



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel
184

Box
68

Folder
825

Prophetic religion and world culture, 1951.

#16 Release Field

Church Power & Reform

Our age has passed beyond cynicism or sophistication. It is now distraught, and not because its high hopes for scientific progress have not been realized. These have been realized far beyond the most extravagant hopes of man. The first half of the twentieth century has been the most brilliantly creative period in scientific history. In it man has made his deepest soundings in the mysterious realms of matter and energy. His inventive genius has achieved for him veritable miracles of power and riches. But they have failed to give him what he had hoped for and what he needs preeminently - security, dignity, happiness. He had come to believe that his scientific laboratories held for him the magic keys to all progress and well-being, but in the darkening and threatening world in which he now finds himself, he cries unto his helpless idols, like the priests of Baal in the saga of Elijah, "O Baal, answer us." But "though they proceeded to slash one another according to their custom with swords and with lances until the blood gushed out upon them. . . , there was no voice, nor answer. . . ."

Our age is suffering from what the Bible calls "the drooping of the soul", a dangerous deflation of morale, a spiritual malaise. Its brilliant intellectual and scientific achievements only serve to illumine phosphorescently^{the}/appalling stages of decomposition.

Prophetic religion admonished men to place above all knowledge, reverence for the moral law and urged men to find therein their security, dignity, and happiness. Knowledge is important. It, too, is of God. Knowledge expands and enriches life. It opens up new continents for the adventuring spirit of man. But "the beginning of knowledge is reverence for God."

In God human life finds meaning. The mission of prophetic religion is to help men to find meaning in a universe where ultimate meaning is forever hidden from them. Professor Albert Einstein writes, "What is the meaning of human life, or of organic life altogether? To answer this question at all implies a religion. Is there any sense then, you ask, in putting it? I answer, the man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate, but almost disqualified for life."¹

There was a time when scientists were confident that they would soon work out the solution for the riddle of the universe. It was only a matter of time, they thought, only a matter of probing deeper and deeper, of adding one fact to another, one discovery to another, until the required total was reached, and then men would know all that they wished to know.

In our generation scientists are far less confident. The most erudite among them today acknowledge that objective reality may forever elude the grasp of men. "In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: There is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond

1. "The World As I See It", Albert Einstein. Covici, Friede. New York, 1934, p. 237.

itself. All highroads of the intellect, all byways of theory and conjecture, lead ultimately to an abyss that human ingenuity can never span. For man is en-
chained by the very condition of his being, his finiteness and involvement in na-
ture. . . . Man is his own greatest mystery.¹"

Although man has been denied the knowledge of ultimate reality - the how and why of things - he is nevertheless permitted to learn much, very much of the relations which exist between things in the universe and the forces in the universe. While he may never be able to explain because he may never be able to understand electricity or gravitation or magnetism - their nature, their origin - he may come to understand a great deal about their operation, and thus be enabled to use them to his advantage, to increase his power and his security in the world. It is in this field, which is unlimited, of profitable research and investigation into the relationships of things and forces, in learning how things operate and how we can use them, that man can find great reward and abundant satisfactions. Thus, even though scientific knowledge may never be absolute for man, it nevertheless offers him a world of enterprise, challenge and meaning to satisfy a purposeful and victorious life.

This is true also of man's spiritual life. Man can never learn the nature of God. Man can never understand the ultimate purpose and plan of creation. The great religious thinkers were the first to point this out, and stressed it time and time again. Nevertheless, man has not been left in utter darkness concerning those matters which affect his moral destiny in this unknowable universe. Much has been made known to him through seers, prophets and by his own revealing experiences. While he may never know the true nature of God or the ultimate purpose of creation, he may learn much about the operations of God's laws of justice, love, truth and selflessness in the world of men, and living by these laws, he may prosper.

1. "The Universe and Dr. Einstein", Lincoln Barnett. William Sloane Associates. New York, 1948. p. 113.

Within a hard, unyielding framework of the unknown and the unknowable there is a vast world of ascertainable moral truth, and opportunities for moral and spiritual growth and fulfillment wherein man can find a sustaining purpose in life, and challenge to noblest ambitions.

Our age has refused to find the meaning of its life in the pursuit of these moral objectives. It has also turned its back on other great teachings of prophetic religion.

In one of his recently published "Unpopular Essays", Bertrand Russell writes: "The importance of Man, which is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians, receives no support from a scientific view of the future of the solar system."¹ To which one is prompted to reply, so much the worse for the scientific view, which doubtless will go through many revisions and corrections in the future, as have so many other scientific views in the past. Time and again science has been tardy in arriving at conclusions which the intuitive religious genius of mankind postulated long ago. Furthermore, there are religious convictions which require no confirmation at the hands of science and which science can never affirm or deny.

But Bertrand Russell is entirely correct when he states that "the importance of Man is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians." It is also the one indispensable dogma of democracy; and it is at the heart of the terrible crisis which is cleaving and rending our world apart today.

Both Judaism and Christianity hold that man has immense significance in the scheme of things. Man is very important to God in the unfoldment of His purposes - each man, every man - rich or poor, wise or simple, white or black, saint or sinner. Sin is a voluntary lapse into unworthiness and unimportance. It is descent into paltriness. Man should live and act as if his life were tremendously significant, as if he were a co-worker of God in creation, as if his soul and mind were boundless

1. "Unpopular Essays", Bertrand Russell. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1950. p. 85.

in their capacities, and in their influence reaching distant shores and extending far into the future.

One of the sages of Israel long ago, employing the rich imaginative style which so often characterized their utterances, declared: "When a man goes forth on his way, a troop of angels precede him and proclaim: 'Make way for the image of God, blessed be He.'"

The universal moral law which religion proclaimed demanded much of man in terms of duty and sacrifice, but it gave much to him in terms of high and independent status, dignity and inalienable rights. "Every man has the right to say," declared an inspired teacher of Israel, "for my sake was the world created." A sense of kinship with God "crowned man with glory and honor" and made him feel "a little lower than the angels."

Similarly, the far-visioned poet of American democracy, Walt Whitman, proclaimed, "The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual - namely, to you." This is the heroic dogma of American democracy which derived its sanction from religion. Religion always addressed itself directly to the individual: "Thou shalt! Thou shalt not! I am the Lord, thy God!" It always held inviolate for man a relationship with God which transcended all his relationships with society.

