

Unity Church, Pittsfield, Mass. October 2, 1910.

Subject,-- The Democracy of the Bible, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

Last Sunday I spoke of the Democracy of God, calling attention to the fact that all through the ages men have been making their gods as a picture of their interpretation of the universal realities, and the significance of human experience in life. The point which I had in mind especially was to bring home the truth that the essence of life is not to worship the God ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ that our fathers made, but to worship the God that we are making, and to remember in doing this that in the handiwork of our craft is our prayer.

We have to confess with regret, that when we come to such a subject ~~xxxxxx~~ as we are dealing with to-day, that we are hardly able to treat it fairly and without prejudice on account of the fact that the use and place of such books as the Bible in human life have been so perverted and distorted

by the over-zealous friends ~~xxxxxxx~~ that we are not able to free ourselves from a certain prejudice against it. In point of fact the wail of complaint sent out by these same would-be friends to the effect that the Bible is being left to ignominious oblivion by the on-marching world is just what they deserve, and what they ought to expect. The truth is that we have been bled to a point of Nausea by these pious ranters. In fact many who have taken these people at their word concerning the Bible, in simple disgust have laid the book aside among the useless trash that humanity has outgrown. This is a lamentable fact, for in so doing we are casting aside a great treasure. It is true that if all the bibles in the world should be suddenly destroyed, and all trace of them should be forgotten, the world would still go on, and humanity would not go to ruin and perdition as many think, yet it would be a great

loss to humanity, for it is a great human document. The Bible, as an arsenal of dogma and theological texts has come very ~~nb~~ close to destroying the bible as a very valuable human book for our generation at least. I hope that ~~xxxxxxx~~ none of us will fall victims ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> their evil ~~fruits,~~ <sup>teachings,</sup> and that we may have some understanding of the real value of the book as a human document and a nourisher of human effort and achievement, I am saying what I have to say this morning.

I was interested to note the other day that Ibsen the great Norwegian writer and dramatist, whom no one would accuse of ecclesiastical inclinations, was a great reader of the Bible. During the months when he was producing ~~xxx~~ his great plays dissecting modern society, and laying bare its impossible hypocracies, the only book that he ever looked into was the bible. It was to him what it apparently was to the Puritan revolutionist, and help and a guide in doing a great a laborious

task. If in the tasks before us there is any light to be gleaned from its wisdom, any stimulation and inspiration to be had from its noble passages, any encouragement and strength to be derived from ~~xxx~~ personalities embedded in its pages, it were a shame that we should lose that help because a lot of people more loud spoken than wisely spoken have disgusted us with ~~kh~~ their interminable tirade about the word of God. If we may not be lead to sins of commission by their false and foolish teachings, let us also be not lead to sins of omission.

Let me state briefly what the bible is. It is a five inch shelf of the books of the Jewish race. It contains the gleanings of their historical, poetical, writings. It contains the best of their fiction, their orations, their religious aspirations, their laws, customs, and it is by no means free from their religious dogmas. Out of a great background of material by a natural process of selection, ~~the xxxxxx~~ we have

in the bible the gleanings of the literary remains of a great people. About all that we know of the evolution of a great race from the days of barbarian culture to ~~axtixx~~ state of civilization is to be found in this library of their life. Their legends, their mythology, more or less accurate records of their history, the struggles of their growth,-- the records of a human family are the ~~aw~~. Now if you have any faith in the great principles of modern life, that through the experiences and reflections of men in their life struggles comes wisdom, and truth, and the approach to justice, then you must see ~~th~~ that in this record of the growth of a people from the dim vapory days of prehistoric times down to the collapse of ~~ixix~~ ancient civilization, and the beginning of mideaevalism, ~~it~~ must be a storehouse of that which is valuable for us to-day. Such a book as that we must not throw away lightly because some over zealous persons try to make of the book a thing which it

never was , and never can be.

I want to state as simply as I may some of the ways in which the book helpss me, not alone this book but all great books, and after all this is all that I am ~~attempting~~ trying to do is suggest its real use in life. In the first place it must be noted that the book is not merely Jewish, It is human. The race that produced it is one of the human family. Their experiences are like other human families ~~exactly~~ the accidents of form and circumstance. So it a human document, and humanity is not unlike to day what it was then. Some men will say, What use and time have I do read about the past, when there is so much in the rpresent. Why should I devote myself to the ages that are gone, why should I pour over the pages that record the life that is no more, when the living present demands so much of my attention , and absorbs all of my time. --- The answer fo that is very simple.

