is borne out in some part by the third verse of the same chapter, which reads: "save when there shall be no poor among you," and considers the absence of poverty the sign of divine favor; witness the remainder of the verse: "for the Lord will greatly bless thee in the land."

Granted, however, that the word ascribed to Moses: "For the poor shall not cease from the land," is prophecy rather than protest, there is a faith which is impiety even as there is an unfaith which is piety. Better the minor heresy of unbelief in the word of Moses, for the poor shall not cease from the land, than the major heresy of belief in the curelessness of poverty and social injustice. Even as it were far less heretical for the Christian to proclaim, in the despite of the word of Jesus, that we shall *not* always have the poor with us, than nervelessly and hopelessly

to assent to the fatal doctrine that poverty shall never cease from the earth, that the injustice of poverty is forever ineradicable. This summary of the principles and practices of the Jew touching poverty suffices to show how fair is the claim that no religion save Christianity requires more than God and one man for its operation.

A cardinal principle of the religion of Israel was the truth,—far from having become axiomatic even after twenty-five centuries,—man is more than property. This principle, though implicit and not clearly outspoken, was in crass contrast to the Roman obsession that property is more than man. This teaching was reasserted with vigor by the prophets: "I will make man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." It is tempting to dwell here for a moment, because it is constantly dinned into our ears that Rome gave us the arts of law and government even as Greece gave us art and science. The Judean law was based upon a great and overshadowing event,—the emancipation of a people from political and industrial bondage. Whether or not the exodus be historical in all its details, there is no denying the historicity of the idealism of the legislation which it inspired. The codes of Justinian, "that detestable book," says Heine, "which may be called the bible of the devil,—I mean the codex of the Roman civil law, which unfortunately still holds away," rested on no such inspiring event. For, whereas the code of Moses befitted a people who took their national rise in a wondrous deliverance, the background of the legislation of contemporary and much later Rome was such fixed social difference and inequality as wrought the impoverishment, degradation and enslavement of the many, and the enrichment and sovereignty of the few.

An English teacher is moved to write the following tribute to the personality-safeguarding character of the Mosaic Theocracy. "The exodus from Egypt is a world-epic, to which history is perpetually adding fresh illustrations of the truth it teaches: eternal justice, implacable to the oppressor, refusing to let him go until he has paid the uttermost farthing. The same conviction must result from the consideration of certain peculiar provisions of the Mosaic law. The land could not be made private property. It belonged to God, the families of Israel being His tenants. No creditor could finally take it from them, nor could any family sink through accumulated debt. The blast of trumpets that heralded the year of jubilee proclaimed universal liberty. No insolvent or slave-classes could come into permanence as long as this law was observed. A slave had not even to wait until the jubilee, every seventh year being a year of freedom. Even when the people fall under a King, he does not call them subjects but brethren. And the equality of every Israelite before God is strikingly shown on the Day of Atonement. No democracy, ancient or modern, has ever so safeguarded the principles of national solidarity and the sacred character of the human personality, as did the Hebrew theocracy."

No contribution of the prophets to the social ideal could be more significant, though not immediately relevant, than their insistence upon the this-worldly character of the faith of Israel, as opposed to the other-worldly quietism of other faiths. In a posthumous work on "Labor and Neighbor," Ernest Crosby says: "Moses evidently saw the evil effects of turning the minds of men away from this world, and in the books ascribed to him we find no hint of a world to come. It was evidently his opinion that true religion concentrates itself on the present; and that

to do right and be right now is the best security for being right forever. At any rate, the ten commandments deal exclusively with this world." This emphasis led Leroy-Beaulieu to allude in playful irony to the dispersed remnants of Judah as "visionary adepts in Messianic humanitarianism." This union of Messianic hope with a persistent humanitarian ideal saved the prophetic teachers from the other-worldliness with its blighting effect upon human effort, which reached its classic culmination in certain faiths and peoples of the East. Borrowing for a moment an alien term, they strove after the Kingdom of God in heaven, but they were not willing to let the devil have unchallenged sway over the earth. It was the native this-worldliness of Israel, re-emphasized in the meliorist teachings of the prophets, that leads a discerning historian of our race to point jestingly to "the bourgeois ideal of the Jewish people, their material ideal…it does not lose itself in the clouds of the azure heavens; its object is this earth and its realities; its aim is the establishment of peace and the diffusion of happiness among men…and the time will come when every man shall be able to sit peacefully in the shadow of his vine and his olive-tree."

