

ARE YOU FAIR TO JEWS?



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by

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TO

The memory of Roger Williams Straus

Apostle of understanding and

Ambassador of good will

The author

Dedicates this booklet with

His esteem and gratitude.

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Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Are You Fair to Jews?

NO nation in the world has a population with such enormous differences of race, color and faith as the United States. Here one finds people from every land and of every faith under the sun. This endless variety has given to our culture a richness unparalleled in history: it constitutes the unique genius and the distinctive glory of America, and has compelled the admiration of the whole civilized world. In the mighty symphony of American life the immigrant catches echoes of the mores, thought, aspirations and dreams of his native land and speedily finds himself at home among us.

REAL PROBLEM

The differences which fertilize and enrich our culture, however, beget strains and tensions. We all feel more at ease among like-minded people: the greater the differences, the greater are the tensions. From the days of the Pilgrims the immigrants have brought along with their baggage their racial animosities and religious prejudices. Hence the problem of learning to live together and like it has been with us since the first settlers met the Redmen who had preceded them, and it has grown in volume and complexity with the increasing number

and variety of new-comers to our shores. Indeed, it is inherent in the very structure and composition of our society.

Learning to live together means learning not only to feel at ease with people who, while devoted to America and its ideals, are of different racial origins and religious faiths, but also to respect those differences. This calls for tolerance, mutual esteem, understanding, good will and even brotherhood among all the multitudinous ethnic and religious groups making up our cosmopolitan society.

The problem is not an easy one: its solution goes against the grain of instinctive feeling. It calls for clear thinking, self-discipline and a respect for the sanctity of the human personality with its inevitable differences: the unfailing mark of a truly civilized person.

INNOCENT VICTIMS

Staining the annals of our history are the waves of organized bigotry which periodically sweep across our land. Notorious among these were the Nativist movement of the 1830's, the Know-Nothing campaign of the 1850's the Loyalty League, the original Ku Klux Klan and allied movements of the post-Civil War period, the American Protective Association of the 1890's, the revived Ku Klux Klan after World War I and the anti-Semitism of the 1930's.

They kindled the fagots of flaming hatreds in a thousand communities, incited

mob violence that led to the murder of hundreds of innocent victims, to beatings, brandings and whippings, and to the burning and looting of stores and homes. In the Know-Nothing riot in 1855 in Louisville alone more than a hundred innocent victims were butchered or burned to death, while the civil authorities, all Know-Nothings, stood idly by. In the smoldering embers of religious hatreds lies the dynamite that can wreck our civilization.

Despite such setbacks, however, we have made progress in the development of tolerance and understanding. The strength of America depends upon this inner unity of its citizens in spite of all outward differences of race, color and creed. "National unity in the midst of cultural pluralism," points out former President Hoover, "has become the ideal of our American democracy." In matters of race, color and faith, observed Booker T. Washington, we can be as distinct and separate as the outstretched fingers of a hand but in all that affects the welfare of America we must be as united as the fingers of a clenched fist.

START WITH NEIGHBOR

The need for such essential unity and solidarity in all that concerns the interests of our nation is rendered all the more urgent by the world leadership that has been thrust upon America. How are we to think clearly and objectively of other nations if we have not learned this art in regard to our own fel-

low citizens? The place to learn it is in our own neighborhood: the persons with whom we can best practice it is the family that lives next door.

Foremost in seeking to eradicate racial hatred and religious prejudice is the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Founded in 1928 on the initiative of Charles Evans Hughes, Newton S. Baker, S. Parkes Cadman and other distinguished Americans, the Conference seeks to promote justice, amity and understanding among citizens of all faiths. It endeavors to analyze, moderate and ultimately eliminate intergroup prejudices, which disfigure and distort religious, business, social and political relations, with a view to the establishment of friendly human relationships.

