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SALVATION BOUND UP IN THE WELL-BEING OF OTHERS

From *Questions Jews Ask: Reconstructionist Answers*

Salvation means deliverance from those evils, external and internal, which prevent man from realizing his maximum potentialities. It is deliverance from frustration of which it is the very antithesis...Stated positively, it means the maximum fulfillment of those human capacities which entitle man [sic] to be described as "made in the image of God.."

We cannot expect a steady, uninterrupted advance in a single direction toward the goal of salvation. New conditions emerge for which we are unprepared, and which may block progress, and even result in temporary regressions in some respects. We must, however, have faith that the good latent in man will eventually emerge and will triumph over those conditions that we recognize as evil. **We should not expect to live to witness the achievement of the full salvation of mankind [sic]. However, by faithfully participating as individuals in the activities that make for human salvation, we can at least have a foretaste of it. The resulting gain in virtue and significance will thus enable us not only to find life worthwhile but also help us render it worthwhile for the rest of the world. That much salvation it is our duty and within our power to achieve.** (126-127)

JUSTICE AS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE

From *The Future of the American Jew*

"Basic Values in Jewish Religion" (244-339)

Enough has been said in previous chapters to indicate which of the traditional dogmas have become either obsolete or irrelevant. Their place cannot be left void. "We usually urge," says [Solomon] Schechter in his essay on the dogmas of Judaism, "that in Judaism religion means life; but we forget that a life without guiding principles and thoughts is a life not worth living." **What we need is to ascertain what guiding principles and thoughts we can find in our religious tradition that are compatible with our modern conception of salvation, and that might serve as an incentive to strive for that salvation.** These "guiding principles and thoughts" would have to serve as the basic values of Jewish religion for our day. *A value is any attitude or belief which is stressed as of high worth, because of its importance for the impetus which it supplies to the striving for salvation.* The alternative to authoritative dogma which has to be accepted, regardless of reason's approval, is not creedal anarchy. It is rather the acceptance of values which, without offending reason, are capable of satisfying our most distinctively human needs. Those are the needs which belong in the domain of the spirit.

The religion of any civilization has to counsel, to solace and to guide those who live by that civilization. It has to reckon with their innermost thoughts and feelings. *Jewish religion should articulate, and urge upon us, those values which would impel us to utilize our abilities and opportunities both for our own salvation and for that of our fellowmen* [sic]. (245-246)

Nine Values

Spiritual selection (versus natural selection)

Faith

Hope

Humility

Inner Freedom

Patience

Thankfulness

Justice

Love

Justice

The ideal of justice is based on the assumption that human beings are intrinsically equal, notwithstanding their apparent inequality in all possible respects of ability, character and fortune. Justice is the antithesis of discrimination either in favor or against...*In respect to that in them which is their very essence, all men* [sic] *are equal. This is the standard by which all justice is measured.*

The principle of human equality is not derived from any moral or spiritual experience, but is that which itself makes such experience possible. It stands above all human formulations of justice, and yet is immanent in them all...

It is the purpose of all laws and institutions, insofar as they are just, not to maintain...disparity, but to ignore it, in the interest of a higher law than that of unconscious nature, the law of human equality, which is the law of God...

Unfairness or injustice is a violation of the fundamental human equality, and is reprobate, whatever the human relationship in which it manifests itself, whether between judge and litigants, or government and citizens, or parents and children, or teachers and pupils, or employer and employees. In all cases where those at one end of the relationship have more power than those at the other end, there is the danger of freezing that disparity of power into a right or a privilege. To do so is, according to the consistently passionate exhortation of the entire Jewish tradition, to be guilty of *hamas*, violence. *The one thing God does not tolerate in man* [sic] *is violence. The only way, therefore, to avert violence is to reckon with the religio-ethical imperative of human equality, which is the soul of justice.*