

Testimony

A Pamphlet from Pax Christi San Antonio

Anticipating September 15, 2019

Pax Christi San Antonio does not solicit donations. Thoughtful comments, however, may be sent to the editor at j6anthonyblasi@yahoo.com, with the understanding that permission to publish them is implied. Pax Christi International was founded in 1945 with the encouragement of Bishop Pierre Marie Théas of Montauban, France, by Marthe Dortel Claudot, as a Christian lay organization dedicated to preventing a repetition of the savagery of the twentieth century's world wars.

Editorial

After the calendar, the Liturgical Reading reflections are based on readings for the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time. Tom Keene's poem is *The Bastard Messiah*. For more of Tom's poems, see <http://www.tomkeeneandthemuse.com/index.php>.

Following the poem is an essay by Paul Hanly Furfey, "A Divine Lesson in Social Justice." Furfey (1896-1992) was a priest and scholarly polymath who helped organize three settlement houses in Washington, D.C. both as social reform agencies grounded in a radical Catholicism and research sites for the sociology department of the Catholic University of America, which he chaired. He had extensive formal education in Hebrew, psychology, social work, sociology, and medicine. I had the pleasure of meeting him once in Washington—I do not recall exactly when. I do remember that he was a legendary figure, and very elderly; and he sat down near the doorway of a hotel meeting room next to me even though he was the guest of honor at an event celebrating his career and social and religious impact. His voice was barely above a whisper, but it seemed to be heard to great effect. At present at its annual meeting, the Association for the Sociology of Religion funds an annual lecture named after him. The essay was first published in 1928; a few of the historical statements would be revised if it were written today.

Calendar

In Austin

Sunday September 15 (3rd Sunday of the month), 7:00pm, Pax Christi Austin meeting. Fr. Payne House, St. Ignatius Church, 126 Oltorf St.

Tuesday September 24, 6:00pm, screening of *Documented*: journalist Jose Antonio Vargas's development as an activist for immigrant rights. Carter Auditorium, St. Edward's University, 3001 S. Congress. Contact: Jennifer Ansier, jennj@stedwards.edu.

Thursday October 10, 7:00pm-8:30pm, author Jose Antonio Vargas on human rights of immigrants. Recreation and Convocation Center, St. Edward's University, 3001 S.

Congress. Free; register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/jose-antonio-vargas-freshman-seminar-speaker-tickets-65683054785#tickets>.

In Dallas

Monday September 9, Reception 6:30pm, program 7:00pm-8:30pm, Faiths in Conversation: What Is Religion. This is the first of a series. The Dallas Institute, 2719 South St. Students free; price varies for others \$10-20 per session, \$40-80 per semester. Information and tickets: dallasinstitute.org/faith-in-conversation/

Tuesday September 10, 6:00pm-8:00pm, Language, Violence, and Activism: A conversation about Mexico Today. Yasnaya Elena Aguilar and John Gibler. On indigenous population rights and activists' efforts. McCord Auditorium (Dallas Hall) Southern Methodist University.

Saturday September 14, 8:00am-4:00pm, conference, "Compassion in Action: Applications in Today's Times." For information see <https://compassionconference2019.simpletix.com/SimpleTixExpress/Events/EventsSectionDetail.aspx?Showid=41594&EventTimeld=10124#ShowDetails>. First United Methodist Church, 503 N. Central Expressway, Richardson, TX 75180. \$55.00 to \$65.00.

Saturday September 14, 8:30am-after 3:00pm, The Open Window, a conference on priestly ordination of women in the Catholic Church. Featured speakers: Gretchen Klotten Minney, author of *Called—Women Hear the Voice of the Divine*, and Rev. Patricia Sandall. White Rock United Methodist Church, 1450 Old Gate Lane. Pre-registration \$35.00; check made out to The Open Window should be mailed to Joan Dolan, 3732 Townsend, Dallas, TX 75229-3722, along with name and contact information. Walk-ins \$40.00. Lunch included in the conference fee.

Sunday September 15, anti-Defamation League Walk Against Hate at Victory Plaza In Dallas. See <https://support.adl.org/team/246032>.

Friday September 20, 11:00am, to **Saturday September 21**, 5:00pm, conference: The Art of Resilience—Latinx Public Witness in Troubled Times. Speakers include Fernando Segovia (Vanderbilt Divinity School), Daisy Machado (Union Theological Seminary), Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (Duke University). Free; registration required, at door or online up to September 13 at smu.edu/artofresilience. Multiple locations in Meadows School of the Arts and Perkins School of Theology. Information: <https://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/LatinoCenter/Events/The-Art-of-Resilience>

Monday October 14, Reception 6:30pm, program 7:00pm-8:30pm, Faiths in Conversation: The Role of Intellect from the Major Faith Perspectives. This is the second of a series. Students free; price varies for others \$10-20 per session. Information, location, and tickets: dallasinstitute.org/faith-in-conversation/

In El Paso

Fridays, 12:00pm-1:00pm, Pax Christi El Paso joins Border Peace Presence in front of the Federal Courthouse (corner of Campbell and San Antonio).

