

A MAN'S RELIGION REVOLVES AROUND HIS "ULTIMATE CONCERN"

ROSH HASHANAH 5728, OCTOBER, 1967

RABBI HERBERT M. BAUMGARD
TEMPLE BETH AM
MIAMI, FLORIDA

IN THIS HEP AGE, IT IS NOT UNCOMMON TO HEAR REMARKS ABOUT THE ARCHAIC NATURE OF RELIGION. BY NOW, EVERYONE SEEMS TO HAVE LEARNED THAT THE WORLD COULD NOT HAVE BEEN CREATED IN SIX DAYS, SO FOR MANY, THE ONLY OTHER POSSIBLE CONCLUSION IS THAT THERE IS NO GOD. WHILE GOD IS BEING DISCARDED, SO ARE THE INSTITUTIONS, RITUALS, AND ETHICS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS WORSHIP. IT IS ALMOST A MAXIM TODAY THAT IF YOU ARE HEP, YOU CAN'T BE RELIGIOUS. WHILE MANY MATURE PEOPLE ARE RE-EVALUATING THE OLD FRAMEWORK OF RELIGION AND ARE RE-FASHIONING IT IN MORE DYNAMIC TERMS, STILL OTHERS ARE ENJOYING THE PLEASURE OF PARTICIPATING IN A TOTAL REVOLT. I HAVE BEEN TOLD OF THE OBVIOUS ZEAL WITH WHICH A CERTAIN COLLEGE BIOLOGY PROFESSOR CONFRONTS HIS FRESHMEN, WHO ARE GREEN TO THE INTELLECTUAL WARS, WITH THE PROPHETIC PROCLAMATION, "STUDENTS, CREATION IS A FARCE"! THIS PROFESSOR FAILS TO ADD WHAT EINSTEIN SO OFTEN SAID; OUR FATHERS MAY HAVE BEEN WRONG ABOUT THE PARTICULAR DETAILS OF CREATION, BUT EVERY NEW DISCOVERY ABOUT THE COMPLEX PRINCIPLES UNDERGIRDING OUR UNIVERSE SIMPLY POINTS TO THE REALITY OF A MASTER PLANNER WHO IS BEYOND OUR COMPREHENSION. IT IS ONLY THE UNSOPHISTICATED THINKER WHO DISCARDS RELIGION IN ITS ENTIRETY, SIMPLY BECAUSE SOME OF THE OLD STORIES ASSOCIATED WITH ITS DEVELOPMENT TURN OUT TO BE LEGENDARY OR SYMBOLIC. IT IS THE UNSOPHISTICATED WHO THINK THAT ONCE A SINGLE PART OF A PHILOSOPHY HAS BEEN CALLED INTO QUESTION, ALL OF IT MUST NECESSARILY BE UNTRUE.

THE SENSITIVE AND OBJECTIVE OBSERVER, HOWEVER, IS NOT CHALLENGED BY SWEEPING ATTACKS UPON OLD IDEAS. HE HAS ALREADY LEARNED HOW TO SIFT FROM THE OLD THAT WHICH IS OF LASTING VALUE, AND HE HAS LEARNED HOW TO QUESTION THE VALIDITY OF THE NEW IDEA UNTIL IT HAS BEEN EXPERIMENTALLY TESTED. EINSTEIN WAS VERY CAREFUL NOT TO MAKE A NEW RELIGION OUT OF SCIENCE ITSELF. HE ONCE SAID, "RELIGION WITHOUT SCIENCE IS MAGIC, BUT SCIENCE WITHOUT RELIGION IS BLIND". OTHER SCIENTISTS ARE NOT SO WISE AS EINSTEIN, AND LIKE THE ANCIENT PRIESTS THEY EXCLAIM, "NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE TRUTH EXCEPT THROUGH ME". THE MATURE OBSERVER IS ABLE TO SEE THAT THE CHIEF CRITICS OF OLD STANDARDS ARE OFTEN NOT MERELY CRITICS. THEY FREQUENTLY ALSO WISH TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE NEW PROPHETS. MANY OF THOSE LEADING THE ATTACK ON RELIGION TODAY, ARE NOT REALLY ANTI-DOGMA. THEY ARE MERELY AGAINST THE OLD DOGMA, AND WHAT THEY WANT TO DO IS TO SUBSTITUTE THEIR OWN DOGMA. IN CRITICIZING THE OLD MORAL CODE, THE MODERN CRITIC MAY WELL BE INTERESTED IN SUBSTITUTING HIS OWN MORE CONVENIENT CODE. IN BY-PASSING THE OLD RITUALS, THE LEADERS OF THE NEW FADS ARE OFTEN HIGHLY IMAGINATIVE IN CREATING THEIR OWN RITUALS. WHAT WE HAVE TODAY IS NOT AN ANTI-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT, BUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANY NEW KINDS OF RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS.