Friends of democracy seem to have forgotten the religious origin of the democratic revolution in the Western world. Modern democracy was born out of the struggle for religious freedom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Out of that victorious struggle there stemmed other victories for man - political, economic and social freedom. Thus, when in the eighteenth century, the Founding Fathers of our Republic wrote into the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," they were giving political expression to what was fundamentally religious doctrine. When they proclaimed that resistance to tyrants is

obedience to God, when they engraved upon the Liberty Bell the Biblical verse, "Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," or when Franklin and Jefferson, in drafting the first seal of the United States, engraved on it the figure of Moses, the immortal emancipator, as he stood on the shore of the Red Sea and caused its waters to overwhelm the Egyptians Pharaoh and his hosts, they were marshalling ¹ supreme religious truth and authority to underwrite their political revolution.

So also did the long and bitter struggle in our country to free the slaves receive its momentum and irresistible drive not from science or economics or from any materialistic interpretation of history, but from a profound religious conviction which could not be permanently denied or suppressed that the enslavement of human beings was contrary to the law of God.

All men must be free because they are all important severally and intrinsically. My life is important and so is my neighbor's. Through cooperation our independent lives gain in effectiveness and security, but lose nothing in spiritual sovereignty. The crux of the whole matter is reverence for human life itself. The immortal mandate of Scriptures, which is found in the Book of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," comes as climax and summation of a whole series of prescriptions and ordinances, all of them intended to stress reverence for human life and respect for the personality of every individual. "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor. . . thou shalt not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind. . . thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor favor the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor. . . thou shalt not spread false reports among thy people. . . thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart. . . thou shalt not take vengeance nor be intolerant of thy fellowmen."

1. "World Crisis and Jewish Survival", Abba Hillel Silver. Richard R. Smith, New York, 1941. p. 63 ff.

Our age, unfortunately, makes little of the individual. His personal life is not very important. Men are handled impersonally in the mass. Increasingly they are becoming statistics in the hands of a predatory collectivism. They are shunted about like herds of cattle. They are slaughtered in the millions. They are coordinated and subjugated to the state until the last vestige of their freedom and their rights vanishes. Because the religious basis of our society has been denied and materialistic theories of life and history have taken hold of the thoughts and actions of men and governments, the stature of the individual, and with it, his rights and inherent dignity, have suffered tragic abatement and diminution in our day. Every precinct of his life is invaded and violated. Having denied to man the image of God, he has been given the mask of the robot. The most endangered person in the world today is the man who thinks for himself. The eagerly awaited "people's century" has unfortunately become the century of the secret police. . .

Because man is regarded as unimportant and possessed of no rights which are inherently and inalienably his, which are subject to no veto either of the state or of society, it has been possible in our day for usurping political parties and governments shamelessly to call for and to achieve the ruthless expropriation and extermination of whole classes of people of whose political and economic views and interests they did not approve. Our age has witnessed the appalling mass slaughter of millions of men, women and children because of some insane race theories held by a totalitarian government. It has also been experiencing recurrently dangerous mass propaganda movements, steeped in hate, bigotry and intolerance, and aimed at depriving men of their dignity, equality and freedom. We have been swinging into an ever-widening orbit of intolerance.

Our civilization today lacks compassion and mercy because man is contemned. He is seldom thought of as an end in himself, but as a tool for something or someone else - the state, the party, the system - to be used, abused, broken and cast aside.

We are moving into dangerous times as mankind gropes for a solution of its grave economic problems and seeks to find the fair balance between social control and individual enterprise, between authority and freedom. Unfortunately, we are moving into these dangerous times with little love in our hearts and with little respect and regard for man as such. We are spiritually unprepared for the enormous task. The psychology of war has already gripped and possessed us, and we are thinking far more of ways of preparing for war than of ways of finding the peace. We have become impatient with the ideas of conference, negotiation, compromise and tolerance. We call them appeasement. We identify them with disloyalty, whereas they are the only true way to peace.

1

In his book, "War or Peace", Mr. John Foster Dulles writes:

We are engaged in an armament race. The race is very exciting, and it is easy for the followers to be carried away by their excitement and lose their sense of proportion. . . .

The peoples of the world have long looked on the United States as a peace-loving nation. Because of that we have had good will everywhere and, when war came, we were able to organize great alliances that marshaled most of the man power and resources of the world against those who were deemed to be militaristic. Our moral authority, in time, overcame initial military disadvantages.

Let us not trade that moral birthright for a mess of pottage. As a result of excessive zeal to give the military whatever they professionally suggest, we have let it appear that we have gone militaristic. The Soviet Union, which has perhaps the greatest military force in the world, whose leaders preach the necessity of violence, appears as the advocate of peace. . .

It is imperative that our government should get good military advice. I have no doubt that we are getting it, for American officers are the most competent and most patriotic of any in the world. But that advice should be weighed by those who believe that war is not inevitable, that we can and must have peace, and that it may be necessary to take some changes for peace. Indeed, history suggests that only those who are willing to take some chances for peace have a good chance of winning total war.

1. "War or Peace", John Foster Dulles. The Macmillan Co., New York, 1950. pp. 239-241.

The road to peace is far more difficult to follow than the road to war. The road to war is a well-trod road which is often paved and smoothly surfaced by national pride and emotionalism, by grandiose conceptions of national superiority and destiny. The road to peace is the hard road of restraint and self-possession, of caution and forbearance, of faith and humility. This is the road to peace. This is the road which religion has always marked out for the progress of mankind.

Even as our age rejected the classic religious doctrine of meaning in terms of moral aspiration, and ends in terms of integrity of the individual, it has also rejected its teachings concerning the method of human progress and the nature of human life.

Our thinking in the last one hundred years on the subjects of organic and social evolution has been based on the doctrine of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. Competition was the key to life, and survival was achieved by combat. Nature was "red in tooth and claw". Social philosophies incorporated these biologic views into their systems and found in them justification for competition and conflict between men and nations. These scientific notions were also marshaled to rationalize war and to justify the ruthless economic exploitation of men in industry and of backward colonial people, as well as the institution of slavery.

Relatedly, science has begun to rectify these views and to approximate in its recent findings the great religious doctrines that cooperation rather than competition is the law of human survival, and that human life is fundamentally not a problem in economics but a problem in human relationships. Even in the animal world it has been discovered ^{that} cooperative behavior is at least as prominent a form of interaction as competition. Animals living in association have greater protection, security and a greater survival potential.