Texas execution dates: September 10 and 25, unless stays are granted. Vigils, 12:00pm-1:00pm, in front of the El Paso County Courthouse.

Sunday September 15, 2:30-4:00pm, Follow the Money: Campaign Finance in El Paso, Kathleen Staudt (University of Texas El Paso) and Rosemary Neil (retired from El Paso County). Maud Sullivan Gallery, El Paso Public Library Downtown, 501 N. Oregon

Friday September 27, 7:00pm, film: *The Sultan and the Saint*, about the meeting of Sultan Malik al Kamil and Saint Francis of Assisi. Following the viewing, panel discussion moderated by Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. Of Lexington, Kentucky, bishop-president of Pax Christi USA.

In Houston

Friday September 13, 12:00pm-1:00pm, “Antisemitism and Hate Speech in Germany Today—What Can We Do?” Eric Hilgendorf (Law, Julius-Maximilians-Universitat). Rayzor Hall 119, Rice University. Information: jewishstdies@rice.edu. Register: https://events.rice.edu/#!/view/event/date/20190913/event_id/58945

Sundays September 22 and 29, Bruce Yeager, “The Jail and Torches that Never Were: Debunking the Scopes-Trial Myth (Background to the Trial). St. Philip Presbyterian Church, room 201, 4807 San Felipe. Information: mmcgm63@gmail.com.

Tuesday September 24, 6:30pm-8:00pm, Secularity and Science: What Scientists Around the World Really Think About Religion. Elaine Howard Ecklund (Rice University) and John H. Evans (University of California, San Diego). Info: Hayley Hemstreet hjh2@rice.edu, 713-348-3974.

Friday September 27, 2:00pm-4:00pm, panel discussion, “Art in the Space of Social and Political Advocacy,” followed by address by Patrisse Marie Cullors. Student Center Theatre, University of Houston, 4455 University Drive. Park in Welcome Center Garage.

Friday September 27, 6:00pm-7:00pm, An Evening with Social Activist and Best-selling Author Patrisse Marie Cullors. Student Center Theatre, University of Houston, 4455 University Drive. Park in Welcome Center Garage. RSVP: <https://www.eventbrite.com/signin/?referrer=%2Fpreview%3F%3D66492162849>

Saturday September 28, 3:00pm, and **Sunday September 29**, 9:30am, film: “Out of Order,” documentary on struggles of LGBTQ clergy. St. Philip Presbyterian Church, 4807 San Felipe. Information: tolerance@rice.edu.

Sunday October 6, 9:45am, "Calvin, the Valois Dynasty, and the French wars of Religion," John H. Zammito (Rice University). St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

Sunday October 13, 9:45am, "The Second Vatican Council and Ecumenical Efforts Towards Dialogue" Garland Pohl. St. Philip Presbyterian Church 201, 4807 San Felipe.

In San Antonio

Wednesday September 11, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Gilbert King, author of *Beneath a Ruthless Sun. A True Story of Violence, Race, and Justice Lost and Found.* The book "plunges the reader deeply into the legal practices, civil rights battles, and stubborn sexual inequalities of the mid-20th century..." McCombs Center Rosenberg Skyroom, University of the Incarnate Word, near the entrance at the US 281 northbound frontage road immediately north of Hildebrand.

Wednesday September 11, 7:00pm-9:00pm, Pub theology with Rabbi Samuel Stahl. The Friendly spot Ice House, 943 S. Alamo.

Thursday September 12, 6:30pm-8:00pm, "The Trouble With My Name," Javier Ávila. Thiry Aditorium, Our Lady of the Lake Univrsity, 411 S.W. 24th Street.

Saturday September 14, 9:00am-3:00pm, Spirituality and Social Justice Institute, *Restoring Justice: Breaking the Cycle of Violence, Crime, and Incarceration.* Featured speaker: Fr. Greg Boyle, S.J. Whitley Theological Center, Oblate School of Theology, 285 Oblate Dr., Suggested payment \$50.00. Meal included. Information and payment: <https://ost.edu/event/ssji2019/>

Tuesday September 17, 6:30pm, Deborah Reid (Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance), "Enhancing Our Parks and Green Spaces to Assist in Meeting San Antonio's Air and Water Quality Goals." Sierra Club meeting, Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main.

Wednesday September 18, 7:00pm-9:30pm, Peter Steinfels, "Sex Abuse and the Future Church." University Center, Conference Room A, St. Mary's University. Parking in Lots D and H. Information: Cynthia Stookesberry, cstookesberry@stmarytx.edu, 210-436-8054.