CHECK RANCOR

With branches established in most of our large cities, the Conference sponsors Brotherhood Week each year and brings together representatives of the three major faiths for frequent discussions of problems of common interest. Headed by Dr. Everett R. Clinchy, the Conference has been instrumental in nipping in the bud many explosions of religious rancor and has deepened and consolidated the peace and good will among members of different faiths in hundreds of communities.

Brotherhood Week was started by the Conference in 1934 and it promises to become as much a part of the American calen-

dar as Independence Day or Thanksgiving Day. A week in February is designated Brotherhood Week and the President issues a special message calling upon all the citizens to put into practice the ideals of tolerance, friendship and brotherhood.

As a result of the Conference's appeal, thousands of sermons are preached from the pulpits of all the major faiths during Brotherhood Week on the duty of respecting the beliefs of others and their rights to freedom of conscience and of worship. Even more important are their efforts to get at the sources of prejudice and bigotry and through education and friendly conference to eradicate them.

THREE CONCLUSIONS

Along with Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell, Pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church of New York, and Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, I have been co-chairman of the Conference's commission on religious organizations for many years. In that capacity I have traveled thousands of miles, attended innumerable meetings and listened to lengthy discussion of the causes of racial and religious antagonism and of the means of eradicating them. Out of those years of experience have emerged three simple conclusions which seem to be of widespread interest and far-reaching significance.

First. No single group, racial or reli-

gious, should have to "go it alone." It should have allies to present its case objectively and fairly when it is misrepresented and misunderstood: such spokesmen will not be accused of "special pleading," of "selfish interests" and will get a much wider and better hearing.

Second. Most antagonisms and prejudices spring from misconceptions of the other group's beliefs, motives and purposes. This is particularly true of religious animosity. Upon investigation it is found to be directed not against the actual belief and practice of people of a different religion but against the misconceptions of them which exist in our minds. Hence most of us war against caricatures, ghosts that haunt our imagination and bats in our mental belfries.

This is good neither for our health, peace of mind, nor sanity. We suffer needless fears and work ourselves into frenzies of indignation and wrath for which there is no basis in fact. Hatred is both corrosive and poisonous: it bites into our capacity for clear perception and poisons our judgment with evidence distorted out of all proportion. It begets tensions, disrupts the peace of a community, and stymies the advancement of understanding and good will. It is the enemy to our individual and social happiness.

Third. The remedy is to correct the misconceptions in an objective and friendly

manner, to promote wider and better understanding between members of different faiths, and to work together on all matters affecting the welfare of the community, state and nation.

Let us now scrutinize the causes of suspicion, distrust and prejudice against Jews. Let us see if they are not largely traceable to misunderstandings and misconceptions. The National Conference of Christians and Jews maintains 65 regional offices throughout the country and spends millions of dollars each year in seeking to track down the sources of religious prejudice and to remove them.

It sponsors costly investigations and the publication of scholarly monographs. Not a little of its effort has been devoted to the elimination of anti-Semitism from American life. Its studies, conferences and discussions tend to show that anti-Jewish feelings is largely traceable to a few widespread misconceptions of Jews, their influence and objectives.

NEED LIGHT, NOT HEAT

In touching upon a subject of great sensitivity to many people, I hasten to say at the very outset that I do not want to stir such sensitivities, and much less to hurt the feelings of a single reader, Christian or Jew. When our feelings are hurt, we do not think clearly but merely tend to hit back in a blind, instinctive manner.

My topic requires light, not heat: it

demands objectivity and open-mindedness on the part of both reader and writer. Such I shall try to bring to the discussion; if any word unwittingly wounds a single reader, I assure him it was farthest from my intentions and I apologize in advance.

Anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism and anti-Protestantism exist in this country but all three are fortunately on the wane. Of the three, anti-Semitism has of course the longest history throughout the world. It was brought to this country by the early settlers.

Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam, later called New York, tried to exclude Jews. Failing in this, he refused "for pregnant reasons" to issue a deed to a Jew who had bought land on Manhattan Island and he forbade Jews to trade at Fort Orange and South River.