In his stimulating book, "On Being Human", Professor Ashley Montagu, writes:

If we could seek for one word which describes society better than any other, that word is cooperation. The important point to grasp is that, contrary to the beliefs of the struggle-for-survival school of thought, man does not have to create a co-operative mood for himself to erect over the tufa of his savage strivings to be otherwise. Not at all. The impulses toward cooperative behavior are already present in him at birth, and all they require is cultivation. There is not a shred of evidence that man is born with "hostile" or "evil" impulses which must be watched and disciplined. Discipline of basic impulses is, indeed, necessary, but it is the discipline of love, not of frustration, which they require.¹

And he concludes his study with the following observation:

Cooperative behavior clearly has great survival value. When social behavior is not cooperative, it is diseased. The dominant principle which informs all behavior that is biologically healthy is love. Without love there can be no healthy social behavior, cooperation, or security. To love thy neighbor as thyself is not simply good text material for Sunday morning sermons but perfectly sound biology.

Men who do not love one another are sick - sick not from any disease arising within themselves, but from a disease which has been enculturated within them by the false values of their societies. Belief in false values which condition the development of the person, in competition instead of cooperation, in narrow selfish interests instead of altruism, in atomism instead of universalism, in the value of money instead of the value of man, represents man turning upon all that is innately good in him.

Man's sense of mutuality and cooperativeness may be suppressed, but so long as man continues to exist, it cannot be destroyed, for these are traits which are part of his protoplasm. His combativeness and competitiveness arise primarily from the frustration of his need to cooperate. These are important facts to bear in mind at a time when all the surface evidence seems to point in a contrary direction. The word of the moment may be "fission" - whether with respect to physics or human affairs - but "fusion" comes much closer to reflecting man's natural behavior patterns.²

All this, of course, is old-fashioned religious doctrine which our age brushed aside as unscientific. Having done so, it deprived itself of the spiritual weapons

1. "On Being Human", Ashley Montagu. Henry Schuman, New York, 1950. pp.45-46.

2. Ibid, p. 100.

with which to confront the advocates of class struggle, of Fascism, Nazism, Communism, and racism who advanced "red in tooth and claw" to dominate the earth!

Our age also rejected, and quite consistently with its general attitude of mind, the methodology of prophetic religion.

One of the essential contributions of prophetic religion to human progress has been the concept of method. There is not only God and the Good Life, but there is also the way - the good way - which alone leads from one to the other.

Prophetic religion defined a method by which men might attain morally desirable ends, a method worthy of the ends. It outlawed the notion that moral ends justify immoral means. Each single step on the way towards the realization of a worthy objective must be a worthy objective in itself. Means have a way of inserting and of integrating themselves into ends, and of determining their ultimate pattern. Therefore, to establish justice or freedom or peace, men must employ the ways of justice, freedom and peace.

The more exalted human goals are - and therefore, the more distant - the less likelihood is there of their early or complete attainment. Accordingly, when impatient and desperate measures, ruthless and brutal, are employed, they not only make the attainment of these goals impossible, but they turn man's long journey towards them into one unmitigated misery and horror. There is no justice without love, and on the basis of justice alone, the world cannot endure.

The method which prophetic religion proposed for human progress was not one of so-called gradualism, or the "golden mean", in terms of some mathematical middle-ground between the extremes of good and evil. That which is evil must be eradicated. Temporizing with it or compromising with it is self-defeating. Decidedly man should be impatient with wrong-doing, and quick and resolute to correct it. Only he should be patient in faith when his efforts are frustrated. When the moral reformation of a society from within is too slow, incitement is offered to revolution by force. It is then that the denied and dispossessed masses of the earth rise in

a desperation which boils up into violence. It is then that they unloose the whirlwind of rebellion and "reply to God after the silence of the centuries." Religion urged the moral transformation of society by revolution, but not by a revolution of violence, terror and purges, but by a pacific revolution of love, compassion and reconciliation - the revolution within, the inner repentance.

Prophetic religion asked of man quick, decisive moral transformation. It did not ask of man the impossible. It did not set goals which are forever beyond his reach. "This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. . . . It is not in heaven. . . neither is it beyond the sea. . . but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it." It did not reject this world as one wherein man could not fulfill himself. It did not deny man his normal enjoyments of life or summon him to self-mortification and asceticism. It did not call for resignation and quietism. It did not proclaim that private property or private enterprise are evil in itself, or that wealth is a vice, or poverty a virtue. It did not regard any human institution, sacred or secular, as infallible, or any economic system as flawless or adequate insurance against abuse of power, the exploitation of man and the defeat of the spiritual promises of human life. It warned of the moral pitfalls hidden in every form of excess, even in the excess of virtue, and in every political and economic system. It admonished men not to make the world of their hands their God.

The method which prophetic religion was careful to define called for acceptance of a supreme moral law of justice tempered by love, binding at all times upon all men individually and collectively. "The good way" called for a curbing of all unlimited power and a rejection of all irresponsible authority. No man and no government is above the moral law.

The classic way of religion has never been fully tried in the world. Today it is being ignored more thoroughly than at any time in human history. State and class autocracies have proclaimed that there is no law superior to theirs, and that their ruthless coercive methods are justified by their results. They are impeccable and ^{because, forsooth,} unimpeachable /or they recognize no laws other than their own by which they can be judged.

The Middle Ages were said to be theo-centric. The modern age has been anthropo-centric. The age following the great world wars has become Cassero-centric. The first has been called an age of faith; the second, an age of reason. Ours is fast becoming an age wherein both faith and reason are being sacrificed to the bloody Moloch of the all-consuming state.

The economic life of man has resolved itself into a bitter class struggle. Each class is resorting without hesitancy or compunction to methods of violence, suppression and civil war. Each class justifies its tactics in the name of some great human ideal. The shame of our age is that men are committing the most shameless acts of immorality in the name of high morality. Methods which are abhorred and denounced in one's opponents are rationalized and justified as moral imperatives when employed by one's self. Mentalk of justice, brotherhood and a classless society and universal peace, but they act as if these ideals were demons out of hell, lashing them on furiously to the most brutal acts of injustice, hatred and violence.

For civilization to survive, it is clearly necessary to revise the mood and thought-pattern of our age, and to recharge our world culture with new meaning and content. In this task we may count upon science as our ally today. Released from the pseudo-scientific incantations of the past and from false social philosophies based upon them, education, braced and fortified afresh by the moral axioms of prophetic religion, should now proceed more purposefully than ever before, and more energetically - for it is later than we think - upon its appointed mission to help men discover the best in their minds and hearts, and to direct them to eager cooperative living in a free society.