Thursday September 19, 4:00pm-8:30pm, symposium, "Moving the Church Forward," featuring Peter Steinfels. University Center, Conference Room A and Foyer, St. Mary's University. Information: Susie Elias selias@stmarytx.edu, 210-436-3516.

Thursday September 19, 7:00pm, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Path to Nonviolence," Roger Barnes. Mabee Library Auditorium, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway.

Monday September 23, 4:00pm-6:00pm, Stephen Sheehi (William and Mary University), "Decolonizing the Humanities." Northrup Hall 040, Trinity University, One Trinity Place.

Thursday September 24, 6:30pm-7:30pm, William H. Willimon (Duke Divinity School), “Racism as Sin: Confessions of a southern Church Leader.” Parker Chapel, Trinity University, One Trinity Place. Park at Alamo Stadium.

Saturday September 28, 1:30pm, film, *The Human Element*, onclimate change. Christus Heritage Hall, 4707 Broadway.

Saturday September 28, 7:00pm, “Project Life-Line,’ Children in Crisis-Dehumanization and Immigration detention, A conversation between Doctors and Faith Leaders.” Student Engagement Ballroom, University of the Incarnate Word, 4301 Broadway. Information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/274017726659120/>

Sunday September 29, 8:00am, one day caravan to the McAllen Detention Center. Leave from the Convocation Center, University of the Incarnate Word. Join by sending message to projectlifeline2018@gmail.com. Information: <https://www.uiw.edu/eccl/Special-Events/index.html>

Thursday October 24, 6:00pm, film, *The Sultan and the Saint*, and interfaith gathering to share the *Document of Fraternity for Humanity for world Peace and Living Together* of Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Al-Tayyeb (Abu Dhabi, February 4, 2019). St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 4201 De Zavala Rd. Free, but tickets required: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-sultan-and-the-saint-an-interfaith-gathering-tickets-66686409847>.

Second Reading (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

First Timothy is one of the three epistles called “pastoral.” The tradition about Paul had led to his followers writing letters in his name after he had been executed in Rome, both because followers traditionally wrote in their masters’ names in antiquity (not to do so would be considered an ego trip) and because the very illegality of Christianity made writing a Christian tract in one’s own name subject to arrest, prosecution, and even execution. So we have the *Letter to the Colossians* and the *Letter to the Ephesians*, neither of which had been written by Paul. After some time, the genuine Pauline letters had been collected. The Pastoral letters comprise a three-part single work, resembling a collection of “letters by Paul.” Various time and place references in the first sections of the first Pauline, *First Timothy*, make it clear to any reader familiar with the biographical information about Paul contained in Luke’s history, *The Acts of the Apostles*, that the authorship is fictive. The section read this Sunday makes one simple point: God is merciful to those who have done evil because of the divine love within the triune Godhead that comes through the Son to humanity.

Third Reading (Luke 15.1-32)

At some masses, the reading may be shortened to Luke 15.1-10. Luke, however, makes something of a progression in a sequence of three parables, and it is worthwhile following him in the way he has Jesus developing a point.

We all know the Parable of the Lost Sheep; Jesus told it when some proper people criticized him for associating with disapproved-of elements in society. To an educator, as such I was most of my life, it was especially rewarding to occasion insight on the part of one or more students who were oftentimes hard to get through to. It was similar to the fishing story of the one that almost got away. We all know that feeling.

But then there is Luke's follow-up narrative of the lost drachma. A drachma was a coin of small value. The woman who swept the house looking for it was more concerned about losing something than she cared about the value of the coin itself. Once finding it, she celebrated with her friends; no doubt, the cost of such a celebration exceeded the value of a drachma. Telling her friends about looking high and low for that old coin was more important than the coin itself. A story for the friends seems to be the point.

The two stories lead up to the narrative traditionally called the "Parable of the Prodigal Son." The central feature of the narrative is not the prodigality of the younger son but the prodigal compassion of the father. By one logic, we can understand the protest of the elder son: Why celebrate that never-do-well? By another logic, we can understand the father's reply: My son your brother was lost and now is found, was dead but now is alive. The celebration with bag pipe music and dancing in the rustic farmhouse is not simply over someone gone and come back, but a return, a response to the father's familial feeling, preserved in consciousness all along in a persisting memory throughout the excursions of the wanderlust son. A story for the family would be the point, wouldn't it? A family restored and storied?

Poem

The Bastard Messiah

In the minds of his Nazarene neighbors
he was a conceived-out-of-wedlock bastard.
He was not the son of Joseph,
they called him son of Mary.

In the minds of his friends and followers,
he was a messiah, a gift of God to the people,
to Israel, to the world.

Two mindsets.
How to reconcile, bring them together?

A story! A virgin, an angel, a decision, a yes, a birth.

Handed down from one generation to the next
and the next to this our day,
a story of how rejected rocks become cornerstones.

It is the story of ourselves.