The roots of gold and veins of honor that are feeding the present, have their tips back in the ~~ages~~ that have gone. We are to-day what we are by virtue of the past. In order to understand the present, to discern clearly the direction and tendencies of modern life, and to make a valuable and faithful contribution to the work of our own times, we must <sup>now</sup> soil in which the roots of the living plants of to-day have taken their nourishment. ~~It is~~ <sup>We need</sup> the sense of historic continuity, not continuity of form, but continuity of spirit, and purpose, ~~that we need~~ to give us the requisite poise, determination and intelligence in the face of our own life problems. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ You have presented to you a great problem, you have to meet it, struggle with it, and solve it. We have before us to day in our own national life a tremendous problem caused by the revolution in religious thought. On the one hand we have the tremendous drift towards what some are pleased to call agnosticism, and

away from the traditional forms and standards of religious ~~th~~ thought and moral conduct. You have the radicals and the conservatives, One will tell you one thing and the other the other You are interested in the great problem that you face, you want to do sincerely and fairly what you can for its solution . But you hardly know which way to turn. On the one hand the conservative will tell you that the only hope of humanity is to go back to the traditions of the fathers, to accept and believe what the fathers accepted and believed, whether you can or not. All this radical teaching is a menace to society, and is only the precursor of disintegration, and the destruction of all life values. Then you turn to the radical and he tells you all hope is in the future , that the water which has turned the mill is passing on to the sea. He will tell you that the conservative is treasuring the memory of things that have been



but can never be again. You must decide between the two, you must work either in one direction or the other, which are you going to do. If you have any sense of historic continuity, if you know anything of the past you will have a basis for making an intelligent judgement and decision. You will see that the situation which you face is <sup>similar</sup> ~~just the same~~ as men have been facing all through history. Take for example a situation in Jewish history whose records are left in the Bible. When the great prophets came to the front with their astonishing condemnation of the oppression and inhumanity of Israel, when Amos left the flocks of sheep in the fields of Tekoa, and came to the city of the king, with his stinging denunciations, declaring that their worship of God was the most obnoxious mockery, that their sacrifices, their solemn assemblies, and the noise of their songs God hated and despised, and he would not be satis-

fied until Justice should role down ~~zzz~~ as waters and rightous-  
 ness as a mighty stream. Then whar happened , when this prophet  
 of social righteousness, started his crusade against the iniqui-  
 ties of his time. The conservative element rallied to the old  
 cry of the hlory of God and the great work done in former x  
 times by the nation and its priest~~ss~~ and levites, and condemn-  
 ed the great Amos for his denunciations and attempted to drive  
 him out of the land. The logic of history has shown that jus-  
 tice and truth were speaking in the voice of Amos, and that  
 iniquity and selfish <sup>ness</sup> and greed were ~~speaking~~ speaking in the voice of  
 the pious priests and hunkers who condemned him. In that day  
 when Amos spoke there was born a new <sup>era</sup> ~~xxxxxx~~ unto Israeal, the  
 greatest and most glorious of its history. History has <sup>found</sup> its ~~xx~~  
 judgement of condemnation, those forgotten, and unnamed serva-  
 vants and slaves of an iniquitous and greedy generation, while

Amos has been accorded the position of the first great moral leader of Historic Israel. Again in the middle ages when feudalism had done its work, and the conventional life of Europe ~~and~~, both state and ecclesiastical, was honeycombed by the rottenness and filth of its greed and oppression, there arose a great cry throughout the nation, the rumblings of revolution ~~appeared~~ were heard, then followed great wars, and turmoil, and strife, the fight of justice against injustice, <sup>humanity</sup> of ~~against~~ against the power of greed avarice, and privilege. Out of it all came a great people, freed from the heel of feudalism,. Their book of instruction all through this period was the Bible. From it came their ideals and inspirations, with it they supported their arguments, and under its banner as a symbol of eternal truth, they fought their way through the dark days of their conflict. And when the struggle was over they &

gave the book a place of honor and reverence in their lives. But in time they too became overlords, and the book which they had used as a weapon of ~~defense~~ offense, they now used a weapon of defense. It became a fetish to them, they worshipped, ~~and that~~ and that which had been their servant now became their ~~master~~ master and held them in the grip of a devoted superstition. If you know those facts it gives you a tremendous advantage in determining ~~your own~~ your own conduct in the face of your own problems. Truth is not conservative, justice is not conservative. Greed is conservative, privilege is conservative. If you want to ally yourself with truth and justice, the history of humanity tells you where you belong, and your cold reasoning head can then confirm the sentiments and longings of your human heart, that is always stirred by an ingrained love for truth and justice. If you love humanity,

if you are interested, in justice, in truth, in progress,  
in humanitarian uplift, do not let a prejudice, brought about  
superficial retailers of platitudes, deprive you of the use  
of a book that <sup>two or more</sup> contains the records of one great historic  
struggle for freedom and justice, and was the arsenal of facts  
in a second great reformation. ~~xxxxxxx~~  
~~xxxxxxx~~. Do not be deceived by its accidental forms/  
to not become subservient to it, but use, ~~xxxxxxx~~  
it ~~as~~ an invaluable weapon in the eternal fight for justice  
and humanity. It is human. Its spirit is democratic, its real  
essence is humanitarian. Parts of it are worthless, but parts  
of it will survive in the merits of their intrinsic worth long  
after much of the up to date writings have disappeared.

