

The Supreme Vindication of American Civilization—Emil G. Hirsch.

# The REFORM ADVOCATE



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philanthropies, while Joseph B. Koplik divided \$500 of his \$2,000 estate among charitable institutions.

Dr. W. E. Aughinbaugh, a commercial globe-trotter, was in this city last week and gave a description of his travels to the daily press. He reported there are 1300 naturalized American Jews living in Jerusalem, "waiting to die there on holy soil," at the present time.

"Occasional."



### Tradition and Dogma.

A Sermon delivered in the Synagog at Stockholm on the Second Day of Rosh-Hashono, Oct. 3, 1913, by Ignaz Goldziher.

Translated for the Reform Advocate by J. H.

Upon my willing acceptance of the flattering invitation of your Honorable Board of Directors to address you on this Memorial day, I had to choose among the numerous themes suitable to this occasion and none appeared to me more fitting or more adapted to the religious questions of the present time and for this solemn celebration than the subject I have selected.

I beg to crave your attention to a few fundamental thoughts of religious life and thinking in general and which thus apply with equal strength and force to the Jewish religious life and thought. There can hardly be any question of more vital importance in the development of all religious life than that of the factors of organic connection between the religious antiquity and the present day as well as the future religious thought and activity.

The exponent of such organic cohesion and the organ of such ideal connection, both in the outward manifestation and in actual facts of religious life, is what we are accustomed to call the Tradition.

In this solemn hour let us consider the influence of tradition upon religious development and I am free to say, that you will agree with me, that tradition must be considered the vital force in all progress and in the constant changes of religious thought and life.

Under the general denomination of tradition we include everything that has been transmitted to us from the preceding generations. Tradition may, however, be divided into two distinct and differing classifications: Its object can be something tangible or concrete, such as for instance an old manuscript, an old book or monuments of ancient times. Besides such tangible or material tradition, there is the tradition of ideals, of thought or of ethical conceptions, transmitted to us from the preceding generations that had conceived them and which ideals, thoughts or conceptions have become our own and we are, therefore, justified in calling such subjective sentiments our own traditions.

By thus defining the lines of demarcation in the conception of the term of tradition we discern the great differences between the large masses of tradition. These discriminations are arrived at by the con-

sideration of the subjective relations that we maintain towards the object designated as tradition.

From this viewpoint we shall distinguish the two different kinds of tradition. It would seem most fitting to illustrate that difference by a comparison or analogy with the one faculty through which man gives the expression of his intellectual attainments and innermost life, this is the history of language. Language itself is the object or rather the product of tradition. No one individual, profiting by the use of language, has himself invented it anew. Every one of us has come into the inheritance of language as the acquisition of prior generations and the life development of the language has been fostered through the activity of all mankind, and every single individual has made use of language for the expression of his own innermost soul life. This latter consideration, excluding in advance a large volume of language tradition, brings home to us an evident discrimination, with which we are daily being molested in the controversies on the school question. That is the difference between the dead and the living languages. Both kinds of languages are the object of tradition. From the tombs and sepulchers of the ancient world, we exhume the embalmed monuments of cuneiform or hieroglyphic writings as the testimonials of a long dead intellectual life. The tombs and sepulchers have preserved these documents during thousands of years and they now enable the scholars of the present day by the deciphering and reading of the inscriptions of the misty antiquity to add to the culture and knowledge of this generation. In this work the scholar, devoting his entire skill and shrewdness, faces an ossified and permanently fixed object in whose life his own soul has no subjective interest or share.

On the other hand we all share with every fibre of our heart and with all impulses of our mind in the life and the development of our mother tongue, the source and the organ of our intellectual personality. With the babble of every infant it is born anew. It is a living thing deriving its activity from life. It has developed with and through the intellectual life and work of our ancestors and it has come to us as a living and precious inheritance. It expresses our inmost feelings, and, being entwined into our daily lives and occupations it grows, expands and develops and continues to become more and more expressive of our thoughts and feelings so as to enrich our intellect, whose adequate representation it aims to be. Quite true, we found the language all ready for us; it had been transmitted to us as a tradition, but it had not been exhumed from the tombs and sepulchers of antiquity nor had it been stored away in the warehouse of memory. In the school of life we have learned the language and we shall transmit it to the coming generations as a living and working force, enlarged and beautified through our own additions to its rich vocabulary.

This contemplation furnishes us the keynote for distinguishing between the two different kinds of tradition. We recognize them as fundamentally and perceptibly at variance in their causes and effects. There are dead and decayed traditions and others living and full of activity and force.