Tom Keene
May 19, 2017

A Divine Lesson in Social Justice

Paul Hanly Furfey

(Originally published in *Thought* 3 (June 1928): 36-52)

We all reverence the Old Testament as the word of God and the record of His relations with the human race. It is an arsenal of theological facts, as well as a tender and beautiful record of the love of God for man. But it is something else besides all this. Few perhaps realize that it is the record of some of the most important and dramatic chapters in the history of freedom. Judea and Israel were the battle ground upon which two mighty social philosophies contended—absolutism and democracy. The Holy Land was an immense laboratory in which these conflicting theories were compared. Thus arose a social problem which gave occasion to the inspired writers to enunciate in unmistakable terms the eternal principles of social justice, and Divine Providence brought it about that the history of His people should furnish all later ages an example of social problems and their solution. So it was that centuries before Demosthenes had stirred the Athenian assembly with his appeals for the principles of democracy the prophets of Israel were expounding the same principles in yet more unmistakable terms and with a no less passionate eloquence.

I

To understand the background of this tremendous drama we must go back to a very early age, the age preceding the coming of civilization. It is an epoch known among archeologists as the Neolithic, or New Stone Age. Man had begun to live in settled villages in many places. He had discovered the art of making pottery and polishing stone. Enterprising tribes were tilling the soil and raising domestic animals. Political organization probably showed the same wide variety of form which we can see among the primitive peoples of our modern world. Some tribes, no doubt, had military geniuses at their head with power extending over a considerable territory, men not unlike Chaka, the famous Zulu chief of modern times. Some had absolute rulers like the modern Dahomi. Some chiefs, on the other hand, had little real power. Their tribes were governed by traditional usages and the ridicule of one's fellows was the most powerful social sanction. Such was the social organization of the majority of the American

Indians. Some tribes, again, were really only immense families, and their government was patriarchal. Such, in a later day, were the groups which gathered around Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Upon such a world burst a new phenomenon and its coming was one of the few great events in the world's history. It was the coming of bronze and almost coincident with it the appearance of a flood of new arts and inventions: writing, sunburned brick, stonemasonry, the arch, the plow, the potter's wheel, the beginnings of astronomy and the formation of accurate calendars. It was, in short, the dawn of civilization. The new light touched Egypt first. In the century following 3000 B.C., the age of the great pyramid builders, there was an extraordinary progress in the mechanical arts which was destined never again to be equaled in the world's history until the nineteenth century of our own era.

But though the new learning first burst into full flower in Egypt it must not be thought that the land of the Pharaohs monopolized all progress. Beginning with the Tigris and Euphrates valleys on the east and curving around north of the Arabian Desert to Palestine on the west lies a narrow strip of productive territory which Breasted has very appropriately called the "Fertile Crescent." This, in turn, is separated merely by the small desert of Sinai from the rich Nile Delta. Communication was easy between the different parts of this territory, comparatively speaking, and all its parts possessed a common background. At the time we are considering the whole region was throbbing with new life. And although Egypt was the first to show the new culture in its full glory great progress was taking place also at the eastern end of the Fertile Crescent. Under the "Kings of Sumer and Akkad" a not inconsiderable literature developed, while the Code of Hammurapi, about 2100 B.C., will always remain one of the world's great legal codes.

These were centuries of immense progress. Their history forms some of the most glorious chapters in the records of the human race. And yet advancing civilization was not an altogether unmixed blessing. For the great monarchies were reared at the expense of freedom. Like the pyramids at Gizeh these great empires challenge our admiration, but like the pyramids their building cost dearly in terms of human suffering. Many a time the Egyptian citizen, harassed by tax collectors and wearied by the importunities of petty officials, must have turned longing eyes to the wild, free life of the desert nomads. The latter had less of the comforts of civilization but enjoyed personal freedom to an extent impossible under the Egyptian bureaucracy.

II

Such considerations must have played a part in the numerous revolts of outlying tribes about which we read; but the revolt of overwhelming importance in the world's history was the revolt of the Israelites. By this time Egypt had passed through vast changes since the days of the pyramid builders. There had been a Feudal Period with a weakening of the central authority at the rise to power of the nobles. Then, after the foreign Hyksos, a new and consolidated empire had arisen with the Eighteenth Dynasty. Whether the Pharaoh of the Bible was Thutmose III of this dynasty, as Father Husslein argues, or Ramses II of the succeeding Nineteenth Dynasty as the more common opinion holds, we do not know, since all the Egyptian monarchs were called Pharaoh.

But whoever he was, he was a man of vast ambition, occupied with vast building enterprises and unconcerned about the rights of the poor. "He was" says Kent "a perfect type of the unprincipled captain of industry."

