



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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On religion for American Weekly, 1959.

COPY 11/5/59

Question: Do you believe in the increase in church membership in recent years denotes that we are becoming a more religious nation, or does it merely indicate that we are frightened & confused?

59-6
For American Weekly

It is too early to say what the increase in church membership and attendance in our country in recent years denotes.

If it goes hand in hand with a marked decrease in our national divorce rate and the number of broken homes and in juvenile delinquency it will indicate a deepening awareness of basic religious values on the part of our people.

If there will ensue a lessening of racial tensions and a greater awareness of the social responsibility on the part of labor and management in adjusting their differences it will reflect a true response to the ethical demands of religion which calls for justice, love and brotherliness in all human relations.

If our people will come to insist on higher standards of taste, decency and morality in our cinema, radio and television programs and in the quality of our novels and our stage productions then we shall know that the spiritual leaven which we associate with religion is at work.

The primary concern of religion is not that we join a temple or a church, but that we attach ourselves to God. The spiritual leaders of old have insisted that only he who aspires to walk blamelessly and to do what is right and to speak truth from his heart -- only he is a true dweller in the tabernacle of God.

If men are turning in our troubled days to religion because they are frightened or confused -- that should not disturb us. That has been a function of religion right along -- to give men faith, confidence, purpose and direction in life. Religion has always served men in their darkest hour.

But the turning must be in deep earnestness and in absolute sincerity if it is to yield these blessings to men.