Visitors to the Museum of Antiquities in Cairo will never fail to look into one of the halls on the first floor, where the five caskets of royal mummies of the 17th, 18th and 19th dynasty are carefully preserved under glass covers. They will be particularly impressed by and admire the exhibits numbered 1180 and 1777 in the catalog. These are the mummies of

the two great Pharaohs of the 14th century B. C., Seti I and Rameses II., which have been exhumed from the sepulchral vaults of Dair al-Bahri. The story of this astounding find is told in every catalog, and the older people of this generation readily recall the description of the royal funeral pageant in July, 1881, when the earthly remains of these early day rulers of Egypt, after resting undisturbed for over three thousand years in their sarcophagios were brought down the Nile upon splendidly decorated ships and accorded royal honors—only to become an exhibit and attraction in a state museum, to be carefully guarded under glass covers and to be furnished a number in the catalog. True, the numbers given them are made quite prominent and printed in large type, and all guide-books call attention to their importance by adding the double star. No doubt, as a mere curiosity or museum exhibit nothing of greater interest can be imagined. It would be impossible to cite anything that would better illustrate what might be termed a dead and decayed tradition. The mummies of the old Pharaohs are desirable objects and exhibits for museums, but to the historical sentiments of the present inhabitants of the country they are utter strangers. There is no conscious connection or continuity between the present day and that long past era when these men accomplished great deeds for the welfare of the country. Their memory is not a living element making for patriotism. No mausoleum will be erected to them, to which their descendants might travel as pilgrims in order to retain a soul stirring deep piety through the memories of a living and exalted past. They are not the symbols of an historical mission, that could create enthusiasm or arouse the National feelings. They are the dead ruins of a dead past, historical hieroglyphics, that at most might revive the delusive spark of a sham romanticism.

This might be considered the best example of a dead and decayed tradition.

In contrast to this what do we call a living tradition? It must consist of ideals, practices, customs or institutions transmitted by the prior generations, in which each succeeding generation took active part and that form part of our own present soul life. As every succeeding generation has added to or improved upon the inherited tradition, so do we continue to shape and improve it in order to leave to our successors a better tradition than we received from our forefathers.

I hardly dare claim to have furnished an exact scientific definition, but I believe, I have given you sufficient information to recognize the difference between a dead tradition and an active living one. To summarize we might state:

1. Preceding generations have established certain religious views, practices and ideals.

2. We, as their successors, are by our history in conscious continuity with the many preceding generations that have created or developed these ideals or institutions.

3. We are the co-operators of our ancestors by our own work in improving upon the ideals or institutions transmitted to us and adapting them to the spirit and the needs of the present times. The very fact, that we are in conscious spiritual continuity with the generations that had formed and developed the traditions and transmitted them to us, and that we contribute our own best intellect to the improvement thereof by creating anew the precious inheritance through our own participation therein, establishes the tradition as living and active in the soul of the community, which is the keeper and depository of the tradition.

You are justified in inquiring of me how I can explain this tradition, descending from generation to generation, ceaselessly renewing itself, never arriving at a definite point of rest and continuously being created anew? The history of development of every living institution will furnish the correct reply. If tradition is to form an organic element in our intellectual and moral life, then it must not be outside of the totality of all our intellectual activities or of all the factors that go to make up our spiritual and moral life, or in more concise terms, our present day culture. On the contrary, tradition must enter our daily life, must exert its influence upon it and in exchange it must extract and absorb from our lives such additions as to recreate or rejuvenate it for transmission to our own descendants in better and improved form and expression.

In now turning to the subject of religious tradition let us apply the preceding illustrations to this class of tradition, thereby proving the soundness of the contentions by this one general possession of human cultural development. The emotions influencing and creating our religious sentiments find their expressions by and are founded upon religious thoughts and institutions, that for thousands of years have successively impregnated the souls and the lives of humanity, and they were not kept apart therefrom or isolated from the other spiritual and intellectual possessions of our ancestors. Psychologists may insist, that such is an absurd conception of the life of the soul. We contend, that religious sentiments cannot be separated from the soul life and do not occupy a special domain of their own therein. Wherever religious sentiments are present they form an integral part of our soul life and cannot be divided from it. This would clearly establish, that such religious traditions as are merged in our consciousness, if they be the honest constituent elements of our spirit and not a parasitic growth without qualification or vitality, are inseparably connected with the totality of our spiritual life, with our ethical ideals, our cultural acquirements, our scientific convictions, our social life, and with our esthetical aptitude. With these several elements of our spiritual being the religious sentiments form an indivisible entity, they obtain their purport only through this harmony and entity. Yea, all our religious sentiments are warranted only by this entity with our soul life. Wherever such union does not exist or where it has been obstructed or ruptured by some disturbing impediment, there the religious traditions no longer are a living factor in our soul life, they merely vegetate and may infect by their nefarious influences the welfare of the entity to which they have fastened themselves, without becoming an integral part of such living and active organism.

