

Ecclesiasticism and Economics

By Louis Wallis

Startling facts about economic radicalism and religion have been suppressed for centuries and are only now coming to light. Vital matters have been concealed by sinister forces operating undercover and making use of the Christian Church and the Jewish Synagogue to distort the truth. Neither Synagogue nor Church are blameworthy as institutions; but they have been manipulated by secular powers interested in exploiting the masses of the people; and thus have been drawn into unwitting and unholy partnership with oppression.

Ecclesiasticism Prostituted

For instance, everybody knows that Russian Christianity was hand in glove with the Czar and the ground landlords of the Moscovite empire. The clergy were ignorant of the Bible; and were not even aware that they were tools of the aristocracy. German Lutheranism, likewise, was under the control of the "junker" class headed by the late Hohenzollern dynasty, and could teach nothing contrary to the economic interest of the secular nobility. The Church of England has been called, not without reason, "the Tory landed aristocracy at prayer."

Religious Upheaval Today

In these fateful days, when economic problems are coming to a head in dramatic, world-wide crisis, it is no wonder that religion is entering a new phase in its evolution. Both Synagogue and Church, in such countries as Russia and Germany, are being handled with brutality. And on the other hand, in countries where freedom of thought prevails, and where there are no publicly supported churches, the story is more peaceful but no less devastating as the people gradually find out the distinction between religion, on the one hand, and ecclesiasticism with its rigid theology on the other.

This profoundly important question is considered from a wholly new standpoint in my book entitled "God and the Social Process" which the Editor of the Freeman has requested me to summarize for readers of this paper. The book is published by the University of Chicago in connection with the University of Cambridge, England. The brief space

at our disposal makes necessary a somewhat dogmatic condensation as follows:

Hebrews Not "Line-bred"

The ancient Hebrews of Bible times, instead of being a "line-bred" nation of one stock, were derived mainly from two parent races which gradually coalesced in the land of Canaan, or Palestine. One of these races came as nomads out of the Arabian desert; while the other was in possession of Canaan long before the desert branch arrived on the stage of recorded history.

The element already settled in the land was known as Canaanites, or Amorites, the latter term being preferred. They consisted of local communities without any national organization, scattered about over the country in the form of little "city states," each locality being administered from a fortified town, or burg.

Economic and Religious Aristocracy

These Amorites were divided into two social strata. The upper class was the governing and proprietary element, established in the walled cities, and monopolizing the land of the surrounding districts; while under them was an enslaved class of peasant farmers composing the bulk of the population.

The aristocrats among the Amorites were known by the ancient, non-Hebrew term "baal" (plural "baalim"). An individual of this description was a person who held land as a private possession in fee simple. In the legal character of baal, or master, he also owned his cattle, slaves and wives.

The term baal was carried up to the gods of the Amorites. To offer sacrifice at the altars of the Baal-gods, and to take oath in the name of Baal, signified that the Amorite religion stood for the prevailing aristocratic, monopolistic régime. The sale of a piece of land or a slave by one baal to another baal was made sure by swearing before witnesses in the name of the divine

Baal of the locality in which the transaction took place.

In other words, the religion of the Amorites followed the pattern of their economics and sociology. It was an aristocratic cult through and through, based upon the "rugged individualism" which goes along with land monopoly and exploitation of the general public. The divine Baal was merely a celestial enlargement and replica of the human baal.

Incoming Nomads Democratic

But the other branch of Hebrew ancestry, which entered Canaan from the Arabian wilderness, had a very different economic and social idea. Being nomads and shepherds, they were democratic. And like unsettled, wandering social groups in every part of the world, they believed that the resources of nature were a divine provision for all, and that the ground ought not to be monopolized by a single individual or by a class of individuals. This idea was universal among the Indian tribes of America before the coming of the English, but was driven out of the aboriginal American mind by the musketry fire of pious Pilgrims who came on the Mayflower and other excursion boats.

One Original Clan

The invaders from the Arabian desert had no organization in "twelve tribes," but consisted of a single group, or horde, which ultimately became known as "the house of Joseph"; but even this name was probably not in use at the time of their entrance into Canaan.

Crossing the Jordan river, this militant group destroyed the baalim and the walled city of Jericho; then pouring up into the hill country of Canaan, they demolished the city of Bethel; and about fifty years later they completed the conquest of central Palestine by annihilating the walled city of Shechem and its baalim.

Large Area Seized

The Joseph group had now cleared for itself a large area in the heart of the hill country, about fifteen hundred square miles in extent. And so far as this particular district was concerned, the Amorite baal-aristocracy had been destroyed.

The Josephite element gradually settled down and became a small nation of shepherds and farmers re-



maining isolated from the Amorites for several decades. The soil was regarded, not as individual private property, but as the common possession of kindred clans; not to be alienated or sold, but held in trust by heads of clans in such a way that the rights of the humblest individual were sacredly guarded as a matter of justice, or "mishpat."

Religion Follows Democratic Pattern

The Josephite religion followed this democratic pattern, and came to a center in the country village of Shiloh, where was located the chief shrine of a deity called "Yahweh" who symbolized the tribal democracy in opposition to Baalistic land monopoly. (The name "Jehovah," found in modern translations of the Bible, is etymologically impossible. It was invented by scribes many centuries later, and was unknown to the Josephites.)

Amorites Beyond Josephite Frontiers

Outside the territory of the house of Joseph, the Amorite master class, however, continued to hold the large part of Canaan. They had more than twenty walled cities, including "Jebus," or "Jerusalem"; and these fortified centers were the headquarters of baal-aristocrats who held the surrounding peasantry in bondage.