When Moses stood before Pharaoh to demand justice for the oppressed Hebrews, two great systems of social philosophy were brought into dramatic contrast. Moses stood for freedom, as Abraham and his omad shepherds had known it on the wild hillsides of Judea. It was the basic principle of his philosophy that the state exists for the good of the governed. The ruler, patriarch or king or elective magistrate, holds office only for the good of those he rules. This was the principle which Almighty God had called upon Moses to vindicate. Over against him stood Pharaoh, the representative of absolutism. In his eyes the state belonged to him. He and the ruling class felt no obligations toward the governed. He was ready to exploit them for his own selfish purposes and would give them no redress. It was not the first time these two principles had clashed. There were probably as we have seen, despots and tyrants even before the coming of civilization. But advancing civilization had made possible the systematic exploitation of the proletariat to an extent and on a scale not dreamed of in the simpler primitive politics. Never before, perhaps, had the contrast been so sharp nor the issue so clearcut as when the great labor leader of the Hebrews stood before the representative of Egyptian absolutism.

The results of the revolt led by Moses are well known. They are told in the vivid pages of the Old Testament and retold with comment in excellent modern books like Father Husslein's "Bible and Labor." Under the guidance of Almighty God the children of Israel left Egypt, wandered long years in the desert, entered, and finally conquered Palestine. These nomad years must have left a deep impression on the character of the whole people. When Moses first called the Hebrews to revolt they did not listen with enthusiasm. Their spirit had been broken by years of forced labor. But when they entered the promised land a new generation had grown up, hardened by the rough life of the desert, and valuing dearly their liberty which they had won through suffering.

III

When the Hebrews entered Palestine they struggled with the original inhabitants along three different lines. There was, first of all, a military struggle and here the Israelites were almost wholly victorious. Secondly, there was a religious struggle between the worship of the one God of the Hebrews and the numerous gods of the Chanaanites. Here the victory was much less decisive. For the pages of the Scriptures tell us how the children of Israel fell again and again in succeeding ages under the lure of the false gods and how repeated chastisements were necessary to bring back their wandering hearts. Finally, there was a social struggle between the social principles of Israel and the principles of Chanaan.

We must remember that the military victories of the Hebrews did not exterminate the Chanaanites. The towns in particular remained strongholds of Chanaanite culture. It was a culture fifteen centuries old, and included government, industry, writing, business, and trade. It was a civilization behind which lay jut that philosophy of the state which the Hebrews had left Egypt to avoid. The sophisticated life of the towns was well calculated to impress the simple Hebrew nomads. As the exigencies of trade brought them into

contact with the Chanaanites the Israelites could not help imbibing a certain amount of this pernicious philosophy.

At this time the Hebrews were still in the tribal state of organization. They had no settled central government; but when national emergencies arose one of the tribal leaders was appointed *shôfêl*, that is, judge, or leader of all the tribes. He was no monarch, but simply the nation's first citizen, *primus inter pares*. This simple form of government was quite sufficient for all ordinary purposes.

This informal sort of organization might have remained indefinitely if it were not for the insidious influence of the Chanaanite ideals. As it was, it became inevitable that sooner or later some one would suggest that the Hebrews imitate the Chanaanites in this, as they were unfortunately doing in other respects. There seems to have grown up a Chanaanite party among the Israelites which gradually became so strong that it made possible Abimelech's coup d'état.

Abimelech's background was admirably suited for the purpose. He enjoyed the limitless prestige of his hero father Gedeon, while the fact that his mother was a Chanaanite would make him the natural champion of the pro-Chanaanite party. So he waded to a bloody throne through the slaughter of his brothers, all except Joatham, and established himself in autocratic power. Israel's first experiment in autocracy, however, was not a success. Abimelech was an insupportable tyrant, cruel and remorseless, and when he was assassinated by a nameless woman all Israel must have turned back to their old form of government with a sigh of relief.

But it was not to be for long. The pro-Chanaanite party gradually gathered strength and they sought an opportunity to assert their principles and reestablish the monarchy. The opportunity came when Samuel, the last of the judges, was growing old and his two sons "walked not in his ways." It would have been hard to arouse the people against the great and just Samuel; but when his sons and apparent heirs were evil the popular demand for a king took shape. Reluctantly Samuel yielded to it, conscious that the people were rejecting not him, but God. But before he yielded he explained the *right of the king*, a vivid description of the autocratic form of government from which Israel had fled in Egypt, under which they had groaned during Abimelech's days of power, and which had always been distasteful to the more loyal Hebrews. The words of Samuel must be quoted:¹

This will be the right of the king, that shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and put them in his chariots, and will make them his horsemen, and his running footmen to run before his chariot, and he will appoint of them to be his tribunes, and centurions, and to plough his fields, and to reap his corn, and to make him arms and chariots.

Your daughters also he will take to make him ointments, and to be his cooks, and bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your best olive-yards, and will give them to his servants. Moreover he will take the tenth of your corn, and of the revenues of your vineyards, to give to his eunuchs and servants. Your servants also and handmaids, and your goodliest young men, and your asses he will take away, and put them to his work. Your flocks also he will tithe, and you shall be his servants.