Then in a use that is more personal, I find a great  
satisfaction and delight. A part of my own personal Bible is

in this Bible of the Jewish race. Every man must have a Bible of his own, must have his literature to which he goes in different moods for help, and uplift. Each has to live his life more or less alone. Sometimes we have to do things that grow out of inner convictions, we have to stand out alone, and face the ~~xxxx~~ little world in which we live. We cannot explain, we cannot make our friends see, and they cannot understand. Yes the thing must be done, and we await the development of events to condemn ~~and~~ justify our action. Such action is not easy. It is easy enough to do what the crowd asks. It is easy enough to do a brave deed amid the hurrahs and shoutings of the crowd, but it is not so easy to cast all you have into the ~~xxxxxxx~~ the boat and sail away from the moorings of conventionality out into the open, and trust yourself to the unseen and eternal truth, that has not yet been seen by men. It ~~xxxx~~

takes a grwat soul to do that. And when I see anyone doing, and want to understand the full strength of their heroism, I go <sup>it</sup> to some of the confessions and stories of the bible, for I find there the outpourings of human souls, who have done that very thing. I do not know a more glorious passage in all literature as the expression of the desperate loneliness of the human soul in its loving service for humanity that the story of the Garden of Gethsemene. If you want to know what the men who have purchased for us whaterver of freedom we have, have been through, just go home and read that passage, <sup>a</sup> calling to mind the facts. Here is this lone man, whose life has been consecrated to the good of humanity, who has cast aside all considerations of wealth, of honor among his friends, of comfort, and ease, that he might drive home to a burdened nation the truth that in the secrets of his heart he felt that they must have. Now he had come to the critical time in his life, either all that he had

said and done must go by default, and he must be branded merely as a demagogue, and openly deny the truth of his assertions, or he must pay the last penalty of his manhood demanded by the cruelty and injustice of times. All his followers had <sup>de</sup>deserted him, even the three most faithful disciples do not understand, and slept ~~th~~ through his agony. Do you wonder that he alone with his convictions, facing the fact that all the world was against him, and clamoring for his life, broke forth into that natural human prayer, uttered alone in the silence of the night-time, and in the agony of his soul. One of the great human moments of history. I love to read that when I hear of a man or a woman who has done the brave deed, and faces the condemnation of the world alone. Its human. Its divine.

I use this as an illustration of the personal use to which some parts of this book may be put. That passage alone is



worth all the cost if all the rest were dross. When you are making up your own personal bible, your own collection for your own help, I beg of you do not pass this gem of human consecration by, simply because some ignorant person tells you that it is the record of a supernatural event staged in histrionic fashion for your pious instruction. It is the outpouring of a human soul. Cherish it. In human such moments humanity is at its best. There would be less of that harsh and ignorant criticism among men if we read the oftener such glarings of human life as this presents. ~~Then~~ Even in our own common-place lives there come moments that demand courage and conviction. When you face such a moment as that, read some passage that shows you the ~~high~~ acme of human consecration. Leave the world behind, and fight it out.

I have used the two illustrations at some length for the sake of pointing out the social and personal value of a great literature. By natural processes of selection we are

weeling from the literature of the past, and perhaps adding  
as sentance from our own times ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in  
making our Bible of Democracy. Each age makes its own Bible/  
To the Jews it was the Law, the first five books of the Old  
Testament. To the early Christians it was tye Old Testament/  
as a whole, the Law and the Prophets. To the later Christians  
it was the Old testament and parts of the New Testamant.  
For four hundred years after the time of Jesus the Christian  
~~body~~ was adding and subtracting from its won contribution.  
In our own time we are unconsciously doing the same thing.  
We are making our Bible of Democracy, From all the great writ-  
ings of the past we are selecting those choice bits, that ap-  
peal to the depths of the human soul in all its varied moods.  
In this cummulative and selective process we find our kinship  
to the past , and realize the true continuity of human history

in the continuity of its great hopes its great struggles for truth, and justice, Through the symbol of Language expressing the hope , the thought the aspiration, and the history of humanity through the centuries, we enter into that deeper and more wholesome idea that we are not merely the children of our time but of all time.