After listening to a bitter attack upon Jews, the Assembly of New York decided in 1737 that they were not entitled to vote. Here were the early manifestations of European anti-Semitism that was destined to crop up so often in American life.

DEBUNKING COMMON CHARGES

What then are some of the more common charges against Jews? They control Wall Street, it is alleged, and exercise an undue economic influence in the United States. Similar charges were made by the Nazis as a simple prelude to the confisca-

tion of Jewish possessions throughout Germany.

What are the facts? *Fortune*, a non-Jewish magazine, made a painstaking investigation of the economic status of Jews in this country. The findings disclosed that Jewish dominance of the American economy was a pure myth. "A vast continent of heavy industry and finance may be staked out," reported *Fortune*, "in which Jewish participation is incidental or nonexistent . . . The Jews are so far from controlling the most characteristic of present-day American activities that are hardly represented in them at all."

Jews, it is charged, control the press, movies, radio, television and theatre and thus unduly influence American public opinion. How different are the facts? The *International Yearbook of Editor and Publisher* shows that only 3½ per cent of the daily newspapers are owned or controlled by Jews, while only three general magazines are classified as under Jewish control.

RARE EXCEPTIONS

True, Jews are well represented in the movies, radio, television and theatre business, in which they have demonstrated marked talent and ability. But the acceptance of movies, shows, radio and television programs is determined not by the producers but by the American public, in which Jews constitute but a tiny fraction.

Jews, it is charged, furnish a disproportionately large number of communists and traitors, such as Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The truth is that Jews are overwhelmingly opposed to communism. Virtually every racial and religious group has had a few communists among its members. A few Jewish communists and traitors have received wide publicity and have created in uncritical minds the misleading impression that they are typical. Far from being typical, they are the rare exceptions. From the days of the founding of the Republic no group has shown greater loyalty than the Jews.

Jews, it is charged, direct the policy of the United States and of the governments of Europe. Pure myth. According to the 1956 *American Jewish Year Book*, there are only 11,908,443 Jews in the entire world. Of these an estimated 5,000,000 are in the United States, of whom 2,050,000 are in New York City. Thus they constitute less than three per cent of our population. It is obvious that such a microscopic percentage could direct neither the domestic nor the foreign policy of our country.

NORMAL INTERESTS

Jews, it is charged, are concerned primarily with the interests of the Republic of Israel and only secondarily with those of the United States. They would drag this country into war to pull Israel's chestnuts out of the fire. The truth is that Jews have

only a normal and legitimate interest in Israel.

What racial group in the United States is not interested in its homeland? How unnatural and inhuman it would be for the Jews of America to be unconcerned with the efforts of Jews of all countries to see the infant Republic, established in their historic homeland, grow and prosper?

Such solicitude and concern are in no way inconsistent with their loyalty to the United States, to which they give their first allegiance and devotion. They do not put the interests of Israel above those of America, nor seek to drag this nation into war to aggrandize Israel. The pronouncements of Jewish leaders have made this abundantly clear. Americans first, Israelis second.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND RUMORS

Thus all the basic charges repeated with endless variations against the Jews of America are seen to be without foundation in fact. They are based upon misconceptions and rumors: upon investigation the labels so often pinned on Jews prove to be libels and the charges turn out to be fabrications and myths.

How then are we to lessen and gradually eliminate anti-Semitism from American life? By refuting the rumors and charges with the facts, correcting the misconceptions, and getting to know the Jews in our respective communities. Isolation is the favorite breeding ground of suspicion and

prejudice which, as its etymology (pre-judge) indicates, means a passing of judgment before all the facts are in.

“I don’t want,” remarked Charles Lamb, “to meet the man who lives at the end of the block.”

“Why not?” asked a friend.

“Because if I knew him,” replied Lamb, “I would be robbed of the luxury of hating him.”