Let us not affect to be ashamed of this ancient ideal of Israel, which is becoming the ideal of the millions in every land, the social basis of whose religious ideals has alienated them from the churches of the world. This so-called bourgeois ideal may not be an all-inclusive ideal but it is a fundamental ideal. I would not go so far as to maintain with a recent Anglo-Jewish writer that "life and happiness are the real essence of Judaism," but I am not unprepared to admit that "those social and humanitarian laws, which aim at social justice, we can call the kernel, the essence of Judaism."

The so-called bourgeois ideal, which the prophet; did most to make central to the thought and aspiration of Israel, rested upon the recognition by Israel from earliest times of the economic basis of human welfare. Such recognition represented a gain of farthest-reaching significance,—comparable in truth to the service rendered to the race, when Israel first declared the unity of God and proclaimed the moral sovereignty of the universe. Back of this recognition, which was a spiritual achievement of the highest order, lay the implication that human welfare is always desirable though not always attainable, and that human welfare is not ordinarily a thing apart from human well-being. Israel clearly understood that a man's highest welfare may sometimes be coincident with earthly woe and wretchedness, but, in general Israel by her prophets affirms the thesis that no scheme of human existence ought to be drawn up, and, if drawn up, is in accordance with the will of God, unless it secure the elements of earthly well-being to all men who toil or are willing to toil, and to all who are unable to toil,—a position nominally but not actually repudiated by the other-worldliness of Christianity. Is that bourgeois ideal of Israel to be lightly esteemed, which would assure to man the economic basis of existence and thus enable him to make for that higher life, which cannot permanently be attained without such guarantees?

Sometimes it is urged by those who wish to minimize the social element in Christianity that Jesus' teaching was antithetic to that of the prophets. And these cite his word to Pilate: My kingdom is not of this world. Whatever the construction placed upon these words, they constitute a solemn warning to men, whose hearts are set upon the things of this world. But it is inconceivable that in saying, My kingdom is not of this world, Jesus wished all men to resign themselves uncomplainingly to the scheme

which decreed the enrichment and exaltation of the few, the impoverishment and abasement of the many,—the multitudes in dire want and a limited number the possessors of the earth and the fullness thereof.

Dr. Campbell, author of "Christianity and the Social Order," appears to be nearer to the mind of Jesus the Jew in holding: "The other-worldism of commonplace Christianity to-day has no place whatever in the pages of the New Testament. The Kingdom of God as Jesus understood it could never have been anything less than a universal brotherhood, a social order in which every individual unit would find his highest happiness in being and doing the utmost for the whole…To Jesus as to John the Kingdom of God was a commonwealth of social justice and brotherhood. It is one of the great contradictions of history that the religion which started as the promise of universal brotherhood should have come to be the chief bulwark of authority and the foe of liberty. The transition was perfectly simple. All that had to be done was to transfer the expectation of communal happiness from this world to the next, and the thing was done. Henceforth the advice to the poor and oppressed would be that they should remain passive under existing injustice, in order that they might receive compensation in heaven. A greater travesty of the original meaning and purpose of the religion of Jesus could not well be imagined."

The so-called Christian powers of the world might well consider the possibility that Jesus meant his kingdom to be one without police and soldiery, a kingdom resting on the one maxim of love and gentleness, and not on a myriad Maxims of force and violence. That Jesus, following the high example of the earlier masters in Israel, should have sought to belittle riches, power, rule, in themselves, is a

rightful inference from his utterance, but that this Hebrew of the Hebrews wished to move men to rest content under the injustice anti oppression of the world in the hope of compensating abundance and bliss in the world to come is borne out neither by the letter nor the spirit of his teachings. And this would signify that Jesus was indifferent to the fate of the poor, and unconcerned with the problem of poverty and the suffering which it entailed, that he cared not what hells of wrong and oppression men perforce endured in this world, as long as they delivered their souls from the snares of eternal hell. But if this be a valid interpretation of his thought, how explain his ministry of pity for the poor and his seeming aim to lessen if not remedy the sorrow and suffering of men due to those social maladjustments which then as now caused poverty and its woes?

