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G. Bromley Oxnam, 1949.

BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER OF THE TEMPLE, CLEVELAND,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CHURCHMAN AWARD TO BE GIVEN TO
BISHOP G. BROMLEY OXNAM
FEBRUARY 23, 1949

I regard it as a high privilege to join the many friends and admirers of Bishop Oxnham on the occasion of his receiving the Annual Churchman Award for his contribution to the promotion of goodwill and better understanding among all peoples. *Grateful Churchman* I salute him as a noble Christian, a great American, and a faithful servant of humanity. *add: will letter report*

I take it that there are three fundamental purposes to which men in our calling must devote themselves if they are to be faithful to the inspiration and challenge of their religious traditions which, in the case of Jews and Christians, stem from one common source - the spiritual and ethical teachings of the Bible.

I take it that we are to work for the One World under all circumstances, and with increased fervor in those periods of human history when the prospect of the One World is dimmest. Prophetic religion has never accepted the concept of an inevitable and irrepressible conflict between classes, nations or races in spite of surface indications to the contrary. Athwart the dark and obdurate irreconcilabilities of systems and ideologies, the spirit of religion ^{has shined} beamed steadfastly the light of reconciliation. It took no sides, except the side of God. Is it really to the best interests of mankind that religion, too, should in our day take sides violently with the East or the West and contribute to the hardening of the disastrous division of our world? Are we not more loyal to our religious inspirations if we try to act as a bridge of understanding between groups of nations seeking to interpret one to the other, calling ~~to~~ each to repentance when their ways are not the ways of God? And pleading unremittingly

as the prophet of old pleaded: "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us all? Why do we deal treacherously, every man against his brother?"

I concede that in an atomic age and in the kind of a world in which we live, this seems very naive. But every great moral teaching of our religions and every utterance of Moses, Isaiah or Jesus appears amazingly naive against the background of the very involved and sophisticated real-politik of the highly practical statesmen which have twice within our lifetime hurled our world into the bloodiest wars known to history.

I take it, too, that it is not our duty as spokesmen of religion to align ourselves with a propaganda for one specific economic system as against another. Our religions have never asked of us to involve ourselves in economic dogmatism. Organized religion should not be expected either to champion existing economic orders in spite of their many and sundry flaws, or some imaginary order which might fail even to approximate the virtues which are claimed for it. The Church and the Synagogue are not concerned with systems, but with safeguarding of principles which each age must be challenged to work into such a system as will best meet its ~~economic~~ needs. Whether it be Capitalism, Socialism, or Communism, there are basic principles of human rights and essential human ideals at stake in each, and the Church and Synagogue must under all conditions remain free to defend these ideals for which no system is adequate guarantee. Neither the rule of king, people or proletariat is sufficient insurance against abuse of power, exploitation of men and the defeat of the spiritual promises of human life.

There are great evils in our democratic society which must be eradicated. *They are not all of the same gravity or the same kind*
There are great evils in the Soviet system which must be eradicated. The task of religion is not to align mankind for or against one or the other, but to assist both in eliminating their social weaknesses and in perfecting their ~~social~~ strengths.

Who is the Greater Wisdom? The
Wisdom of him who called - "Great Sins"
-3- call in every direction + war destruction
- our future, War 2

I take it finally that as spokesmen of religion, we are opposed to war and the war machine. The evils of which we suffer cannot be done away with by war. The long debate which will continue for generations on authority versus freedom, on social controls to insure economic security versus constitutional liberties to protect the individual will not be settled by the atomic bomb. Regional security pacts and armament races have always led to war - not to peace.

It is only through the very patient and heartbreakingly slow processes of working together, through such available agencies as the organs of the United Nations, that nations may find their way ultimately through the labyrinth of suspicion, fear and hatred to the open fields of cooperation and peace.

It is because the man whom you have chosen to honor this evening, Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, has in my judgment represented in his consecrated life's ministry these basic purposes of religion that I am delighted to be here this evening to pay my meed of tribute to him.

