

THE INSTABILITY OF PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

The Judaic Attempt to equalise Opportunity.

It has frequently been remarked that history repeats itself, and this is to be expected, since similar national customs eventuate inevitably in similar consequences. "That 'evil communications corrupt good manners' is but an expression of the general law that human character is profoundly modified by its conditions and surroundings." (Henry George.) "This," says Emmanuel Deutsch—"this is the end of all investigation into history or art: **THEY WERE EVEN AS WE ARE.**"

While "Institutions make men," despite differences in race, it is nevertheless true that men make institutions. In the history of every civilisation there is evidence of that progressive groping for a just basis upon which a civilised society can be built in which all persons shall have equal opportunity.

In the national history of the "Children of Israel" we have a unique narrative, showing how the rude invaders of Palestine of the legendary past progressed from a condition comparable with that of the half-savage Bedouins of to-day to a high social state.

The Arrival of the Israelites in Palestine.

The Amorites and the other older inhabitants of Palestine, which is about the same size as Wales, were more civilised than the invaders, but they had become enervated, living enclosed within a system grown out of erroneous practice. They had approached a condition resembling that which the Hebrews themselves reached in the regal period. The fenced cities were overcrowded with panicky citizens, and

the depopulated, undercultivated country-side, producing insufficient food, created a more perilous position for the town-dwellers than for the ferocious herdsmen who attacked their fancied security.

The imprisoned, disunited cities fell one after the other into the hands of the Israelites, who murdered and plundered in the name of Yahve ; but in time the country settled down, and the intruders intermarried with the Amorites, Midianites, Canaanites, Hittites and other tribes of Palestine. These names continued to distinguish the people, irrespective of racial mixture, inhabiting certain districts in which was a city or town containing a nucleus of the original dwellers who favoured some special deity.

The Israelites were polytheistic, like the people they lived among, and all joined frequently in the worship of each others' gods. Outstanding sores soon healed up, and although religious rivalries existed, there was never that extreme aversion between them and their neighbours which distinguished the sectarian Jews of later times, worshipping as they did the same one God.

The arrival of the shepherds had the effect of adding to the general prosperity. The country was partitioned out among their tribes, which brought it more into use, especially as they soon devoted themselves also to tillage. Their products were naturally exchanged with the inland towns and seaports, and there was thus created a condition of prosperity and security, which benefited all.

Mosaic Laws and Ordinances.

It is not definitely known to what extent the institutions said to have been established by Moses (as, for example, the periodic land divisions) were in operation. It is probable that the new-comers adopted the Chaldæan custom of one day's rest in seven from the original settlers along with more questionable practices.

What we do know is that the tribes fell into indiscriminate anarchy at the time of the Judges, and men banded themselves into factions for self-preservation. These unions of strength then fought each other for supremacy, and larger aggregations formed for the same reason, until there only existed two opposing leagues, one under Saul, who had been

made king, and another under his rival David, who finally supplanted him.

The Credence of the Israelites in the Regal Period.

Whatever may have been their philosophy of ownership when they struggled "to possess the land," by the time they reached the regal period the Israelites, like the older inhabitants of Palestine, believed that land could be bought and sold. In consequence, the rural parts of the country were again deserted, and the landless slaves in the overcrowded cities were ready to embark upon wars of conquest with neighbours.

The people lived precariously from hand to mouth and were subject to frequent outbreaks of famine and pestilence. They did not, however, at that time attribute these symptoms to wrongful social custom, but thought that the gods were angry with them because they had not completely exterminated defeated tribes, or because David had taken a census of the people.

While the rulers and the court had advanced in culture, "the beasts of the people" had sunk into a low condition of ignorance and servility. The imperialistic period of Kings David and Solomon was over, and the kingdom was splitting up into fragments, each of which became an egoism surrounding some local god, which the wise Solomon, in his day, had tactfully appeased by admission to the Temple at Jerusalem. There was now the inevitable reaction which comes sooner or later from oppressed tributaries, and these sought the aid of powerful neighbours like Egypt and Assyria.

The Judaic Land Reformers.

The prophets recalled the earlier days of a prosperous land "flowing with milk and honey," and saw plainly that the barrenness of the country and the misfortunes of the nation were alike attributable to large estates in few hands and land-withholding. Isaiah, the pioneer in the fight for freedom, does not temper condemnation of those "that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth," neither does the lion-hearted Micah spare the power-

ful who "covet fields, and take them by violence: and houses, and take them away."