In other words, the religious traditions must live in the soul of the individual as well as in the consciousness of the community. They cannot remain apart or outside of the progressive development and enlargement of our knowledge, or our scientific attainments. The spiritual and intellectual progress—both of the smaller and the larger communities, who are the preservers and keepers of all religious traditions, necessarily corresponds to the degree of assimilation of the old tradition with the new knowledge, which gives direction to the modern activities. In conformity with the new spirit tradition is developed and rejuvenated and unintentionally it is interpreted anew and in harmony with the certitudes and the assurance of the newer intellect. Thus tradition is the object of an organic development. In this develop-



THE BEZALEL SCHOOL.

ment and in full accord with its own spirit, but without changing the substance, tradition demonstrates its vitality and in its adaptability to the new conditions it furnishes proof of its ability to survive. The absence of development, on the other hand, is ample testimony that such tradition is dead and decayed and no longer is part or takes share in the life of the soul. It no longer is an organic element thereof, a sure proof of the extinction of all former vitality. With the cessation of development and of the ability of adaptation the heretofore active tradition is relegated to the ranks of the dead and decayed ones. Its efficiency is semblance only, born and supported by artificial emotions of the moment. It no longer accords with the firm and lasting consciousness of our soul, does not form part of its life and is something foreign to it, an accidental intruder or gleaned from foreign soil. It no longer forms part of the harmonious entity of the soul life. At the best it is only a welcome guest, not a member of the family circle, in whose honor the state apartments have been aired and re-decorated, or—an archeological curiosity, a venerable ruin to be preserved among the historic monuments of ancient times. 1\*) Nothing more than the mere preservation of the religious tradition of antiquity in a museum.

1\*) Note. Compare.

Compare the work of M. Schwab on Salomon Munk (Sa vie et ses oeuvres. Paris, 1900: page 172), wherein Munk's attitude towards the religious tradition has been properly characterized by a prominent philosopher as "A venerable ruin fit only to be preserved among the historic monuments." ("Une ruine venerable bonne a conserver parmi les monuments historiques.")

(To be continued.)

### From Bezael to Bezalel.

By Dr. A. Levinson.

In the desert did the Jews wander . . . . . For years and years were they slaves to Pharaoh. Day in, day out did they build his pyramids, but not their polished stones did they hew, not their immense forms did they shape. Only clay did they mould, only straw did they supply, only bricks did they heap up.

Every spark of art within them was distinguished, every artistic impulse stifled, every aesthetic sense anesthetized.

Even the Levites that moulded no clay, that made no bricks, that gathered no straw, shared not the art of the country. Strange to them were the statues of the goddesses, the body of the sphinx, the structure of the pyramid.

Said the nations, "Jews have no art!"

To Mount Sinai did the Jews come, received their Torah, swore faith to God, and promised not to make "any graven image or any likeness of anything in the heaven above, or the earth beneath or in the water under the earth."

"A God whose glory is full of heaven and earth and yet no image can be made of him? There is no art among Jews! There is no art to their God!", said the nations.

In the desert do the Jews wander . . . . . Their God is in heaven, but His people are on earth. They long to gather and praise their Lord. They seek a tent of covenant, a Holy of Holies. The material the women and children supply; The plan, Moses draws. But where is the artist, where the architect? "A Jewish artist for a Jewish tabernacle!"

There appears—Bezalel.

Not in the Art Institutes of Egypt did he study; not the priests of Oseus did he serve. A born artist, imbued with the spirit of God, was he. And skillful men, in "whose hearts God put wisdom" did he train to share the work with him. Training others, inspiring fellow men, discovering new talents is a part of the artistic temperament, of the artistic spirit. Together they builded the tabernacle.

Not the heads of gods did they mould, not the bodies of goddesses did they shape, not the faces of the pyramids did they carve. An ark for the tablets of the Lord did they construct. And the letters that they made were kept intact by miracles, and the light over the altar burned continually, and the cherubim spread their wings in holy protection forever. The tabernacles was built with all its hooks and sockets, a perfect work, a model of art. Such was the contribution of the first Bezalel.

#### II.

In Goluth did the Jews wander. Pursued from one country to another, without a resting place for body or soul, they left behind their gold and silver, their houses