This education should not be a part-time or released-time instruction relegated to the church or the Sunday school, as a sort of grudging concession to a patriarchal convention or to a culture run to seed. It should permeate and electrify every subject that is taught, especially the social sciences, every educative institution, every area of social activity for young or old, every agency which molds public opinion. The stone which the builders rejected should now become ~~again~~ the chief corner-stone. It is not only a defeated Germany which needs re-education, but ^{all} the victorious peoples as well. What our age needs and what the newer education should offer it is not a corpus of canonized doctrines to be accepted under authority, a new dogmatism as a counterfoil to the monolithic orthodoxy of modern dictatorships, but a new mood and point of view, a new covenant with character, a new and confident devotion to the enduring social ideals of mankind and to the only valid and unvitiated technique for attaining them. "Make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel. . . turn yourselves, and live!"

Prophetic religion was the supreme champion of social idealism, of justice, of freedom, of peace. It was the thorn in the flesh of privilege, the goad, the troubler. Its task was "to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." Its mission was not to give man peace of mind. The Bible nowhere calls upon men to go out in search of peace of mind. It does call upon men to go out in search of God and the things of God. It calls upon men to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to seek justice and pursue it, to relieve the oppressed, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to establish peace in the world. Such enterprises are seldom attended by ease and tranquility. Rather are they attended by persecution and suffering. If prophetic religion could not offer the faithful the compensations of peace of mind, it did offer them other compensations - an uplifting and sustaining interest in life, nourishing pride and wonderment, and on rare occasions, unbelievable ecstasy. There is a singing vibrancy to lyrical moments of daring and aspiring. At such moments men partake of the wine of life and eat of the bread of heaven.

Ecclesiasticism and institutionalism unfortunately banked its fires. As a result, leadership in the building of the good society was frequently seized by other hands which, as often as not, plunged mankind into greater misery than before, for the hands of the godless may build a well-run and efficient prison-house; they can never build the good society. Religion was not only tardy in the championing of human rights, but at times, retarding and reactionary. It is still too slow-paced and worldly-minded. It must seize the initiative again for mankind's salvation. It must become apostolic, and courageously lead in a world-wide pacific revolution to eliminate poverty, to stamp out illiteracy, to end economic exploitation and race discrimination, to improve the health of the masses of the earth, and to stimulate the maximum exploitation of all resources, human and physical, for the sake of man as such. It will then recapture the loyalty of men for the faith which it proclaims and it will rekindle confidence among them in the efficacy of the peaceful methods of human progress in place of revolutionary violence and dictatorship, which materialistic communism proclaims. Belatedly, though fortunately not too late, the great democracies of the world, Great Britain and the United States, have come to realize that the ultimate defense of democracy in the world lies not in superior armor or in the atomic bomb, but in raising the standard of living of the masses of the earth whose misery and wrongs are receptive soil for doctrines of violent revolution and for all types of messianic deceptions. In a climate of unrelieved despair and resentment, both Fascist and Communist dictatorships find their opportunity, as well as other forms of social aberrations. For the deception of these totalitarian salvationists is transparent. It is not the state which, in their system, diminishes and "withers away", but the individual, his freedom and his personality. The evils of privilege and tyranny which they propose to eradicate soon reappear under another guise and ^{another} gloss.

Politically the nations of the world have organized for collective action to insure peace. The United Nations is the second attempt at such organization. Its

achievements have so far not been notable. It, too, may fail only to be revived after a third world war has again demonstrated its indispensability. For there is no substitute for collective action if the world is to have peace. The religious denominations of the world, however, have not yet organized for collective action. This is the more exceptionable inasmuch as all the great religions of mankind have heralded and stressed their universalism and their international character. In this failure lies a partial explanation of the ineffectiveness of the religious forces on the world scene today. A world organization of religions - not their clerical leaders only but their lay leaders as well - can buttress and re-enforce the United Nations. It can rally the religious spirit and loyalties of mankind to its support and liberate a great fund of genuine peace sentiment. It can create the proper climate, the favorable emotional atmosphere and temper for the deliberations of that body which finds itself today almost stifled in the miasma of turbid, irritative recriminations and vituperative competitiveness. The attempt to achieve the political organization of mankind solely on the basis of national self-interests and calculated immunity from war is evidently not succeeding. The United Nations is not self-sustaining. It needs the continuous replenishment of an up-welling faith, sustained and purposeful social activity, and international movements for the advancement of mankind must be centered in a belief, and must draw their sustenance from it.

Is it not clear that men of good will all over the world today who are inspired by the great teachings of their religions must unite their forces in urgent defense of their common, spiritual heritage which is being threatened both at home and abroad? They must work indefatigably for the One World under all circumstances, and especially must they work for it with increased devotion and fervor in a period in human history such as ours, when the prospect of the One World is dim unto extinction. They must never accept the idea of an inevitable and irrepressible conflict between classes or nations or economic systems - all surface indications to

the contrary. The warm spirit of man is always better than the cold war. It is not to the best interest of mankind that men of good will should work today for the hardening of the disastrous divisions of our world which already exist. It is not to the best interests of mankind that men of good will should become violent and indiscriminate partisans of one economic system as against another, to the point of proclaiming their total irreconcilability and their inability ever to co-exist in the same world. These were the bitter and provocative slogans of the bloody religious wars which ravaged mankind for so many centuries, and of all the racial wars of mankind. All these wars, after exacting their frightful toll in human life and misery, ended not in victory, but in the compromise of mutual toleration.

Jews and Christians and men of all other faiths have work to do in the world, not merely as citizens of their countries, but as adherents of historic and prophetic faiths whose mission it has always been to teach men to rise above the levels and limitations of system, class, nation, or race to the high levels of humanity, to an eager and out-reaching cooperativeness in the building of the good society on earth, where man's high hopes for justice, freedom and peace can find at last their happy anchorage.

The Talmud records a legend. During the four "turnings of the sun" - the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice - a different angel is appointed over the world, but for a moment, when the change of the angels takes place, the world remains without a leader. It is at this moment that Scorpio throws gall and a drop of blood into the water to cause death to mankind.¹

Our age is at one of these "turnings of the sun", and our world is without a leader. Scorpio is at the moment throwing gall and blood into the stream of life to cause the death of mankind. What angel will be appointed to guide the destiny of our world tomorrow? Will Prophetic Religion be that guardian angel?

¹ *Louis*
Ginzberg, "The Legends of the Jews", VI, 204.