And "in the last days," when Justice with Mercy should be enthroned at length, Micah foretold, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid."

The Jubilee Year.

The reformers tried to remedy the dangerous state of affairs that had developed during the regal period by the institution of a Jubilee Year, which every fifty years should cut down parasitic growths. The slaves were to be set free, and the man burdened with debt was to be enabled to restart unencumbered.

In the laws attributed to the great lawgiver, Moses, land is regarded as a gift or loan, not to be bought and sold into perpetuity, "for the land is Mine." At the Jubilee Year the land was to be restored and a redistribution made to the original tribal holders, with certain modifications in the case of town sites.

The stranger in the land was to be included in the commonweal: "Thou shalt neither vex the stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

But the dream of the patriots was never realised. Before they died in prison or were put to death at the instigation of the profiteers, it is probable that the reformers had caused to be written a book containing their proposals, which Book of the Law was "discovered" in the time of Josiah, King of Judah.

The Promise and Warning in the Book of Leviticus.

In the Book of Leviticus there is a remarkable summing up of the good consequences which should result if the land were again put into cultivation and repopulated. They should eat their bread to the full, and dwell in the land safely. "None shall make you afraid—five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight." The country would no longer harbour

evil beasts. The desolation of the country would disappear, and its loneliness would be broken by the music of laughing children, the gladness of mothers, and the proud song of men whose bond had been lifted, so that they could walk upright.

But the warning should they depart from following the laws and ordinances is not less explicit. They should become stricken with disease, consumption and the burning ague "that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart." Wild beasts should multiply and rob them of their children, destroy their cattle and make their highways desolate. Famine should appear, "And they shall deliver your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and be not satisfied."

In besieged cities they should become cannibals, to eat the flesh of their children. Frightened and crazed, they should fall upon and kill each other; the sound of a shaken leaf should cause them to flee when none pursued. Again they would enter the house of bondage, and they which hate them should reign over them.

This prediction was amply fulfilled in the calamities which befell the enclosed people.

The Israelites were first led away into captivity by the Assyrians, who took the fenced cities one after the other.

The Captivity of Judah followed afterwards by the Babylonians, a remnant being left with Jeremiah the prophet, who had lately been in prison, having incurred the wrath of the profiteer "that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work."

The "Restoration."

The tribes of Israel were lost, nationally extinguished among similarly dispossessed slaves in the provinces of Upper Mesopotamia.

But the teachings of the prophetic idealists had left their mark of moral superiority upon the men of Judah. These gained the respect of their captors, and a portion returned to their native land, to be known as the Children of the Captivity. The remainder, who chose to be left in Babylon, preserved their individuality as the Jews of the "Dispersion"

To an unknown extent the land was redistributed, and it is curious to note that history repeated itself, as the land again found its way into fewer and fewer hands.

The landless, at the mercy of the landed nobles and the priests, were cruelly exploited. In their necessity they accepted bare subsistence terms, which is everywhere the portion of the cheap slave, or they struggled hopelessly in the toils of usury.

The Story of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In the story of Ezra and Nehemiah we see how the self-consciousness of the Jews as a "Chosen Race" was promoted, and why their neighbours saw in them a "Peculiar People."

The Children of the Captivity, unlike the pastoral Children of Israel under Joshua, did not benefit the population economically. Spoilt in luxurious Babylon, they were consumers more than producers of useful wealth. The resources of the Remnant were stressed to support them when they settled in and around Jerusalem.

Under Zerubbabel, the governor, they proceeded to rebuild the Temple and the walls of the city, which aroused the resentment of the Remnant, who looked with scorn upon what they considered to be a vain undertaking. Zechariah, the prophet of the Remnant, seeing in this "preparedness" only preparations for a new imprisonment, reminded the governor that they lived "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

But Zerubbabel and the priests, possessing a Babylonian sense of the fitness of things, aimed at the acquirement of despotic power over the people. Discrimination was made between the Children of the Captivity and the Remnant, who were in process of being naturally welded by inter-marriage. The Remnant were now called "adversaries" by the intolerant priestly faction, and when Zechariah protested, he was killed, which caused intense bitterness to spring up, with a tendency to reprisal and counter-reprisal.

The building of the wall was stopped and the gates were burnt by fire.

Armed with the decree of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, Ezra of the Dispersion arrived to assist the hieratic faction.