The regrettable recoil of Christendom, if so it may be called, from the bourgeois ideal of Israel's prophets, gave rise to two momentous developments,—on the one hand, to the monasticism which was to be of no direct value to the life of the world, for it did not teach men how to live. Simon Stylites' example was not immediately helpful to his contemporaries who lived at the foot of the pillar. Again, the mistaken distortion of the teaching of Jesus into opposition to Israel's bourgeois ideal resulted in one of the fundamental teachings of Christendom,—there are those who would call it the blight of Christianity,—the notion that evils and hard-ships in this life should not alone be endured but even invited in the expectation of recompense and redress in the next. This notion of the millions, needless to say, men of possessions and place and power have found it desirable sedulously to cultivate. The bourgeois ideal was cast aside, and for it was substituted the opiate,

which soothes the starving to-day by picturing the overloaded banquet table of the morrow, the opiate which deluded men into the faith that to starve the body is to enrich the soul. This nominal ideal of Christendom, ever honored in the breach save by the lowly, was phrased by Schiller:

"Duldet muthig, Millionen,
Duldet fuer die bess're Welt."

Bravely to endure is ever well but not for the sake of a better life to come. Bravely one ought ever to endure but never without striving to better things. From this danger Judaism was saved by the prophetic insistence that every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree.

In proof of the significance of Israel's contribution to the social message one need but note how many social reformers of our own day point to the Mosaic commonwealth and its legislation either as the source or the Justification of their own proposals. These do not assent for the most part to the divine character of such legislation, nor do they wish to utilize the reverence felt therefor. But they revert to the ancient, withal intensely modern model of the Mosaic commonwealth, because it retains the germ and more of many of the theories of social advance propounded in our own day.

As disciples of the prophets, it remains for the sons and daughters of Israel to-day to hold up without fear or flinching the ancient and unaging, because, alas, untried, ideals of social justice. The Jew ought to be one of the captains in the armies now waging peaceful war on behalf of social equity and social righteousness. And he has been, and is in the lead! It is heartening to the Jew to recall that the modern leadership of the socialist movement rested with two sons of Israel, truant to the fellowship but loyal to the larger faith of Israel, which above all bids us pursue justice. Whatever our belief touching the

economic validity of socialism, it is inspiring to recall that millions have been awakened to a new hope and a new idealism by the summons of two sons of Israel. Again, Israel's potential leadership of the cause of social progress is attested by the circumstance that it was the monumental work of another Jew, Jean de Bloch, which led the Czar to convene the Hague Conference in the cause of international peace through justice.

An historian of Israel maintains that not the least of the wrongs inflicted upon Israel was that the Jews, the world's proclaimers of idealism, who once preached to the world the Kingdom of God, have been turned into the most matter-of-fact and earthly-minded of races by unennobling persecution. And yet ours is the daring hope that Israel, whose historic starting-point was a great emancipation, may yet again be "smitten with the great vision of social righteousness," and with the wisdom of statesmanship and the courage of faith speak the word of deliverance unto the children of men in the social-industrial crisis of our own age. A people, the genius of whose divine leading first commanded the enslaving powers: "Let my people go that they may serve me," shall not claim surcease from service and strife until the work of righteousness be peace.

We face the peril of forgetting one and not the lesser phase of the Jewish task, the establishment of a "social system which is to be a model to the nations and to contain the maximum of social justice." A non-Jewish writer on the purpose of the Jew in history forecasts Israel's task in the words: "The Jew has had burnt into his very soul a regard for the rights of others, and a sympathy with the oppressed which makes him especially fit for the practical part of his divine work." Judaism

may have no concrete solution to offer of the mighty problems which face our age, but this we know,—if the social ideal of the Hebrew prophets were regnant in our present-day civilization, injustice and inequity would cease to be and the requirement of the Lord, which is justice, would become the voluntary bond between man and man.

Such was the social message of Israel, which found clearest expression in the teaching of her prophets. The message of the prophets in every age must be social. If the message of social living be needed in every age, our own is in direst need of a word that shall restore peace to the discordant and warring elements of our so-called civilization.

"Still at the prophets' feet the nations sit."

I sometimes fear that we ought in truth read the line of the poet differently;—at the prophets' feet the nations sit still. Let not the nations still sit nor yet sit still at the prophets' feet, but arise and follow in their footsteps, not standing where they stood but journeying on toward the goal whither they directed their steps. The privileged burden of Israel is to fulfill the injunction which the prophet laid not upon one son of Israel but upon the heart of Israel, the suffering priest-servant of humanity: he shall bring forth justice according to truth: he shall not fail nor be abashed till he have set justice upon the earth. Then shall justice flow like waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.