Haile Selassie

When Ras Tafari Makonnen was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia in 1930 and took the name Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Lion of the tribe of Judah, it was like a prophecy coming true for the Jamaicans who had held on to Marcus Garvey’s words, “Look to Africa for the crowning of a Black King; he shall be the Redeemer.” His bloodline could be traced back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, he was said to be a direct descendant from the seed of David. Some, including Leonard Howell, saw a deep spiritual meaning behind all of this, and so the Rastafarian faith was formed; named directly after the emperor. Even the name Haile Selassie, which translates to “Power of the Holy Trinity,” had many convinced that he was indeed the messiah, a reincarnation of Christ.

Haile Selassie I however, did not view himself as divine or promote the Rastafarian faith. In fact Haile Selassie I was a Christian, a supposed leader of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and took faith in the bible. Nonetheless, the man did leave much to be admired.

Selassie was one of Ethiopia’s finest leaders. He pushed for the development of his country, and emphasized the importance of education. He pressed education forwards on all levels; primary, secondary and university level, for both boys and girls. He built numerous primary and secondary schools, including a university which he named after himself.

In 1931 he gave the people of Ethiopia citizenship and a constitution, which also created the country’s first Parliament, and was aimed at giving Ethiopia a sense of nationality. When World War I came to an end and the League of Nations was developed, Selassie pushed Ethiopia onto the international level when it was accepted into the League of Nations in 1924. He was also a key founder of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). It may not go well with all of us to view him as a savior; but a lot can be gained from his array of speeches and words of wisdom.

The War speech. 1963

When Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Haile Selassie personally led the defending troops, but in May 1936 he was forced into exile, and fled to Britain. Twice, in 1936 and 1938, he appealed for the League of Nations to take action and assist, but his appeal was in vain. In 1940, after Italy entered World War II, he returned to Africa with British help, and in 1941 he reentered Ethiopia and regained his throne. And in 1963, he stood before the United Nations in New York, and delivered the speech which is considered to be amongst the most powerful speeches of the 20th century. Here is an excerpt from the famous war speech:

"Today, I stand before the world organization which has succeeded to the mantle discarded by its discredited predecessor. In this body is enshrined the principle of collective security which I unsuccessfully invoked at Geneva. Here, in this Assembly, reposes the best - perhaps the last - hope for the peaceful survival of mankind.

In 1936, I declared that it was not the Covenant of the League that was at stake, but international morality. Undertakings, I said then are of little worth if the will to keep them is lacking.

The Charter of the United Nations expresses the noblest aspirations of man: the abjunction of force in the settlement of disputes between states; the assurance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as the race, sex, language or religion; the safeguarding of international peace and security.

But these, too, as were the phrases of the Covenant, are only words; their value depends wholly on our will to observe and honour them and give them content and meaning.

The preservation of peace and the guaranteeing of man's basic freedoms and rights require courage and eternal vigilance, that the least transgression of international morality shall not go undetected and un-remedied. These lessons must be learned anew by each succeeding generation, and that generation is fortunate indeed which learns from other than its own bitter experience. This Organization and each of its members bear a crushing and awesome responsibility: to absorb the wisdom of history and to apply it to the problems of the present, in order that future generations may be born, and live, and die, in peace.

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War speech continued

...The record of the United Nations during the few short years of its life, affords mankind a solid basis for encouragement and hope for the future. The United Nations has dared to act, when the League dared not - in Palestine, in Korea, in Suez, in the Congo. There is not one among us today who does not conjecture upon the reaction of this body when motives and actions are called into question. The opinion of this Organization today acts as a powerful influence upon the decisions of its members. The spotlight of world opinion, focused by the United Nations upon the transgressions of the renegades of human society, has thus far proved an effective safeguard against unchecked aggression and unrestricted violation of human rights.

The United Nations continues to serve as the forum where nations whose interests clash may lay their cases before world opinion. It still provides the essential escape valve without which the slow build-up of pressures would have long since resulted in catastrophic explosion. Its actions and decisions have speeded the achievement of freedom by many peoples on the continents of Africa and Asia. Its efforts have contributed to the advancement of the standard of living of peoples in all corners of the world.

For this, all men must give thanks. As I stand here today, how faint, how remote, are the memories of 1936. How different in 1963 are the attitudes of men. We then existed in an atmosphere of suffocating pessimism. Today, cautious yet buoyant optimism is the prevailing spirit.

But each one of us here knows that what has been accomplished is not enough. The United Nations judgments have been and continue to be subject to frustration, as individual member states have ignored its pronouncements and disregarded its recommendations. The Organization's sinews have been weakened, as member states have proceeded, in violation of its commands, to pursue their own aims and ends. The troubles which continue to plague us virtually all arise among member states of this Organization, but the Organization remains impotent to enforce acceptable solutions. As the maker and enforcer of international law, what the United Nations has achieved still falls regrettably short of our goal of an international community of nations.

This does not mean that the United Nations has failed. I have lived too long to cherish many illusions about the essential high-mindedness of men when brought into stark confrontation with the issue of control over their security, and their property interests. Not even now, when so much is at hazard, would many nations willingly entrust their destinies to other hands.