How true that is of all of us. When we don’t know one another, we are subject to the most irrational suspicions and the blindest hatreds. Ignorance, kindled by lies, flames into passion which explodes with lethal violence and terror. There, in brief, is the anatomy of intolerance, religious bigotry and racial hatred.

“In the night,” wrote Hegel, “all cows are gray.” In the night of ignorance, all members of the despised race are alike. Their nationality alone is sufficient to condemn them. When pre-judgments of this kind are formed, morality disappears; blind passion and terrorism hold undisputed sway.

SCAPEGOATING DEVICE

A capital instance of passing judgment upon all the members of a race occurred in Nazi Germany. No matter how law-abiding, patriotic and devoted a Jewish citizen was, the Nazis condemned him because he was a Jew. To have even a small portion of Jewish blood in one’s veins was enough to

incur the wrath and the beatings of the Gestapo. Herein is seen the device of scapegoating as a mechanism of escape from one's own frustrations.

Dispirited, humiliated, half-starved and frustrated after World War I, the Germans projected their frustrations upon the Jews, cast upon them the blame for their sorry plight and made them their scapegoats. Too few and too impotent to strike back, the Jews became the targets upon which the Hitlerites vented their pent-up emotions of anger and hatred.

With a cruel arrogance unparalleled in history, they herded millions of Jews into concentration camps and incineration centers and filled thousands of ash cans with their remains. In so doing, the Nazis stained the pages of German history with an infamy so black and so deep that it will remain to the end of time as a warning to the nations of the paranoid mentality which scapegoating fastens upon those who indulge in it.

HOW EXPLAIN?

How can we explain such conduct on the part of a cultured nation in which modern science had reached its apex. It was the drip, drip, drip of repeated charges against the Jews that wore out the resistance in the minds of men. It made them act like automata in the pillaging, beating and murdering of people who had been for years their respected and friendly neighbors. Let no one underestimate the incredi-

ble power of charges constantly repeated. They are like the drops of water, which by their continuous fall, wear out the stone.

The drippings of poisonous propagan-da in uncritical minds, points out Thomas F. Doyle, all too soon form a calcifying crust which smothers the natural virtues of sympathy and kindness. To minds thus conditioned, it becomes possible to view with complacency and even with satisfaction the infliction of penalties upon a helpless and unpopular minority. Such victims become the scapegoat upon which they fasten all their frustrations and grievances, and then lead to the slaughter.

What happened in Nazi Germany can happen in other countries where poisonous propaganda, unanswered and unrefuted, is allowed to inundate the population and condition the minds and hearts of men. Slanders must be answered in order that truth and justice may prevail. As often as calumnies are repeated, they must be refuted. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty: it's the price too of justice and fair play.

"There are no caves," said Heywood Broun, "in which men can hide when their fellows cry out in agony." There are no ivory towers to which men can retreat when their fellowmen are being vilified.

There are many signs that anti-Semitism is waging a losing battle in America, whose whole ethos and genius are dia-

metrically opposed to discriminations on the grounds of race, color or religion. Let me cite a few heart-warming instances of what takes place in communities where Christians and Jews really get to know one another and show concern for the welfare of each.

When I was the chaplain of the Catholic students at the University of Illinois, Rabbi Frankel confided to our Religious Workers' Association that Jewish students were finding difficulty in getting lodgings in homes near the campus. At the suggestion of a big-hearted Methodist minister, Rev. James C. Baker, now a bishop, chaplains of all faiths appealed to their congregations to end such discrimination and to welcome Jewish students into their homes. The response was as immediate as it was overwhelming.

HELPING HAND

In Brooklyn Rabbi Marans of the United Sephardim Synagogue sought to get a band to provide suitable music for the traditional parade for the dedication of a new Torah, a holy Scroll of the ancient Jewish law. Father Paul N. Fiore of Our Lady of Loretto parish happened to hear of his predicament. In a jiffy the 100 members of the school's band were mobilized and, marching in their bright new uniforms, provided the music.