He proclaimed throughout the land that all the Children of the Captivity should gather themselves together at Jerusalem within three days, failing which their property would be confiscated, and dissenters would be accounted "strangers."

Shivering in the rain which was falling, the awe-stricken people were told how wicked they had been, and commanded to alienate their "strange" wives, together with the children of the marriages.

This violation of natural affection and humanity, so characteristic of the fanatic in power, resulted in the Jews becoming a Peculiar People or Chosen Race, hated by and hating their "adversaries," whom they stigmatised as "Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites"!

Traced to its origin, the economic inequality created by the intrusion of the much-consuming city-dwellers was the first step in the chain of circumstances which produced what would have been a temporary resentment, but which the priests established as a permanent intensified religious hatred.

The aversion and dislike felt by the Jews of the Captivity towards their kinsmen had far-reaching consequences. When Sargon's colonists, the Samaritans, offered, as worshippers of the same God, to assist in the rebuilding of the Temple, the Jews indignantly repulsed them, and an antagonistic egoism was set up in Samaria. This jealous policy was entirely foreign to the spirit of the great prophets of Judah, but it became the obsession of the hierarchy, and resulted in incalculable calamities.

Loathed and detested, the Jews have suffered for their unfortunate narrow and sectarian exclusiveness throughout the ages. In the history of the nations there is probably no more extreme illustration of nationalism. The pogroms in continental Europe of modern times are directly consequent upon the progressive growth of hatred, first crystallised into rigidity by Ezra the Scribe.

In the Book of Leviticus, the hand of the "ready scribe" may be detected by comparing ch. xix ver. 34, of an earlier period, with the later immoral doctrine of ch. xxv ver. 44, 45 and 46, in which the Jews are enjoined to enslave the children of the "strangers that do sojourn among you."

The Jews were now subjected to heavy ecclesiastical government. The tribute to Persia was small in comparison to this taxation, but it was multiplied by the cruel rapacity of the nobles, who even confiscated the tithes intended for the Levite, the fatherless and the widow. The small holders fell into debt, and were imprisoned by that slavery which proceeds from usury. The children of the Chosen People themselves were sold into slavery by their parents.

Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, was then commissioned to go to Jerusalem with the object of remedying these unfortunate symptoms. The benevolent reformer appears to have considered that the cause lay in the mixed marriages, which still continued in accordance with Nature's contempt for man-made laws, for he vehemently declares, "And I contended with them and reviled them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair!"

Civil commotion, pestilence and famine followed the well-intentioned efforts of the "controller," who vaguely was conscious of failure, for he frequently and pathetically remarks, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all I have done for this people."

Ezra and Nehemiah's god was a limited extra-cosmic conception like Ormuzd, the Zoroastrian god of heaven. He was not the Supreme God of the universe put forth by the great prophets. "To do justly" is a universal principle. "The Gentiles," said Isaiah, "shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising."

The Maccabees.

In their veneration of the priest the Jews soon forgot the Deity. Their yoke came not from foreign oppression, but from the hieratic despotism, which became involved in the competitive struggles between Egypt and Syria, under the Hellenic dynasties of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidæ.

The wealth and magnificence of the high-priests, supported by a superstitious laity, led to intrigue, jealousies and hatreds. The priesthood and people divided into factions, one of which adopted Hellenism by contact with the Greek influence and became for a time supreme. A violent persecution of the orthodox Jews was set on foot, a favourite

test of conformity being the eating of swine's flesh, which excited the revolt of the Maccabees, who headed a struggle for national freedom.

The Maccabees, after a long and fierce war, became more religiously intolerant than ever with each other and with their neighbours. In accordance with the habit of egoisms, they were split into new factions, out of which grew the quarrelling sects of Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees and Sadducees.

The cult of Hellenism was probably responsible for the belief of the Pharisees in a future life, in rewards and punishments hereafter, and of Paradise and Hell. Punctilious about forms and ceremonies, they "strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel." "Sitting in Moses' seat, they made the word of God of none effect through their tradition." They were the Liberal Party of the hierarchy.

The Sadducees were the aristocratic, landed class, and they formed the "national" party, simulating great patriotism. Placing culture before justice, they were direct spiritual descendants of Ezra.

The Ruins of Judaism.

The history of the Asmonæan kingdom under Maccabæan princes and Herod kings is one of continual civil discord and crime. The profiteers obtained such wealth and influence that they controlled even the opinions of the people, whose minds were in a state of utter darkness.