1951 51-18

IX
Chapter XVIII

PROPHET^{ic} RELIGION AND WORLD CULTURE

By

Abba Hillel Silver

1

*For Church
Peace Union
book:
Religious faith
and world
culture
(no card
made)*

The crisis of our age is far more spiritual than economic. It is a crisis of ideas and beliefs. Were it mainly economic, our enormous and vastly accelerated engine of material production, our advanced technological skill, our new sources of power, and our increased facilities for transportation and distribution would have solved it before now. They are not solving it. They are contributing more and more to conflict, breakdown and chaos. The besetting fear of our age is not that of Malthus that sufficient food may not be available for the world's expanding population. Rather is it the fear that, while food and water, and all the desirable things of life, may be abundant and near at hand, the human race, like Tantalus, will, because of some fatal perversity of fate, never be permitted to enjoy them.

Our age has passed beyond cynicism or sophistication. It is distraught, and not because its high hopes for scientific progress have not been realized. These have been realized far beyond the most extravagant hopes of man. The first half of the twentieth century has been the most brilliantly creative period in scientific history. In it man has made his deepest soundings in the mysterious realms of matter and energy. His inventive genius has achieved for him veritable miracles of power and riches. But they have failed to give him what he had hoped for and what he needs preeminently — security, dignity, happiness. He had come to believe that his scientific laboratories held for him the magic keys to all progress and well-being, but in the darkening and

threatening world in which he now finds himself, he cries unto his helpless idols, like the priests of Baal in the saga of Elijah, "O Baal, answer us." But "though they proceeded to slash one another according to their custom with swords and with lances until the blood gushed out upon them . . ., there was no voice, nor answer"

Our age is suffering from what the Bible calls "the drooping of the soul," a dangerous deflation of morale, a spiritual malaise. Its brilliant intellectual and scientific achievements only make phosphorescent the appalling stages of decomposition.

2

Prophetic religion admonished men to place reverence for the moral law above all knowledge, and urged men to find therein their security, dignity, and happiness. Knowledge is important. It, too, is of God. Knowledge expands and enriches life. It opens up new continents for the adventuring spirit of man. But "the beginning of knowledge is reverence for God."

In God human life finds meaning. The mission of prophetic religion is to help men to find meaning in a universe where ultimate meaning is forever hidden from them. Professor Albert Einstein writes, "What is the meaning of human life, or of organic life altogether? To answer this question at all implies a religion. Is there any sense then, you ask, in putting it? I answer, the man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate, but almost disqualified for life."¹

There was a time when scientists were confident that they would soon work out the solution for the riddle of the universe. It was only a matter of time, they thought, only a matter of probing deeper and deeper, of adding one fact to another, one discovery to another, until the required total was reached,

before men would know all that they wished to know.

In our generation scientists are far less confident. The most erudite among them today acknowledge that objective reality may forever elude the grasp of men. "In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: There is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself. All highroads of the intellect, all byways of theory and conjecture, lead ultimately to an abyss that human ingenuity can never span. For man is enchained by the very condition of his being, his finiteness and involvement in nature . . . Man is his own greatest mystery." ²✓

Although man has been denied the knowledge of ultimate reality -- the how and why of things -- he is nevertheless permitted to learn much, very much of the relations which exist between things in the universe and the forces in the universe. While he may never be able to explain, because he may never be able to understand the nature and origin of electricity or gravitation or magnetism, he may come to understand a great deal about their operation, and thus be enabled to use them to his advantage, to increase his power and his security in the world. It is in this field, which is unlimited, of profitable research and investigation into the relationships of things and forces, in learning how things operate and how we can use them, that man can find great reward and abundant satisfactions. Thus, even though scientific knowledge may never be absolute for man, it nevertheless offers him a world of enterprise, challenge and meaning to satisfy a purposeful and victorious life.

This is true also of man's spiritual life. Man can never learn the nature of God. Man can never understand the ultimate purpose and plan of creation. The great religious thinkers were the first to point this out, and stressed it time and time again. Nevertheless, man has not been left in utter darkness concerning those matters which affect his moral destiny in this unknow-

able universe. Much has been made known to him through seers and prophets and by his own experience. While he may never know the true nature of God or the ultimate purpose of creation, he may learn much about the operations of God's laws of justice, love, truth and selflessness in the world of men; and living by these laws, he may prosper.

Within a hard, unyielding framework of the unknown and the unknowable there is a vast world of ascertainable moral truth and of opportunities for moral and spiritual growth and fulfillment, wherein man can find a sustaining purpose in life and a challenge to his noblest ambitions.

Our age has refused to find the meaning of its life in the pursuit of those moral objectives. It has also turned its back on other great teachings of prophetic religion.



In one of his recently published "Unpopular Essays," Bertrand Russell writes: "The importance of Man, which is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians, receives no support from a scientific view of the future of the solar system."³ To which one is prompted to reply, so much the worse for the scientific view, which doubtless will go through many revisions and corrections in the future, as have so many other scientific views in the past. Time and again science has been tardy in arriving at conclusions which the intuitive religious genius of mankind postulated long ago. Furthermore, there are religious convictions which require no confirmation at the hands of science and which science can never affirm or deny.

But Bertrand Russell is entirely correct when he states that "the importance of Man is the one indispensable dogma of the theologians." It is also the one indispensable dogma of democracy; and it is at the heart of the terrible crisis which is cleaving and rending our world today.

Both Judaism and Christianity hold that man has immense significance in the scheme of things. Man is very important to God in the unfoldment of His purposes -- each man, every man, rich or poor, simple or wise, black or white, saint or sinner. Sin is a voluntary lapse into unworthiness and unimportance. It is descent into paltriness. Man should live and act as if his life were tremendously significant, as if he were a co-worker of God in creation, as if his soul and mind were boundless in their capacities, and, in their influence, reaching distant shores and extending far into the future.

One of the sages of Israel long ago, employing the rich imaginative style which so often characterized their utterances, declared: "When a man goes forth on his way, a troop of angels precede him and proclaim: 'Make way for the image of God, blessed be He.'"

The universal moral law which religion proclaims demands much of man in terms of duty and sacrifice, but it gives much to him in terms of high and independent status, dignity and inalienable rights. "Every man has the right to say," declared an inspired teacher of Israel, "for my sake was the world created." A sense of kinship with God "crowned man with glory and honor" and made him feel "a little lower than the angels."

