

Two Goals: Commitment and Community Support

• RABBI EMANUEL RACKMAN

Excerpts From Convention Address—on our spiritual and fiscal goals

Jewish Self-Respect

The reports on Day Schools all over the country were most impressive. I was very much interested in the report on the South which made reference to the Day School in Charleston, S. C.

In 1825 or 1828, the Governor of South Carolina issued a proclamation, prior to Thanksgiving, calling upon people to assemble in their churches and thank G-d for the blessings that were theirs. The proclamation was signed not only in the year A.D. but with full Christian flourish. The Jewish merchants of Charleston had enough *derech erez* and respect for their own tradition to go to the Governor and tell him that there are Jews also in South Carolina, and that he should not issue a proclamation in a tone which is unmindful of another constituency. The Governor refused to change the proclamation and that year, on Thanksgiving Day, all of the Jewish stores in Charleston were open as a protest against the Governor. This happened more than 130 years ago.

There were committed Jews in 1825. As a matter of fact, we had an instance in the days of Valley Forge, when a young Jewish soldier came to General George Washington to ask for permission to observe a day other than Sunday as the Sabbath. And over the signature of General George Washington there is a letter granting this young man permission to observe the Sabbath—a day that was holy to him.

I want you to know that this young man did what during World War II — with hundreds of thousands of Jewish men and women in the armed forces of the United States — not one Jewish soldier had the courage to do: ask for that permission. We finally got it in 1943; but it was the Seventh Day Adventists who asked for it. We became the indirect beneficiaries of what they had sought and obtained.

There were Jews in 1777 and 1778; and there were Jews in 1825 and 1828. What happened to these generations? They were also Jews with commitment, Jews with courage. Yet, alas there was no Torah education. It wasn't their fault. There was just no way to transmit Torah. Our continent was plagued with a lack of

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Jewish scholars, with a lack of Jewish schools. You couldn't establish them if you wanted to.

The Vital Ingredient

Then there came the Eastern European influx, at the beginning of this century; and the situation was corrected. There came scholars and men who knew Torah and they established not only congregations but founded schools. But alas, they too did not prove to be what they should have been. Who can gainsay that the Talmud Torah of forty and fifty years ago did not teach as much as our Yeshivos of today. Yet, commitment to Torah is not communicated only through knowledge. This can come only from a school which combines — perhaps it's in the words and that is what they meant when they named it — *Torah* and *Mesorah* — Torah and Tradition, as this wonderful organization calls it; or designate it *Torah Veyirah* as Satmar calls it. But you need the combination of the two. One without the other will insure no survival whatever. And it is to this that you are dedicated, it is this which is your goal to fulfill; and with every new school that is established you create more and more opportunities for young men to work for Torah, to express themselves, to create in the field of Torah. You can even create a modern Orthodox intelligensia. You create a group of *B'nei Torah* who are vying with each other in learning, who are able to write books pertaining to Torah. And there will be the readers for these books. There will be those who will understand. There will be those who will seek to buy them.

In All Fairness

There is, however, an area which is a problem that you must consider, because from this Convention there must go forth a voice that will really make its mark.

I have been committed and still am committed, perhaps less certain that I was before, but still committed,

I think, to the separation of church and state. But
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FEDERAL AID TO RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

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Excerpt From Convention Address

IN RECENT MONTHS, we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in the problem of providing governmental support to religious schools. The controversy, which came to a head in 1949, once more Hared up, not only between groups of different religions but also within religious camps. The majority opinion seems to agree with the statement by President Kennedy when he was successfully campaigning for his present office—that the payment of any funds from a public source to a denominational institution is a violation of the traditional principle of the separation of church and state.

If separation, as Mr. Justice Frankfurter stated means separation and nothing less, then it can be said with confidence that there never was a church-state separation in the United States, especially in education. There are numerous examples throughout our history of Federal and state financial aid to denominational schools and colleges. At the present moment, there are numerous religious schools which are enjoying the benefits of loans for improving instruction in science, mathematics, and languages under the National Defense Education Act of 1958. Isn't the principle of separation equally applicable to loans as to grants, to religious schools as to colleges? Yet no one in the government, including the President, has made any determined effort to be consistent. Why not? Because there was probably no intention in our history to institute a complete separation. But if separation is not complete, it is not separation.

Let us also look at the public school. In actual practice, this is not a secular, but rather non-sectarian Christian school. And what is more, in most communities in our country, there is a determined effort to retain Bible

Two Goals

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what I cannot forgive is that the American Jewish groups that are agitating most vociferously for the separation of church and state are the ones that are denying the Day Schools the money that they are entitled to if they are to be cut off from Federal aid. At least, see that they get some money from the Jewish community. But the same people who say you can't get from the government are the people who are holding their hands on the purse-strings of Federations and Welfare Funds and not letting the Day Schools get hold of them; and this must be told to the world-wide community — not only the Jewish community — if necessary.

In the city of New York, \$50,000 a year is given to Day Schools by Federation. 'The *lowest* figure in the

reading, prayers, Christmas observances, and other religious practices. Haven't we been paying huge sums from the public treasury for public schools that are actually religious in spirit? Separation means actual separation, but this is not what has happened in public education and is not likely to happen. By no means should we overlook the fact that compulsory school attendance often means compulsory participation in religious ceremonies—indirect conflict with the religious freedom clause, which, unlike the doctrine of separation, is expressed explicitly in the second half of that part of the First Amendment dealing with religion. This is the part which is rarely quoted in the controversy of church-state relations.

For too long has the American Jewish community been one-sidedly devoted to the dubious doctrine of separationism. It is high time, in the light of the cold reality of a long record of cooperation by the government and religion in educational affairs, to take a new look at the situation. The Jewish day schools have more than proved themselves with signal service to the nation and to Judaism. Basic justice requires that the public offer aid for public service and without any more control than the state is already exercising over religious schools *without* the payment of funds.

All Jewish groups, including those which have actively opposed the only significant types of religious education—the Yeshivah and the Jewish day school—should make a concerted campaign for public aid to these schools. If they should restudy the problem objectively, they would probably see governmental support to religious schools in a different light than heretofore.

Public aid to the Jewish day school will yield immense dividends on two fronts: the welfare and security of the nation through the education of a well-informed and loyal citizenry; and the preservation of the leadership and followership of the American Jewish community through the extension of Torah Judaism.

(Full address in next issue)

United States. And we are fighting a losing battle to hold on to that \$50,000. I'm in the midst of it, so I know.

We must raise our voice to the leadership. Make up your minds. We will not be strangled. This is our lifeline. Separation of church and state is a technique; and, as the Supreme Court said: Let's not make a sacred cow of it. If you make it possible for the Day Schools to live by getting the Jewish Community to support the movement, then we are in no need of Federal aid, or State aid. But if you are going to cut off the one line, if you're going to deny the help from Federations and Welfare Funds, then we will have to help break down that which has been cherished by us for so long. At least, we must let the rest of the Jewish world know that it can no longer commit this act of strangulation upon us.