Land was in the hands of the very few, and the dispossessed were not less explosive because they were confined in a smaller space. The people sought any outlet for the relief of pent up feelings, but without any realisation of the fundamental cause of their bondage.

Greater power and frightfulness were necessary to restrain commotions, and the enclosed people advocated and provided the very instruments which made their conditions worse, in the belief that in force alone lay the solution of their miserable tangle.

Atrocities were committed in the strivings of the cliques equal in cruelty to any to be found in the bloodstained pages of the old regal period of Israel. We read of Alexander

Jannæus, the high-priest and king (B.C. 105-78), after a victory against his own countrymen, executing eight hundred prisoners by crucifixion, while he feasted in view of them as they hung dying, in the presence of his wives and concubines.

Sexual perversion was rife and polygamy flourished. Leprosy and other vile diseases tormented the bodies of rich and poor alike. Lunacy sometimes brought relief to the minds of the mentally defective victims, aberrated by the struggle for existence in a hostile environment.

The New Prophets.

The wave of hope aroused by the success of the Maccabæan revolt had broken on the rocks of bitter disappointment. The Zealots failed because they attempted to raise themselves by the domination of others. Fighting had not brought freedom, but only increasing hatred and slavery, which cultivated disunion and produced enemies on every side.

There were yet many who thought that freedom could be attained by means of physical and moral violence, and the Jews, after Palestine had become the tributary of Rome, continued to look for a Messiah who should lead them to victory over their enemies.

But a small minority of thoughtful men had learnt a lesson from the recent happenings. They saw that the foreign parasite was in reality supported upon the backs of the home variety, whose power was weakened, if anything, thereby, and that the country had greater freedom under Roman rule than when they lived under the cruel sway of their own princes and the priesthood.

From the fragmentary records of the gospels in the New Testament we glean that the New Prophets taught the people that a change of heart was necessary—that the prevailing point of view was wrong: "Ye must be born again," said they.

The Kingdom of God upon Earth.

John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth put forward the ideal of a spiritual State founded upon justice and love—of a kingdom of God upon earth, as it is in heaven, to which men and women might belong, no matter what their obliga-

tions to earthly tyrants might be. Jesus told the people that He came not to destroy, but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets ; that is, He came to make men free.

Slavery and the Philosophy of Jesus.

A war waged by slave-owners in order to impose slavery is manifestly immoral, but it was not so evident that physical and moral violence are vain as means of obtaining freedom from slavery.

Nevertheless, painful experience had testified to these earnest labourers that warfare is a gamble against the bank of Satan, and that the dice are loaded against all the belligerents. It is impossible, by continuing the gamble, to obtain reparation and restitution. "The loser always pays," and in war all the gamblers are losers. The real war-debts are hatreds, the seeds for propagating future wars and further slavery, until civilisation is bankrupt. The gain to those who "cut the loss," is in the lesson—learn or perish. "Put up again thy sword into his place ; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword."

If the slaves are victorious, slavery is not abolished : the slaves, remaining ignorant, only become slave-owners, and experience teaches that the one-time slaves become severe and cruel taskmasters.

Freedom is only obtained when ignorant ill-will is superseded by enlightened goodwill. Only in this way can the slaves see by which instrument they are enslaved. They will then see that the responsibility is their own, and that freedom may therefore be obtained at will.

The parasitic slave-owner is a more miserable slave than those upon whom he batters. Living in an enervating, luxurious prison, how can he, even less than his servile attendants, understand the delights of freedom? The thought of the plunge into the cool waters of liberty fills his hypercultured soul with dread. The test of John the Baptist in the river Jordan possesses great symbolic meaning.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, men of property, who "devoured" widows' houses and "for a pretence" made long prayers, were thought by the peasants of Galilee to be the salt of the earth. They thought Jesus mad when

He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." "Who, then, can be saved?" asked the poor men, in pure bewilderment.

How to Obtain Freedom.

The door opens inwardly, and it is obstinate vanity attempting to hack a way through, upon the self-justifying plea that "things cannot be taken lying down." In this mood, when weary, the fighter for freedom is easily captured by a new tyranny. The slave ceases to be a slave when he no longer denies freedom to others. He is a free man when he no longer does to others that which he does not care to have done to himself—when he learns "to do justly and love mercy." "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free."

More good-nature is not enough. This is the unprotected condition, which is so easily decomposed by false doctrine into the will to hate. There must be goodwill towards men.