Similarly, the far-visioned poet of American democracy, Walt Whitman, proclaimed, "The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to one single individual -- namely, to you." This is the heroic dogma of American democracy which derived its sanction from religion. Religion always addressed itself directly to the individual: "Thou shalt! Thou shalt not! I am the Lord, thy God!" It has always held inviolate for man a relationship with God which transcended all his relationships with society.

the democratic revolution in the Western world. Modern democracy was born out of the struggle for religious freedom in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Out of that victorious struggle there stemmed other victories for man: political, economic and social freedom. Thus when, in the eighteenth century, the Founding Fathers of our Republic wrote into the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," they were giving political expression to what was fundamentally religious doctrine. When they proclaimed that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God, when they engraved upon the Liberty Bell the Biblical verse, "Ye shall proclaim Liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," or when Franklin and Jefferson, in drafting the first seal of the United States, engraved on it the figure of Moses, the immortal emancipator, as he stood on the shore of the Red Sea and caused its waters to overwhelm the Egyptians Pharoah and his hosts, they were marshalling supreme religious truth and authority to underwrite their political revolution. ✓

So also did the long and bitter struggle in our country to free the slaves receive its momentum and irresistible drive, not from science or economics or from any materialistic interpretation of history, but from a profound religious conviction which could not be permanently denied or suppressed that the enslavement of human beings is contrary to the law of God.

All men must be free because they are all important severally and intrinsically. My life is important/^{and}so is my neighbor's. Through cooperation our independent lives gain in effectiveness and security, but lose nothing in spiritual sovereignty. The crux of the whole matter is reverence for human life itself. The immortal mandate of Scriptures, which is found in the Book

of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," comes as climax and summation of a whole series of prescriptions and ordinances, all of them intended to stress reverence for human life and respect for the personality of every individual. "Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor . . . thou shalt not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind . . . thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor favor the person of the mighty, but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor . . . thou shalt not spread false reports among thy people . . . thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart . . . thou shalt not take vengeance nor be intolerant of thy fellowmen."

Our age, unfortunately, makes little of the individual. His personal life is not very important. Men are handled impersonally in the mass. Increasingly they are becoming statistics in the hands of a predatory collectivism. They are shunted about like herds of cattle. They are slaughtered in the millions. They are coordinated and subjugated to the state until the last vestige of their freedom and their rights vanishes. Because the religious basis of our society has been denied and materialistic theories of life and history have taken hold of the thoughts and actions of men and governments, the stature of the individual, and, with it, his rights and inherent dignity, have suffered tragic abatement and diminution in our day. Every precinct of his life is invaded and violated. Having denied to man the image of God, he has been given the mask of the robot. The most endangered person in the world today is the man who thinks for himself. The eagerly awaited "people's century" has unfortunately become the century of the secret police.

Because man is regarded as unimportant and possessed of no inherent and inalienable rights, it has been possible in our day for upsurping political parties and governments shamelessly to call for, and to achieve the ruthless expropriation and extermination of whole classes of people of whose political

and economic views and interests they did not approve. Our age has witnessed the appalling mass slaughter of millions of men, women and children because of some insane race theories held by a totalitarian government. It has also been experiencing recurrently dangerous mass propaganda movements, steeped in hate, bigotry and intolerance, and aimed at depriving men of their dignity, equality and freedom. We have been swinging into an ever-widening orbit of intolerance.

Our civilization today lacks compassion and mercy because man is condemned. He is seldom thought of as an end in himself, but as a tool for something or someone else -- the state, the party, the system -- to be used, abused, broken and cast aside.

We are moving in dangerous times as mankind gropes for a solution of its grave economic problems and seeks to find the fair balance between social control and individual enterprise, between authority and freedom. Unfortunately, we are moving also with little love in our hearts and with little respect and regard for man as such. We are spiritually unprepared for the enormous task. The psychology of war has already gripped and possessed us, and we are thinking far more of ways of preparing for war than of ways of finding the peace.

In his book, War or Peace, Mr. John Foster Dulles writes: ⁵

We are engaged in an armament race. The race is very exciting, and it is easy for the followers to be carried away by their excitement and lose their sense of proportion

The peoples of the world have long looked on the United States as a peace-loving nation. Because of that we have had good will everywhere and, when war came, we were able to organize great alliances that marshaled most of the man power and resources of the world against those who were deemed to be militaristic. Our moral authority, in time, overcame initial military disadvantage.

Let us not trade that moral birthright for a mess of pottage. As a result of excessive zeal to give the military whatever they professionally suggest, we have let it appear that we have gone militaristic. The Soviet Union, which has perhaps the greatest military force in the world, whose leaders preach

the necessity of violence, appears as the advocate of peace...

It is imperative that our government should get good military advice. I have no doubt that we are getting it, for American officers are the most competent and most patriotic of any in the world. But that advice should be weighed by those who believe that war is not inevitable, that we can and must have peace, and that it may be necessary to take some chances for peace. Indeed, history suggests that only those who are willing to take some chances for peace have a good chance of winning total war.

The road to peace is far more difficult to follow than the road to war. The road to war is ^awell-trod road which is often paved and smoothly surfaced by national pride and emotionalism, by grandiose conceptions of national superiority and destiny. The road to peace is the hard road to restraint and self-possession, of caution and forbearance, of faith and humility. This is the road which religion has always marked out for the progress of mankind.

WRHS

6



Even as our age rejected the classic religious doctrine of meaning in terms of moral aspiration, and ends in terms of integrity of the individual, it has also rejected its teachings concerning the method of human progress and the nature of human life.

Our thinking in the last one hundred years on the subjects of organic and social evolution has been based on the doctrine of natural selection and the survival of the fittest: competition was the key to life, and survival was achieved by combat; nature was "red in tooth and claw."

Social philosophies incorporated these biologic views into their systems ⁱⁿ and found them justification for competition and conflict between men and nation. These scientific notions were also marshaled to rationalize war, and to justify the ruthless economic exploitation of men in industry and of backward colonial

peoples as well as the institution of slavery.

Belatedly, science has begun to rectify those views and to approximate in its recent findings the great religious doctrines that cooperation rather than competition is the law of human survival; that the problem of human life is not fundamentally one of economics but of inter-personal relationships. Even in the animal world it has been discovered that "cooperative behavior is at least as prominent a form of interaction as competition." Animals living in association have greater protection, security and a greater survival potential.

In his stimulating book, On Being Human, Professor Ashley Montagu writes:

If we could seek for one word which describes society better than any other, that word is cooperation. The important point to grasp is that, contrary to the beliefs of the struggle-for survival school of thought, man does not have to create a cooperative mood for himself to erect over the tufa of his savage striving to be otherwise. Not at all. The impulses toward cooperative behavior are already present in him at birth, and all they require is cultivation. There is not a shred of evidence that man is born with "hostile" or "evil" impulses which must be watched and disciplined. Discipline of basic impulses is, indeed, necessary, but it is the discipline of love, not of frustration, which they require.