¹ 1 Kings, viii, 11-18.

And you shall cry out in that day from the face of the king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day, because you desired unto yourselves a king.

But the eloquence of the great Samuel could not influence the people and Saul was chosen king. The faults of this monarch were great ones and he was rejected by God. But it must be said of him that he remained, on the whole, faithful to the political principles of his race. He did not become an oriental despot. As Kent says, "He preserved the democratic simplicity of a tribal sheik." He held court without formality in his native town of Gabaa. Under David there was an increased centralization of power. He was capable of being arbitrary as his treatment of Urias shows. But on the whole there is little to criticize in this great and lovable ruler. It was only under his son, Solomon, that the prophetic words² of Samuel were fulfilled entirely.

The young monarch proved to be a commercial genius. Breasted calls him "one of the leading merchants of the east." He dealt in horses and organized a trading fleet in partnership with Hiram, king of Tyre. He married a daughter of the king of Egypt. He delighted in display. His great building operations must have required heavy taxes and the people had cause to complain of his government.

If Solomon was the representative of the old Chanaanite despotic principles in government then Jeroboam, the son of Nabat, stood forth as the tribune of the common people and the upholder of the democratic ideals of Israel. This remarkable man was of plebeian origin but through natural ability had risen from the ranks. Standing forth as the leader of the oppressed people he organized a rebellion which proved abortive, but Jeroboam himself escaped to Egypt. With the death of Solomon he returned, however, and before Roboam, the heir to the throne, was crowned he seized the psychological moment to put forward the demands of the people. He petitioned Roboam in these words:³ "Thy father laid a grievous yoke upon us: now therefore do thou take off a little of the grievous service of thy father, and of his most heavy yoke, when he put upon us, and will serve thee."

The young prince was therefore confronted with the necessity of choosing between the two opposing theories of government. Should he yield to the petition and establish what we may call a *democratic monarchy*, if the term be permitted, a monarchy, that is to say, in which the rights of the people are of supreme importance; or should he follow the tradition of his father and become an oriental despot? Once again the two contending principles stood over against each other. There was no mistaking the issue. It was perfectly clear to everybody. Roboam requested a short time for making his decision. He followed unwise advice and chose the second of the alternatives. He told the people:⁴ "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions."

The decision cost Roboam half his kingdom. The northern tribes revolted and made Jeroboam their king, while Roboam was forced to content himself with the South. From this point on we must follow the histories of these two kingdoms separately.

² The original printing has *works* rather than *words*—ed.

³ 3 Kings, xii, 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

IV

The rulers of the Northern Kingdom seem to have been faithful to the Hebrew ideal of government until the time of Achab. Jezabel, the Phoenician wife of this king, was directly responsible for the introduction of despotic ideals. The affair of Naboth's vineyard illustrates Achab's policy. Naboth owned a piece of property which the king desired, because, as he said, "It is high and adjoining to my house." What should Achab do? One outstanding difference between an oriental despot and a king according to the Hebrew ideal lay precisely in respect for private property. An oriental monarch felt no compunction at all in seizing his subjects' property if it pleased his royal purpose. On the other hand, the Hebrew ruler must carefully respect the property rights of his humblest subject. It was the parting of the ways for Achab. While he was hesitating, "angry and fretting," his wife took matters into her own hands. She trumped up charges against Naboth, suborned false witnesses and compassed the judicial murder of the unfortunate Naboth. Thus Achab gained possession of the coveted property.

This high-handed policy drew down the stinging denunciation of the prophet Elias. The king temporarily repented; but it was too late. The dynasty was hopelessly corrupt and it was not long after the death of Achab that his whole house was massacred and a new dynasty came into power. The new line, the house of Jehu, witnessed days of remarkable, if somewhat specious, prosperity. Especially in the days of Jeroboam II, the third successor of Jehu, the Northern Kingdom enjoyed striking material success.

This prosperity was confined, however, principally to the upper classes. The middle class had suffered by the vicissitudes of war and had lost their lands and independence. Meanwhile, the poor sank lower and lower. Heavy taxes had burdened the lower classes and they sought in vain for justice in the corrupt law courts. The rich were too much occupied with the pursuit of pleasure to be concerned about the sufferings of the poor. So in the growing cities of the Northern Kingdom the poor dwelt in misery and saw all about them the sophisticated amusements of the wealthy.

One day a strange figure appeared on the streets of the Northern capital—a grim man wearing the sheepskin and leather girdle of the shepherd. It was Amos of Thecua and he denounced the evils of the day with a burning eloquence which has possibly never been surpassed by any writer sacred or profane. He addressed himself to the rich and powerful:⁵

Hear this, you that crush the poor, and make the needy of the land to fail, saying: when will the month be over and we shall sell our wares, and the Sabbath and we shall open the corn, that we may lessen the measure, and increase the sickle, and may convey in deceitful balances, that we may possess the needy for money and the poor for a pair of shoes, and may sell the refuse of the corn?