The scales were balanced by the action of Lt. Stephen Brown, a member of Temple Beth El of Providence, Rhode Island. While

stationed with the 34th Medical Battalion some 25 miles south of Seoul, Korea, he had some free time on his hands. Seeing the Korean men, women and children trying with their crude tools to build a church at nearby Yang-Pyung, he decided to give them the benefit of his American "know-how."

At the dedication of the church the congregation presented a citation to Lt. Brown for his "invaluable services" and "noble contribution" to brotherhood. "Those who pray here," read the citation, "will remember you forever as a dear benefactor."

BLESSES CHAPEL

Brandeis University, presided over by my old friend, Dr. Abram Sachar, is Jewish-sponsored but non-sectarian. When it invited Archbishop Cushing to bless its new Bethlehem Chapel for the use of its Catholic students, he readily accepted. Immediately a splinter group of fanatical Jew-haters raised a frenzied hue and cry of protest. Ignoring their efforts at intimidation the great archbishop, whose broad human sympathy and unfailing kindness have won the hearts of all Boston, went to the campus, blessed the chapel and offered the first Mass.

The Hebrew community of Lowell, Massachusetts, named the archbishop as its choice for the Man of the Year Award for "outstanding good will and exemplary service to people of all creeds." In accepting the

award at a great testimonial dinner, Archbishop Cushing made an earnest plea for the washing out of racial and religious hatreds and the discriminations which stem from them.

“The road to world peace,” he said, “is the street where we ourselves live. The first steps to world peace are steps to the stranger in need or the sorrowful next door, be his race or religion what it may . . . To those who, through ignorance or malice, would infect us with the spiritual disease of bigotry or the contagious germs of racial hatreds, and thus serve the enemies of God and of country, I say:

Whoever degrades another de-
grades me,
And whatever is said or done
against another,
Returns in the end to hurt me.”

INJURY TO ALL

In the increasing perception of this profound ethical truth lies the best hope for the eradication of anti-Semitism and of all racial and religious hatreds. Discrimination against any of our brothers blasts at the moral basis of the rights of all, and in the end will injure all. When I defend the Jew or the Protestant against discrimination and injustice, I am buttressing the moral citadel in which my own rights repose.

The person in Holland who is concerned solely with the strength of the dyke in front of his own land finds that an open-

ing before his neighbor's farm will speedily inundate his own. So it is with the mighty moral dyke that protects the rights of all of us. We are like voyagers in a boat. A leak in any part of the vessel will spell destruction for all.

It is well for all Christians to reflect occasionally upon the great debt which they owe the people of Israel. For thousands of years before the birth of Christianity they held aloft the torch of monotheism when the rest of the world was plunged in the darkness of polytheism and idolatry.

STRANGELY INCONSISTENT

They carried the message of the prophets to subsequent ages and enriched the world with their religious and ethical insights. To honor Christ as God incarnate and then to sneer at the people from whom He sprang is strangely inconsistent and ironical. Hence in teaching the truths of the Christian religion it is essential to observe the law of charity and to avoid, even unintentionally, arousing prejudice against the Jew.

Laws are not sufficient to protect the individual from the subtle cruelty of discrimination in social, political, economic and civil life. Only the enlightened spirit of fair play and good will on the part of citizens can provide this protection. This is the business of all of us. Well did Samuel Johnson say:

Of all the ills that human hearts
endure,
How small the part that kings
and laws can cause or cure.

GROWTH IN TOLERANCE

In America we can transform our differences into opportunities for growth in tolerance, understanding and brotherhood and thus enrich and deepen our spiritual life. When a grain of sand gets lodged in an oyster, instead of vainly brooding over the irritation, the mollusk transforms the grain into the most precious thing within its power—a shining pearl.

So can we transmute our differences into the shining pearls of understanding and brotherhood: the precious jewels of the spirit. Paraphrasing the title of a book popular a few decades ago, "Live Alone and Like It," we in America can live *together* and *like* it.

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