The New Prophets, therefore, sought to remove the scales which obscured the mental vision of the people. They saw that Hatred is the child of Ignorance, and that it grew and fed upon Physical and Moral Violence, which manifested itself in War and Slavery.

The Code of Jesus.

The Decalogue enjoins, "Thou shalt not kill," but this is extended by Jesus, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was inadequate: "Ye have heard, that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy,' but I say unto you, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.'"

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth': but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Do not behave cowardly or insolently, but by conviction refuse to be a party to hatred and violence of any kind.

"Strike, but hear me!" said Themistocles, when threatened violently by an adversary in argument. The principle rests upon the bedrock of the social instinct. It is wise foresight never to be vindictive—reparation comes in unexpected ways. The gain is in the lesson.

The Political Economy of Jesus.

Was it just, that while the foxes had holes and the birds of the air their nests, the Son of man had not where to lay His head? Yet, since the sun shines upon the evil and the good and the rain falls upon the just and the unjust, everyone had an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Those who would discriminate for others might find discrimination exercised against themselves. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

Jesus taught the abandonment of property claims in so far as human need required such abandonment. To the old questions, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He answered in these words of deep economic meaning: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

When to God, e.g. to the individual, there were rendered the things that were his, and to Cæsar, e.g. the community, the things that belong to all, then from this secure and sound foundation there would be erected by common consent a stable social system, without the necessity of props of power, subject to dry rot and sudden collapse.

The Unchangeability of the Commandments of God.

Man, possessing freedom of choice, is a free agent within certain limits, which may be defined, but which may not be overstepped. The "commandments of God" or "laws of Nature" are omnipresent, omniscient, eternal and immutable. The Sage of Galilee insisted that it was futile to attempt to alter "the will of the Father." The Golden Rule, like the Law of Gravitation, is as old as the universe. Man has neither created this planet nor does he rule it, and before he knew anything of the existence of natural laws he unknowingly obeyed them. He obeyed the Law of Gravitation before Newton discovered it, just as he was whirled through

space while he vehemently protested that the earth stood still. He obeys the Golden Rule also under the stress of necessity, in obedience to the fiat, "This do, or perish."

While man's enactments may be broken, it is vanity to talk of "breaking the commandment of God." Natural law may be disregarded perilously, but one does not break, suspend or alter the Law of Gravitation by jumping from the top of a high cliff. The Golden Rule is not broken when men or nations fight and kill, each deluded into thinking that by the subjugation one of the other peace and happiness can be ensured. The penalty in the consequences is exacted "to the uttermost farthing." "Verily, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all things are accomplished."

The Prince of Peace demonstrated that there was more to unlearn than learn: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." It was prejudice or lack of imagination in the minds of the grown-ups which barred the way to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The jostling, scrambling multitude did not hear the decree of the Inexorable: Children, not this wise: children, not that way!

"As ye Sow, so shall ye also Reap."

Wrong-headed theories should be tested by the only test available to science: "By their fruits ye shall know them." It is plain common sense that you cannot gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles. There is only one answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Obeys the commandments of God, not in fear of some punishment hereafter, nor with a view to the securing of special favours, but as an inevitable necessity. Those who conform to these principles Jesus likened unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock; while those who disregarded them He likened unto a foolish man who built his house upon sand. He did not call the man who conformed with the law a saint, nor did He denounce the heedless person as a sinner. In Nature there is neither partiality shown to the one, nor vindictiveness to the other.

No matter how often or how greatly man may err, he is forgiven so soon as he "repents," that is, so soon as he "learns to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

He was Misunderstood, Despised and Rejected.

"The common people heard Him gladly," but He was misunderstood by many, who thought these things should come to pass by power and might. On one occasion Jesus escaped into a mountain, perceiving that they were about to "come and take Him by force to make Him king."

But "He stirred up the people" by His teaching, and they began to ask awkward questions. The profiteers knew they must take action. They therefore charged Him with blasphemy, and by means of their agents, the scribes, they aroused the religious prejudices and passions of the sects against Him.

It was not in the interests of the Roman authorities to oppose vigorously the insane wishes of the Jewish mob, the excitement of which had to be discharged. Jesus was handed over to be crucified, suffering the usual death of a slave-malefactor.

The Redeemer was killed not for His theology, but for His politics. After the great Sacrifice, His followers said of Him, "But we hoped it was He which should redeem Israel," meaning a political redemption by force.