For this oppression the poor man had no redress. The judges who held court at the city gate were venal:⁶

⁵ Vii, 4-6.

⁶ V, 11-12.

Therefore because you robbed the poor, and took the choice prey from him, you shall build houses with square stones and shall not dwell in them, you shall plant most delightful vineyards and shall not drink the wine of them. Because I know your manifold crimes and your grievous sins, enemies of the just, taking bribes, and oppressing the poor in the gate.

The ruling classes had a fearful responsibility. *Noblesse oblige*. Instead of using their power for their own selfish comfort they should have taken arms against the evils of the day. But they had neglected their duty:⁷

You that sleep upon beds of ivory, and are wanton on your couches that eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the herd. You that sing in the sound of psaltery: they have thought themselves to have instruments of music like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the best ointments, and are not concerned with the affliction of Joseph.

The message of Amos was taken up shortly by Osee. But though the burden of their preaching was the same the personalities of the two men were strangely contrasted. Amos was inflamed with a just wrath. Osee spoke more in sorrow than in anger. Amos spoke of God's justice, Osee of His love. Gomer, the unfaithful wife of Osee whom he yet loved in spite of her unworthiness, was a type of the faithless people of Israel whom God yet loved. But even so the doom of Israel was sealed:⁸

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for the Lord shall enter into judgment with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth and there is no mercy and there is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing and lying and killing and theft and adultery have overflowed, and blood hath touched blood. Therefore shall the land mourn and everyone that dwelleth in it shall languish with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of the air.

The doom predicted by the prophets was not long delayed. In about 722 B.C., the capital of Israel fell before the Assyrian armies, many of the unhappy inhabitants were carried away captives, and the Northern Kingdom was destroyed. But although the arms of Assyria were the immediate cause of the downfall of Israel the fundamental cause was the social injustice which had weakened the upper classes through luxurious living and the lower classes through poverty.

V

The social history of the Southern Kingdom is longer. It was slower to develop prosperity. But during the middle years of the eighth century the belated tide of wealth at length reached Juda. Commerce with Arabia and Africa was made possible through the conquest of the Edomites. Together with foreign products came foreign customs and

⁷ Vi, 4-6.

⁸ Iv, 1-3.

ideals. The old simplicity gave way to a more sophisticated existence. The same social evils which had been rampant in the North now appeared in the south—luxury and incompetency among the upper classes, injustice and bribery in the law courts, misery among the poor. The increased prosperity of Juda must have been a cause for congratulation among the people of that day, but there was at least one man who saw deeper. He saw that a prosperity which was founded on social injustice was a specious one and would lead ultimately to ruin. This man was Isaias, statesman and orator as well as prophet of the Lord. He was aghast at the corruption of the city.⁹

How is the faithful city that was full of judgment become a harlot? Justice dwelt in it but now murderers. Thy silver is turned into dross; thy wine is mingled with water. Thy princes are faithless, companions of thieves. They all love bribes; they run after rewards. They judge not the fatherless; and the widow's cause cometh not in to them.

All this must bring the inevitable doom:¹⁰

The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and its princes; for you have devoured the vineyard and the spoil of the poor is in your house. Why do you consume my people and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord.

The message of Isaias is the same as the message of the Northern prophets. As soon as the insidious false theory of government had taken root among the Hebrews the nation was doomed. As soon as the powerful and ruling classes neglected their duties and used their power for their own selfish ends it was the beginning of the end. In a scathing passage the prophet brings the women of Juda before the bar of his impassioned eloquence. He enumerates in pitiless detail the petty vanities which the upper classes considered more important than the welfare of the poor. While the women of the upper classes were concerning themselves with these trifles they were blind to the social forces which were slowly but inevitably compassing their doom:¹¹

In that day the Lord will take away the ornaments of shoes and little moons, and chains and necklaces, and bracelets, and bonnets, and bodkins, and ornaments of the legs, and tablets, and sweet balls, and earrings, and rings, and jewels hanging on the forehead, and changes of apparel, and short cloaks, and fine linen, and crimping pins, and looking-glasses, and lawns, and headbands, and fine veils. And instead of a sweet smell there shall be a stench, and instead of a girdle, a cord, and instead of curled hair, baldness, and instead of a stomacher, haircloth.

⁹ I, 21-23.

¹⁰ Iii, 14-15.

¹¹ Iii, 18-24.