Drama of Hebrew History

From such beginnings, the drama of Hebrew history now begins to unroll before us. The Josephite area steadily increased in population until it contained about two hundred and fifty thousand souls when the growth of numbers at length became a threat against the rule of the Amorite aristocracy in contiguous provinces.

At the same time, the oppressed peasantry in the other parts of Canaan, stirred by the example of democratic land tenure among the Josephites, grew restive under the rule of the baal monopolists in the various fortified cities. An alliance naturally grew up between the Josephites and enslaved farmers just north of them in a district known as "Issachar"; and this coalition presently extended further northward, embracing two other localities called "Naphtali" and "Zebulun."

By combining with the oppressed peasants of these three provinces, the Josephite militia was able to defeat the army of Baal under the Amorite General Sisera. Thus, the lower classes of Canaan, beyond the frontiers of the central Joseph group, were set free from their baalistic over-lords and converted to the wor-

ship of Yahweh, the deity of justice, or "mishpat."

Legends of Ancestors

A nation was now gradually taking shape; and in accordance with primitive habits of thought, the existence of this newly forming community had to be explained by genealogical myths.

The original core of the nation was the Joseph horde, or tribe, which had by this time spread southward giving rise to a freshly split-off group called "Sons of the South" (Ben Yemen) or "Benjamin," the younger brother of Joseph. And since there was no longer any territory in the central highlands for the expansion of these two groups, it followed that they were the only sons of their mother. Maternity is known before paternity in early times; and the name of the female sheep, or ewe (i.e., Rachel) became the connecting link between Joseph and Benjamin, the only sons of Rachel.

These two Sheep Tribes, then, were a solid group at the basis of the national evolution. They were the men of Rachel (perhaps "Ish-rachel," or by elision, "Israel"). And when they entered into alliance with the oppressed farmers of Issachar, Naphtali, and Zebulun, a further growth of genealogy was demanded. A shadowy patriarch now began to loom before the imagination whose name was not at first agreed upon. His favorite wife, however, was Rachel, the mother of the two Sheep Tribes; while all the remaining tribes were born upon a lower level of prestige, being the sons of slave girls (Bilhah and Zilpah), and of an ugly and hated wife Leah.

Hebrew Kingdom Appears

Pressure of enemies from outside of Canaan forced the organization of a monarchy under the Josephite king Saul, and later under David the creator of a new tribe still further south under the name "Judah" which was a part of the Hebrew nation for only about seventy-five years. The Jewish dynasty of David became so arrogant and oppressive that the Joseph tribes and their northern allies withdrew and set up another kingdom which properly made use of the name "Israel."



The alien tribe of Judah, which had been forced into union with the Joseph tribes by David, was now traced to the hated mother Leah, who, by deceit, had been forced upon the lover of Rachel. In other words, the developing Hebrew mythology followed the pattern of Hebrew history just as the religion followed the pattern of economics and sociology.

In the meanwhile, the heavy pressure of war taxation and the growth of indebtedness among the lesser land-holders led to the seizure of land by creditors; and in this way a newly rich class began to arise which reproduced the economic status of the old Amorite aristocracy.

Yahweh Becomes "Baal"

Concentration of land in the grasp of a wealthy class, and the resulting change of property titles from the primitive tribal status to the commercialistic "baal-tenure," produced a revolution. The big landlords controlled the government, appointed the priests, and altered the religious rites. The tribal democracy, which the house of Joseph had established in central Canaan, was overwhelmed in a vast resurgence of the old Amorite cults; and thus Yahweh was transformed into a Canaanite Baal.

Hebrew Prophets

It was under these economic and sociological conditions that the Hebrew prophets became a factor of high importance on the stage of history. There were two schools, or groups, of prophets. One school was allied with the rich and stood for the prevailing social order; it prophesied in the name of Baal, or of a Baalized Yahweh. The other school was against the prevailing social order; it denounced Baalism, and pointed out that the worship of Yahweh was originally identified with "mishpat" and collective rights to the land.

Between the claims of contending prophets, masses of the people were uncertain and confused. The ship of state moved rudderless through stormy seas. The Josephite kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrian empire; and then, later on, the tribe, or kingdom, of Judah was broken up, and its principal inhabitants carried away captive to Babylon.

Judaic Monotheism

The Josephites disappeared from history (the "lost tribes"); and the Jews thus became the surviving remnant of the Hebrew people. They carried with them to Babylon certain historical and prophetic writings which later became the basis of the

Hebrew Bible. Ceasing to call Yahweh by the name of Baal, the Jews instead made use of the term "Adon" (lord); and the religion came to center about a formula known as "The Shema," which reads as follows: "Listen Israel! Thy Adon, our God, is One Adon."

The Synagogue is entirely a post-Babylonian development. Under its rule, the Jewish masses looked back upon the Hebrew past through a haze of myth and legend abounding in miracles and obscuring the sociological and economic facts of history.

While the Synagogue and its monotheistic religion marked a cultural advantage, the old social problems reappeared, leading to a revival of prophetism under the lead of Jesus, giving rise to Christianity, which was really an outgrowth of the earlier Hebraism and not a branch of the Jewish religion.

Economics and Ecclesiasticism

On the whole, the influence of both Synagogue and Church through the ages has been to obscure the very problem which gave rise to the great struggle of religions under the He-

brew prophets. This doubtless has been unavoidable, since the interpretation of Hebrew history and the Bible is not an easy matter.

But the result has been to make organized religion serviceable to the "vested interests" which do not want the problem of economics to be raised or discussed. Yet the great social awakening of today puts pressure upon Jews and Christians alike to decide what attitude modern religion is to take with reference to the very problems that agitated the Hebrew prophets.