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AGENCIES THROUGHOUT CANADA.

# My Democracy

Government of the People. by the People, for the People

By Dr. LYMAN ABBOT

In New York Outlook

My democracy is not a political opinion; it is a religious faith. I believe in the reign of the people because I believe in my fellow-men. And I believe in my fellow-men because I believe in God their Father. I believe that we are the offspring of God; that he has made, or, to speak more accurately, is making, man in His own image; that Jesus Christ represents human nature as it is to be when the Father's work is finished; that the principles inculcated by Jesus Christ represent the principles which will rule in human society when human society is finished.

I do not believe in natural depravity. The nature of any uncompleted object is to be determined by the finished product: of a tree, by its fruit; of an edifice, by its use when completed. Man is emerging from the animal. The animal qualities which still adhere to man are not depraved in the animal, because they belong to the animal nature. They are depraved in man, because they do not belong to human nature. Depravity is against his nature. Kindness is natural and cruelty unnatural; love is natural and selfishness unnatural; spirituality is natural and sensuality is unnatural. Saying of a man that he is hoggish is not saying that he is a normal man; it is saying that he is an abnormal man. Saying that he is snaky, or has a tigerish temper, or has the skin of a rhinoceros, is not saying that he is natural; it is saying that he is unnatural. To call a man a dog is to affirm that he is less than a man. Our common language repudiates the notion that depravity is natural. We assume that depravity is unnatural.

Because I am a Christian I am a democrat; not a Wilson democrat, nor a Harmon democrat, nor a Bryan democrat, nor a Clark democrat, but just plain democrat; that is, a believer in the rule of the people. Because I am a Christian I am an optimist. I believe that our Father is at work in the world, making out of common folk such as Jesus Christ was. If I were not a Christian, I should be an aristocrat and a pessimist. It is my faith in a Christlike God and a Christlike humanity which makes me both democrat and optimist.

This is a religious definition of my faith. The scientific definition is in effect the same, though it is reached by a different approach.

I am an evolutionist. I believe that creation is growth, not manufacture. The worlds are made out of star dust; the animal creation out of protoplasm; man out of the animal creation. The tigerish temper, the hoggish greed, the rhinoceros's insensibility, are rags of the cast-off garments of man's rudimentary condition. They were natural to him before he was a man. They are unnatural to him now that he has become a man. Thus science and religion agree in their estimate of the present dignity and future destiny of man.

The scientific estimate is thus stated by Professor Huxley: "No one is more strongly convinced that I am of the vastness of the gulf between civilized man and the brutes, or is more certain that, whether from them or not, he is assuredly not of them. No one is less disposed to think lightly of the present dignity or despairingly of the future hopes of the only consciously intelligent denizen of this world."

The religious estimate is thus stated by the Hebrew Psalmist:

"Thou hast made him a little lower than God,  
And has covered him with glory and honor;  
Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands;  
Thou hast put all things under his feet;  
All sheep and oxen, yea, and all beasts of the field;  
The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas."

With the scientist, I think highly of the present dignity and future destiny of man. With the Psalmist, I believe that he is made to be a little lower than God.

No doubt, for this faith I am primarily indebted to the Bible. I cannot understand the prejudice of Christians against

Jews. I am profoundly grateful to the Hebrew people for transmitting this faith in man to the Gentile peoples.

The first chapter of the Hebrew writings declares that God made man in His own image and gave him the world for his habitation, and nature and its forces for his servants. That is the foundation of natural science.

The second chapter declares that man, forewarned of the danger, was yet left free to eat of a poisonous tree; free to eschew the evil and choose the good, or choose the evil and eschew the good. That is the foundation of personal and political liberty.

The third chapter declares that, while the bite of the serpent shall poison him, he shall eventually crush the head of the serpent. In that is the promise of ultimate moral victory.

The first chapter assures man mastery over nature; the second chapter man's mastery over himself; the third chapter man's mastery over the forces of evil.

The first is a charter of scientific optimism; the second is a charter of political optimism; the third is a charter of spiritual optimism.

Life confirms the vision of this ancient prophet.

Man has already secured mastery over nature. We can burrow better than the mole, build better than the beaver, store better than the bee, run faster than the deer, lift more than an elephant, outswim the fish in the sea, and we are learning to outfly the eagle in the air. And the forces of light, heat and electricity are obedient to our bidding.

The present unrest in the world is man's demand for the remainder of his charter rights; his right to govern himself; his right to destroy the evils which are destroying him.

Revolution in China; unrest in India; sporadic revolt in Russia; popular uprisings in Persia and Turkey; Anarchism in Italy; Democratic Socialism in Germany; Anti-Clericalism in France; public opinion curbing the power of feudal lords in England; the democratic revolt against special privilege in America—all have a common cause. Sampson is awaking and bursting the withes with which the Philistines have bound him.

I sympathize with the revolutionists in China; with the peasants in Russia and Italy; with the popular movements in Persia and Turkey; with the Social Democrats in Germany; with the Anti-Clericalists in France; with the Liberals in England; with the democratic revolt against special interests in America.

I do not approve of all their methods. But I hope for the liberation of the Chinese from the Manchu dynasty; for the deliverance of the peasantry in Russia from the bureaucracy, and in Italy from ecclesiastical repression and landlord exploitation; for the complete establishment of representative Government in Persia and Turkey; for the transfer of power from the Emperor and the military aristocracy to the people in Germany; for the emancipation of education from ecclesiastical control in France; for the overthrow of the last vestige of feudalism in England; and for the triumph of industrial democracy in America.

And for the same reason:

Whether the aristocracy is a foreign dynasty or a domestic bureaucracy; whether it is a military, a political, an ecclesiastical, or a commercial power; whether it is a Chinese Emperor, or a Russian Czar, or a Turkish Sultan, or an Italian landlord, or a German bureaucrat, or a French bishop, or an English hereditary lord, or an American boss, political or industrial, is immaterial. Mankind are awaking to the consciousness that they are God's offspring; that they possess the right, because the divinely endowed capacity, for self-mastery; and that no government is good government which does not tend to self-government.

I am glad that they are awaking, though I do not doubt that for a while they will be more dangerous awake than asleep.

A few years ago a Chinese embassy visited this country. A dinner was given to the embassy in New York City. One of the members of this embassy made an address. In it he said: "China is waking up; and it is the missionary who has awak-

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