And he concludes his study with the following observation:

Cooperative behavior clearly has great survival value. When social behavior is not cooperation, it is diseased. The dominant principle which informs all behavior that is biologically healthy is love. Without love there can be no healthy social behavior, cooperation, or security. To love thy neighbor as thyself is not simply good text material for Sunday morning sermons but perfectly sound biology.

Men who do not love one another are sick -- sick not from any disease arising within themselves, but from a disease which has been enculturated within them by the false values of their societies. Belief in false values which condition the development of the person, in competition instead of cooperation, in narrow selfish interests instead of altruism, in atomism instead of universalism, in the value of money instead of the value of man, represents man turning upon all that is innately good in him.

Man's sense of mutuality and cooperativeness may be suppressed, but so long as man continues to exist, it cannot be destroyed,

for these are traits which are part of his protoplasm. His combativeness and competitiveness arise primarily from the frustration of his need to cooperate. These are important facts to bear in mind at a time when all the surface evidence seems to point to a contrary direction. The word of the moment may be "fission" --whether with respect to physics or human affairs --but "fusion" comes much closer to reflecting man's natural behavior patterns.⁷

All this, of course, is old-fashioned religious doctrine which our age has brushed aside as unscientific. Having done so, it has deprived itself of the spiritual weapons with which to confront the advocates of class struggle -- of Fascism, Nazism, Communism, and racism -- who advanced "red in tooth and claw" to dominate the earth!

7

Our age has also rejected, and quite consistently with its general attitude of mind, the methodology of prophetic religion.

One of the essential contributions of prophetic religion to human progress has been the concept of method. There is not only God and the Good Life; There is also the way -- the good way -- which alone leads from one to the other.

Prophetic religion defined a method by which men might attain morally desirable ends, a method worthy of the ends. It outlawed the notion that moral ends justify immoral means. Each single step on the way toward the realization of a worthy objective must be a worthy objective in itself. Means have a way of inserting and of integrating themselves into ends, and of determining their ultimate pattern. Therefore, to establish justice or freedom or peace, men must employ the ways of justice, freedom and peace.

The more exalted human goals become, the less likelihood there is of their early or complete attainment. Accordingly, when impatient, ruthless, and brutal desperate measures are employed, they not only make the attainment of these goals

impossible, they also turn man's long journey towards them into one unmitigated misery and horror. There is no justice without love: on the basis of justice alone the world cannot endure.

The method which prophetic religion proposed for human progress was not that of gradualism, or the "golden mean," in terms of some mathematical middle-ground between the extremes of good and evil. That which is evil must be eradicated. To temporize or compromise with evil is self-defeating. But if man should be impatient with wrong-doing, and quick and resolute to correct it, he should also be patient in faith when his efforts are frustrated. When the moral reformation of a society from within is too slow, the denied and dispossessed masses of the earth rise in a desperation which boils up into violence. It is then that they unloose the whirlwind of rebellion and "reply to God after the silence of the centuries." Religion urges the moral transformation of society by revolution, not through violence, terror and purges, but by love, compassion and reconciliation -- the revolution within, the inner repentance.

Prophetic religion asks of man a quick and decisive moral transformation. It did not ask the impossible of man. It did not set goals which are forever beyond his reach. "This commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off... It is not in heaven... neither is it beyond the sea... but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it." It did not reject this world as one wherein man could not fulfill himself. It did not deny man his normal enjoyments or summon him to self-mortification and asceticism. It did not call for resignation and quietism. It did not proclaim that private property and private enterprise are evil in themselves, nor that wealth is a vice, and poverty a virtue. It did not regard any human institution, sacred or secular, as infallible, nor any economic system as flawless or adequate insurance against the abuse of power, the exploita-

tion of man, and the defeat of the spiritual promises of human life. It warned of the moral pitfalls hidden in every form of excess, even in the excess of virtue, and in every political and economic system. It admonished men not to make the works of their hands their God.

The method which prophetic religion was careful to define called for acceptance of a supreme moral law of justice tempered by love, binding at all times upon all men individually and collectively. "The good way" called for a curbing of all unlimited power and a rejection of all irresponsible authority. No man and no government is above the moral law.

The classic way of religion has never been fully tried in the world. Today it is being ignored more thoroughly than at any time in human history. State and class autocracies have proclaimed that there is no law superior to theirs, and that their ruthless coercive methods are justified by their results. They are impeccable and unimpeachable because, forsooth, they recognize no laws other than their own by which they can be judged.

The Middle Ages were said to be theocentric. The modern age has been anthropocentric. The age following the great world wars has become Caeserocentric. The first has been called an age of faith; the second, an age of reason. Ours is fast becoming an age wherein both faith and reason are being sacrificed to the bloody Moloch of the all-consuming state.

The economic life of man has resolved itself into a bitter class struggle. Each class is resorting without hesitancy or compunction to methods of violence, suppression and civil war. Each class justifies its tactics in the name of some great human ideal. The shame of our age is that men are committing the most shameless acts of immorality in the name of high morality. Methods which are abhorred and denounced in one's opponents are rationalized and justified as moral imperatives when employed by one's self. Men talk of justice and brotherhood,

of a classless society and universal peace, but they act as if these ideals were demons out of hell, lashing them on furiously to the most brutal acts of injustice, hatred and violence.

8

For civilization to survive, it is clearly necessary to revise the mood and thought-pattern of our age, and to recharge our world culture with new meaning and content. In this task we may count upon science as our ally today. Released from the pseudo-scientific incantations of the past, and from false social philosophies based upon them, education, braced and fortified afresh by the moral axioms of prophetic religion, should now proceed more purposefully than ever before, and more energetically -- for it is later than we think -- upon its appointed mission to help men discover the best in their minds and hearts, and to direct them to eager cooperative living in a free society.

This education should not be a part time or released-time instruction, relegated to the church or the Sunday school as a sort of grudging concession to a patriarchal convention or to a culture run to seed. It should permeate and electrify every subject that is taught, especially the social sciences, every educative institution, every area of social activity for young or old, every agency which molds public opinion. The stone which the builders rejected should now become the chief cornerstone. It is not only a defeated Germany which needs re-education, but all the victorious peoples as well. What our age needs, and what the newer education should offer it, is not a corpus of canonized doctrines to be accepted under authority, a new dogmatism as a counterfoil to the monolithic orthodoxy of modern dictatorships, but a new mood and point of view, a new covenant with character, a new and confident devotion to the enduring social ideals of mankind and to the only valid and unvitiated technique for attaining them.

