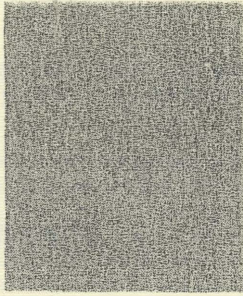


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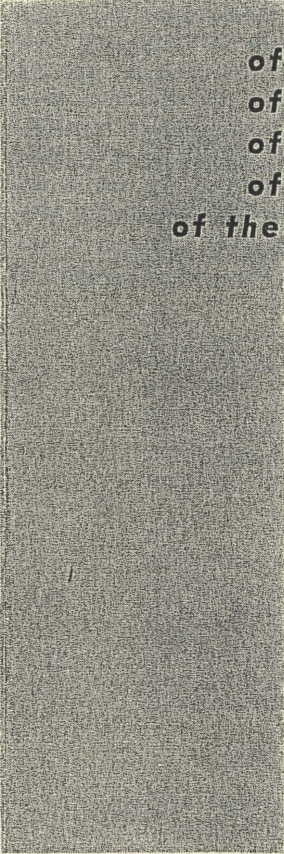


WHAT

I BELIEVE

AS

A LIBERAL JEV



of GOD
of MAN
of ISRAEL
of SOCIETY
of the INDIVIDUAL

by
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WHAT I BELIEVE AS A LIBERAL JEW

FOREWORD

What does a Jew believe? Perhaps no two Jews believe, in detail, the same things about God and the world. Judaism does not demand that its followers adhere to a sharply defined metaphysical belief. Nevertheless, most Jews have an attitude towards God and life which distinguishes them from their Christian neighbors. There are certain basic Jewish attitudes which are shared by Orthodox and Liberal Jews alike.

This pamphlet proposes to be only what its title suggests, what *one* Jew believes. As a Liberal Jew my beliefs will probably not coincide precisely with the beliefs of Orthodox Jews, nor will all Liberal Jews agree at every point which I have outlined. Nevertheless, most Jews will find themselves in agreement with most of the attitudes expressed here, for they do represent the philosophy of the Jewish tradition in large part.

At least, Jews and Christians unversed in the Jewish background will find here a mood indicative of the Jewish view of life.

addendum

This pamphlet was prepared in 1960. My credo has since been changed but slightly over the years.

OF GOD

1
I believe that the world was created, that it didn't just happen. I believe that life was intended to be meaningful and purposeful. I do not believe that we were placed in this world by a blind fate and that human life is a mere matter of getting and spending.

2
I believe that man is a creature of an intelligence greater than his own. I believe that God is not only intelligent beyond my comprehension but that love and mercy are part of His personality. I do not believe that God can be adequately described in human terms nor fully comprehended by human beings.

3
I believe that God sought to create the world according to a definite pattern, and that there is both a physical and a moral law (a Torah) to which all existence is subject. I do not believe, however, that God has pre-determined every detail of existence, nor that His power extends over every detail at every moment. The power of God is extended by the acts of righteous men. Injustice may triumph in the short run, but in the fullness of time, justice will prevail.

4
I believe that the Creative Power is concerned with me as its child and partner. I believe that God is linked to the destiny of each of His creatures. Our sufferings and our growth affect Him. His power is always with us, sustaining us even before we call upon it.

5
I believe that God hears prayer. Prayer is the tapping of a power that is always present in us. The release of unsuspected reserves of energy and wisdom is the flowing of the divine balm which is ever within us, and ever links us to the source of life itself. I believe that there is "a power in the world making for righteousness and peace," and that we can ally ourselves with that power through word and deed.

OF MAN

6
I believe that man's role in our world is to become a partner with God in the creation that knows no

end. Our world is both physically and morally imperfect, and to the extent that we establish justice we participate in the divine plan. I believe that through constructive creation and through ethical deeds we add to the god-like quality of our world.

7
I believe that man can build the good society on this earth. I believe that this world is the center of man's existence, and that he must find life's great meaning in his earthly strivings.

8
I believe that man can channel his lust towards worthwhile ends beneficial to the world community. I do not believe that man is essentially sinful and incapable of mastering himself.

9
I believe that man is capable of deeds far beyond his present achievements. I believe that man can work progressively towards a world without prejudice, without war, and with a minimum of social conflict.

10
I believe that "sin" is waywardness from the moral law, and that repentance is return to the law. I believe that different men in different ages may interpret the moral law variously, but that most men in all ages can agree on a basic residue of law upon which humanity must stand. I believe that the Ten Commandments largely delineate this basic law, but that other laws may and must be added as their imperative nature is gleaned from human experience.

OF ISRAEL

11
I believe that some people in human history are "chosen" in the sense that they choose to take upon themselves the burden of making human life meaningful. I do not believe, however, that any people is innately superior to any other people. I believe that all men are children of one creative source, and, therefore, equally precious.

12
I believe that the Jewish people in its history has often-times demonstrated its nearness to God by its positive choice to suffer martyrdom in the interest of advancing the moral law. To the extent that I, too, become a protagonist for understanding and justice, I share in the greatness of my people. As a Jew, indeed, as an inspired human being, I must stand

ready to experience material and bodily injury in the interest of a peaceful and just world.

13

I believe that Jews throughout the world are tied together by faith, hope, history, and culture. Although we do not all share the same political allegiance, what happens to some of us has its effect upon all of us. The welfare of Jewry is the concern of all Jews, just as the welfare of mankind must be the concern of all men.

OF SOCIETY

14

I believe that the religious man must necessarily be involved in the political and economic struggles of his time. If this world is the center of man's meaningful existence, the individual must oppose any attempt to deviate from the moral law recognized by all men as basic. The righteous man acts out his ideas and attitudes. He may not hide himself from the social problems of his fellow beings.

15

I believe that democracy must be economic as well as political, that the land and the means of production must be owned neither by an omnipotent state nor by a few monopolists. The land and the products of the land belong to God and to all men. The way must be open for all men to share bountifully in the fruits of the earth.

16

I believe that the people must be free to change their leaders and their government when they become oppressive. I believe that war cannot be the way to good government, nor force the pattern of international diplomacy. As a Jew, I strive towards the Messianic Day of world peace based on understanding and justice.

17

As a Jew, I must insist on every man's right to express the truth as he sees it, without fear of social, economic, or political reprisal. I do not believe that popularity alone or orthodoxy alone is a proper criterion for the truth of a statement. I believe that slander is akin to murder. It is a grievous sin to permit a righteous man to be slandered.

18

OF THE INDIVIDUAL

I believe in the value of learning for its own sake. I believe that investigation into any field of human

activity will lead to a broadening of one's mind. But I believe that wherever possible learning should be coupled to action which serves mankind in some way.

19

I believe in the sanctity of the home. I believe in the loyalty husband and wife owe each other, and in the loyalty parents and children owe each other. I believe in the Jewish effort to extend the concept of the family relationship to the realm of the nation and the nations.

20

I believe in the sanctity of children. I believe that the parent who violates his child's personality detracts from the divine image. I believe that the main function of the parent is to teach the child, with love, that the world and men are for him and not against him. The parent must teach the child to be "at home" in the world. The parent who does not equip himself or provide his child with ideas and techniques to establish a meaningful world forfeits the name of parent.

21

I believe in the necessity of "GAMILUTH HASADIM," Deeds of Kindness without thought of personal reward. Visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked are as vital as labor for the just society. The world cannot stand unless the weak and the oppressed are upheld.

22

I believe in the on-going-ness of life. I have no pre-conceptions about life after death, but I believe that He who created us is great enough to care for us. I believe that "Death" is but part of the process of life which endures so long as God endures.