The message which Isaias was preaching so eloquently was taken up by his contemporary, Micheas. Like Amos, Micheas was a countryman and he shared with the herdsman of Thecua the same contempt for the luxury of city life. His message was the same as that of the other prophets. The corruption of the upper classes would inevitably bring their downfall:¹²

Hear, O ye princes of Jacob, and ye chiefs of the house of Israel. Is it not your part to know judgment, you that hate good and love evil, that violently pluck off their skins from them, and their flesh from their bones? Who have eaten the flesh of my people and have flayed their skin from off them, and have broken and chopped their bones as for the kettle, and as flesh in the midst of the pot. Then shall they cry to the Lord, and he will not hear them; and he will hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved wickedly in their devices.

Micheas was one of the few prophets who succeeded in making a definite impression upon the social conditions of his time. The threatened invasion of Sennacherib lent force to his eloquence and with the miraculous deliverance of Juda from the Assyrian armies a reform seems to have been instituted.

But the reform was not destined to have a lasting effect. Once again false ideals of government began to be accepted. Under Manasses this tendency was at its height. Not only was this king himself a perfect type of the oriental despot but by his submission to the king of Assyria he "opened the doors of Juda to the culture and religion of the Assyrian conqueror." A few years later the prophet and nobleman Sophonias describes the plight of the Southern Kingdom:¹³

Woe to the provoking and redeemed city, the dove. She hath not hearkened to the voice, neither hath she received discipline. She hath not trusted in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. Her princes are in the midst of her as roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves; they left nothing for the morning.

But neither the eloquence of Sophonias, nor that of his contemporary Jeremias could stem the tide of corruption. Joakim was wholly committed to despotic ideals and in spite of the imminent danger of his kingdom he ruled unjustly and abused his power for his own selfish ends. He was rebuked by Jeremias:¹⁴

He judged the cause of the poor and the needy for his own good...but thy eyes and thy heart are set upon covetousness and upon shedding innocent blood, and upon oppression, and running after evil works. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Joakim the son of Josias King of Juda: They shall not mourn for him...He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, rotten and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem.

¹² lii, 1-4.

¹³ lii, 1-3.

¹⁴ Xxii, 16-19.

The doom of Juda was sealed. Hopelessly rotten as the land was through the incompetency of the ruling classes it was only a question of time before the words of Jeremias were fulfilled:¹⁵

Thus saith the Lord: Behold a people cometh from the land of the north, and a great nation shall rise up from the ends of the earth. They shall lay hold on arrow and shield; they are cruel and will have no mercy. Their voice shall roar like the sea; and they shall mount upon horses prepared as men of war, against thee, O daughter of Sion.

In 586 B.C. the Chaldean king, Nabuchodonosor, destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people away captive into Babylonia. Thus ended the history of the Southern Kingdom.

After the Babylonian captivity the Jews returned to Jerusalem with an enlarged social horizon. Their prophets continued to treat of social problems; but the one question which we have been discussing, the duties of the upper classes toward the proletariat according to the two opposed theories of government, was no longer the burning question of the hour.

VI

It would be possible to construct a convincing and perfectly valid argument for the inspiration of the Scriptures from the detailed predictions of Divine retribution which the prophets made during the centuries just reviewed. Such however, is not the purpose of the present paper. It is our purpose rather to emphasize another and almost equally striking fact. In a world where the theory of "might makes right" was regarded as an obvious fact the prophets raised their voices in behalf of the rights of the weak. In an age of despotism they preached the obligation of the ruler toward the ruled. For the first time in human history they taught that the oppressed had rights. In certain non-essentials the Old Testament made concessions to human weakness—the polygamy of the patriarchs for example. But in the matter of social injustice the Scriptures are intransigent. In all the writings of the prophets there is not a sentence, not a word, which condones social injustice in any form. The more thoroughly one understands the charter of the times the more remarkable this unanimity of thought appears. To say the least, it would be hard to explain by purely natural causes.

It is the clear doctrine of the prophets then, that the ruler has obligations toward the ruled. A government which rules for selfish motives is an abomination. The only reason for the existence of political power is that it shall be exercised for the benefit of the governed. Divine retribution inevitably awaits the ruler or the ruling class which is faithless to this ideal.

Looked at from a purely natural standpoint this means that the prophets enjoy a remarkable place in the history of social thought. Centuries before the rise of the Greek republics they laid down the principles upon which all modern democracy rests. Looked at from a supernatural standpoint their prophetic teachings are even more significant.

¹⁵ Vi, 22-23.

They are the negation of state utilitarianism. They mean that government is a moral act, and that no government can endure which neglects the principles of morality.

We live in an era of political change. Old ideas of government are giving way to new. Dynasties are being overthrown. Constitutions are being revised. Fundamental legal concepts are being called into question. All this represents progress, for the most part and we must applaud it. But the most essential element of any polity, old or new, is not a produce of recent progress. It is as old as morality and it was enunciated in unmistakable terms by the prophets. It is the Divine principle of the mora obligation of the ruler to the ruled.

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