"Make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel . . . turn yourselves, and live!"

9

Prophetic religion was the supreme champion of social idealism, of justice, of freedom, of peace. It was the thorn in the flesh of privilege; the goad, the troubler. Its task was "to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." Its mission was not to give man peace of mind. The Bible nowhere calls upon men to go out in search of peace of mind. It does call upon men to go out in search of God and the things of God. It calls upon men to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to seek justice and pursue it, to relieve the oppressed, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to establish peace in the world. Such enterprises are seldom attended by ease and tranquility. Rather are they attended by persecution and suffering. If prophetic religion could not offer the faithful the compensations of peace of mind, it did offer them other compensations -- an uplifting and sustaining interest in life, a nourishing pride and wonderment, and, on rare occasions, unbelievable ecstasy. There is a singing vibrancy to lyrical moments of daring and aspiring. At such moments men partake of the wine of life and eat of the bread of heaven.

Unfortunately, ecclesiasticism and institutionalism banked the fires of prophetic religion. As a result, leadership in the building of the good society was frequently seized by other hands, ^{which} as often as not, plunged mankind into greater misery than before, for the hands of the godless may build a well-run and efficient prison house; they can never build the good society. Religion was not only tardy in championing human rights; at times it was actually retarding and reactionary.

It is still too slow-paced and worldly-minded. It must again seize the initiative for mankind's salvation. It must become apostolic, and courageously lead in a worldwide pacific revolution to eliminate poverty, to stamp out illiteracy, to end economic exploitation and race discrimination, to improve the health of the masses of the earth, and to stimulate the maximum exploitation of all resources, human and physical, for the sake of man as such. It will then recapture the loyalty of men for the faith which it proclaims, and it will rekindle confidence among them in the efficacy of the peaceful methods of human progress in place of the revolutionary violence and dictatorship which materialistic communism proclaims.

Belatedly, though fortunately not too late, the authentic, self-critical democracies of the world are coming to realize that the ultimate defense of democracy in the world lies not in superior armor or in the atomic bomb, but in raising the standard of living of the masses of the earth whose misery and wrongs are receptive soil for doctrines of violent revolution and for all types of messianic deceptions. In a climate of unrelieved despair and resentment, both Fascist and Communist dictatorships find their opportunity, as well as other forms of social aberrations. The deception of these totalitarian salvationists is transparent. It is not the state but the individual, his freedom and his personality which, in their system, diminishes and "wither away." The evils of privilege and tyranny which they propose to eradicate soon reappear under another guise and another gloss.

Politically the nations of the world have organized for collective action to insure peace. The United Nations is the second attempt at such organization.

Its achievements have so far not been as notable as had been hoped. Even if we should be unable to prevent a third world war, the United Nations would not necessarily come to an end. Certain of its important functions in the economic, social and humanitarian areas would doubtless go on without a break, even as certain functions of the League of Nations were continued through World War II. Moreover, the UN's Security functions, even if halted for a time, would be revised; for there is no substitute for collective action if the world is to have peace. The religious faiths of the world, however, have not yet organized for collective action. This is the more exceptionable inasmuch as all the great religions of mankind have heralded and stressed their universalism and their international character. In this failure lies a partial explanation of the ineffectiveness of the religious forces on the world scene today. A world organization of religions — not their clerical leaders only but their lay leaders as well — can buttress and reenforce the United Nations. It can rally the religious spirit and loyalties of mankind to its support and liberate a great fund of genuine peace sentiment. It can create the proper climate, the favorable emotional atmosphere and temper for the deliberations of that body which today finds itself almost stifled in the miasma of turbid, irritative recriminations and vituperative competitiveness. The attempt to achieve the political organization of mankind solely on the basis of national self-interests and calculated immunity from war is evidently not succeeding. The United Nations is not self-sustaining. It needs the continuous replenishment of an up-welling faith. Sustained and purposeful social activity and international movements for the advancement of mankind must be centered in a belief, and must draw their sustenance from it.

Is it not clear that all men of good will today must unite their forces in urgent defense of their common, spiritual heritage which is being threatened

both at home and abroad? They must never accept the idea of inevitable and irrepressible conflict between classes or nations or economic systems. The warm spirit of man is always better than the cold war. It is not to the best interest of mankind that men of goodwill should work today for the hardening of the disastrous divisions of our world which already exist. It is not to the best interests of mankind that men of goodwill should become violent and indiscriminate partisans of one economic system as against another, to the point of proclaiming their total irreconciliability and their inability ever to co-exist in the same world. These were the bitter and provocative slogans of the bloody religious wars which ravaged mankind for so many centuries, and of all the racial wars of mankind. All these wars, after exacting their frightful toll in human life and misery ended not in victory, but in the compromise of mutual toleration.

Jews and Christians and men of all other faiths have work to do in the world, not merely as citizens of their countries, but as adherents of historic and prophetic faiths whose mission it has always been to teach men to rise above the levels and limitations of system, class, nation, or race to the high levels of humanity, to an eager and out-reaching cooperativeness in the building of the good society on earth, where man's high hopes for justice, freedom and peace can find at last their happy anchorage.

The Talmud records a legend. During each of the four "turnings of the sun" -- the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice -- a different angel is appointed over the world. But for a moment when the change of the angels takes place, the world remains without a leader. It is at this moment that Scorpio throws gall and a drop of blood into the water to cause death to mankind. . . .

Our age is at one of these "turnings of the sun," and our world is without

a leader. Scorpio is at the moment throwing gall and blood into the stream of life to cause the death of mankind. What angel will be appointed to guide the destiny of our world tomorrow? Will Prophetic Religion be that guardian angel?

267



Copyright by

1. Albert Einstein. The World As I See It, page 237. New York: Covici, Friede, 1934. *Used by Permission of Crown Publishers, Inc., New York.*
2. Lincoln Barnett. The Universe and Dr. Einstein, page 113. New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948.
3. Bertrand Russell. Unpopular Essays, page 85. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950.
4. Abba Hillel Silver. World Crisis and Jewish Survival, pages 63 ff. New York: Richard R. Smith, 1941.
5. John Foster Dulles. War or Peace, page 239-241. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950.
6. Ashley Montagu. On Being Human, pages 45-46. New York: Henry Schuman, 1950.
7. Ibid, pages 100-101.
8. Louis Ginzberg. The Legends of the Jews, VI, page 204. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publishing Society of America, 1928.