Yet, this is the ultimatum presented to us: secure the conditions whereby men will entrust their security to a larger entity, or risk annihilation; persuade men that their salvation rests in the subordination of national and local interests to the interests of humanity, or endanger man's future. These are the objectives, yesterday unobtainable, today essential, which we must labor to achieve. Until this is accomplished, mankind's future remains hazardous and permanent peace a matter for speculation.

There is no single magic formula, no one simple step, no words, whether written into the Organization's Charter or into a treaty between states, which can automatically guarantee to us what we seek. Peace is a day-to-day problem, the product of a multitude of events and judgments. Peace is not an "is", it is a "becoming." We cannot escape the dreadful possibility of catastrophe by miscalculation. But we can reach the right decisions on the myriad subordinate problems which each new day poses, and we can thereby make our contribution and perhaps the most that can be reasonably expected of us in 1963 to the preservation of peace. It is here that the United Nations has served us - not perfectly, but well. And in enhancing the possibilities that the Organization may serve us better, we serve and bring closer our most cherished goals.

On the question of racial discrimination, the Addis Ababa Conference taught, to those who will learn, this further lesson: That until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned: That until there are no longer first-class and second class citizens of any nation; That until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; That until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; That until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained; And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique and in South Africa in subhuman bondage have been toppled and destroyed; Until bigotry and prejudice and malicious and inhuman self-interest have been replaced by understanding and tolerance and good-will; Until all Africans stand and speak as free beings, equal in the eyes of all men, as they are in the eyes of Heaven; Until that day, the African continent will not know peace. We Africans will fight, if necessary and we know that we shall win, as we are confident in the victory of good over evil.

The United Nations has done much, both directly and indirectly to speed the disappearance of discrimination and oppression from the earth. Without the opportunity to focus world opinion on Africa and Asia which this Organization provides, the goal, for many, might still lie ahead, and the struggle would have taken far longer. For this, we are truly grateful. But more can be done. The basis of racial discrimination and colonialism has been economic, and it is with economic weapons that these evils have been and can be overcome. In pursuance of resolutions adopted at the Addis Ababa Summit Conference, African States have undertaken certain measures in the economic field, which, if adopted by all member states of the United Nations, would soon reduce intransigence to reason. I ask, today, for adherence to these measures by every nation represented here that is truly devoted to the principles enunciated in the Charter. I do not believe that Portugal and South Africa are prepared to commit economic or physical suicide if honorable and reasonable alternatives exist. I believe that such alternatives can be found. But I also know that unless peaceful solutions are devised, counsels of moderation and temperance will avail for naught; and another blow will have been dealt to this Organization which will hamper and weaken still further its usefulness in the struggle to ensure... (continued on page4)
The great nations of the world would do well to remember that in the modern age even their own fates are not wholly in their hands. Peace demands the united efforts of us all. Who can foresee what spark might ignite the fuse? It is not only the small and the weak who must scrupulously observe their obligations to the United Nations and to each other. Unless the smaller nations are accorded their proper voice in the settlement of the world’s problems, unless the equality which Africa and Asia have struggled to attain is reflected in expanded membership in the institutions which make up the United Nations, confidence will come just that much harder.

Unless the rights of the least of men are as assiduously protected as those of the greatest, the seeds of confidence will fall on barren soil. The stake of each one of us is identical - life or death. We all wish to live. We all seek a world in which men are freed of the burdens of ignorance, poverty, hunger and disease. And we shall all be hard-pressed to escape the deadly rain of nuclear fall-out should catastrophe overtake us.

When I spoke at Geneva in 1936, there was no precedent for a head of state addressing the League of Nations. I am neither the first, nor will I be the last head of state to address the United Nations, but only I have addressed the League and this Organization in this capacity. The problems that confront us today are, equally, unprecedented. They have no counterparts in human experience. Men search the pages of history for solutions, for precedents, but there are none. This, then, is the ultimate challenge. Where are we to look for our survival, for the answers to the questions which have never before been posed? We must look, first, to Almighty God, Who has raised man above the animals and endowed him with intelligence and reason. We must put our faith in Him, that He will not desert us or permit us to destroy humanity, which He created in His image. And we must look into ourselves, into the depth of our souls. We must become something we have never been and for which our education and experience and environment have ill-prepared us. We must become bigger than we have been, more courageous, greater in spirit, larger in outlook. We must become members of a new race, overcoming petty prejudice, owing our ultimate allegiance not to nations but to our fellow men within the human community.” [*] Jack

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Interesting fact

Rita Marley, Bob Marley’s wife converted to the Rastafari faith after seeing Haile Selassie on his trip to Jamaica. She stated that as he waved to the crowd, she saw a stigmata mark on the palm of his hand, which was similar to the markings that Christ had from being nailed to the cross, and that was proof enough for her that Haile Selassie was in fact the messiah.

The Brain Box: Optical illusion

Optical illusions are pictures that trick the eye; visually deceptive images. They are usually caused or created from the bending of light, use of contrasting colours, and a play on lines and shapes. This phenomenon has lead itself into an art called Op Art, that has modern age artists fascinated and fans wanting more.

Before you is a picture of two still circles on a grey background. Stare at the dot in the centre of the picture, move your head backwards and forwards and see what happens.