ANYONE WHO HAS PARTICIPATED IN, OR OBSERVED A MARIJUANA "HAPPENING", WILL AGREE WITH WHAT I AM SAYING. THE FAITHFUL MEET IN A SECRET PLACE, JUST LIKE THE EARLY CHRISTIANS, WHO WERE RENEGADES FROM THE OLDER ROMAN RELIGIONS. IN THE CENTER OF THE SECRET PLACE, THE LEADER OF THE MARIJUANA SECT LIGHTS A CANDLE TO SET THE MOOD FOR THE MYSTIC RITE. THE RITUAL HAVING BEEN PERFORMED, THE LEADER THEN SERMONIZES ON THE PLEASURE AND THE ECSTASY TO BE GAINED BY PARTAKING OF THE MAGIC POTION, EVEN AS THE ANCIENT CHRISTIANS SPOKE ABOUT PARTAKING OF THE COMMUNION WAFER AND WINE. FOR THE EARLY CHRISTIAN, THE COMMUNION WAS TO BRING ABOUT A UNION WITH A SUPPOSEDLY DIVINE SPIRIT THAT DIED ON THE CROSS; FOR THE MARIJUANA OR LSD INITIATE, THE COMMUNION IS DESIGNED TO UNITE THE UNHAPPY PERSON WITH HIS SUPPOSEDLY GREATER SELF. THE MARIJUANA LEADER OR LSD PRIEST, SPEAKS OF THE GLORIES OF HEIGHTENED EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE, AS IF THIS EXPERIENCE LINKS ONE, SOMEHOW, TO THE ESSENCE OF LIFE, TO THE DEITY CONCEALED IN ONESELF. NO, IT IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF RELIGION THAT THE FOLLOWERS OF MARIJUANA OR THE DISCIPLES OF LSD SEEK. THEY SEEK THE NEW RELIGION.

ULTIMATE CONCERN -

THE BIBLE READS IN ONE PLACE, "ONLY TASTE OF THE TORAH AND UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS GOOD". THE DEVOTEES OF THE NEW DRUGS HAVE REPLACED THE SACRED OBJECT, BUT THEY HAVE INCLUDED THE RITUAL OF TASTING. AT THE SEDER SERVICE ON PASSOVER, THE RITUALISTIC OBJECT TO BE TASTED IS MATZAH. THE EATING OF MATZAH IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE ALSO, BUT A RESPONSE CONDITIONED BY AN IDENTIFICATION WITH HISTORY AND LINKED TO MAN'S SUFFERING IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM. THE TASTING OF THE MATZAH IS A CALL TO IDENTIFICATION WITH THE GROUP, WITH THE PEOPLE ISRAEL, AND THROUGH THEM, TO MANKIND. THE TASTING OF MARIJUANA AND LSD, IS A CALL TO AN ABSENCE OF IDENTIFICATION WITH ANYTHING OUTSIDE OF ONESELF. THE RESULTS THESE DRUGS PRODUCE ARE NOT SOCIAL, BUT HYPER-INDIVIDUALISTIC. THEY PRODUCE A KIND OF ULTIMATE DETACHMENT FROM ALL REALITY. SMALL WONDER THEN THAT THEY LEAD TO CONFUSION AND TO DESPAIR FOR MANY.

THERE ARE SOME IN OUR MIDST WHO DON'T LIKE THE TASTE OF MATZAH WHICH IS "THE BREAD OF AFFLICTION". THEY DON'T LIKE THE RITUAL THAT IDENTIFIES US WITH MAN'S SUFFERING. THEY LIKE, INSTEAD, THE TASTE OF MONEY. THE SO-CALLED MATERIALIST CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS BEING ANTI-RELIGIOUS. FOR IN HIS FLIGHT FROM THE OLD RELIGION AND ITS GROUP ORIENTATION, WHAT THE MATERIALIST CLEARLY SEEKS, IS A NEW RELIGION. HE CONTINUES TO GIVE OF HIS TIME AND ENERGY TO THE "CAUSE". ONLY THE "CAUSE" IS DIFFERENT. JUDAISM TEACHES, "SERVE GOD", BY WHICH IT MEANS, "SERVE THE SPIRIT OF GROWTH, THE CREATIVE AND GIVING SPIRIT, THE ETHICAL SPIRIT". THAT BRINGS MEN TOGETHER. THE MATERIALIST PAYS HOMAGE TO A DIFFERENT SPIRIT - THE SPIRIT OF ACQUISITION, THE SPIRIT OF HOARDING, THE SPIRIT OF PLEASURE UNCONDITIONED BY THE QUALITY OF ETHICS AND THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP. BUT THE MATERIALISTS ARE LIKE THE HASIDIM, THE ARDENT ORTHODOX JEWS, IN MANY WAYS. THE MATERIALIST IS NOT LESS FANATICAL AND ZEALOUS THAN THE HASIDIM IN THE SERVICE OF THE PARTICULAR GOALS HE HAPPENS TO CONSIDER IMPORTANT. THE MATERIALIST IS WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIS VERY HEALTH. ISN'T HE WILLING TO IGNORE HIS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND TO AGGRAVATE HIS ULCERS? WHO SAYS HE IS NOT CAPABLE OF GIVING OF HIMSELF? DOESN'T HE PERFORM HIS RITUALS AT THE BANK ROUTINELY? THE MEDIEVAL CATHOLICS WORSHIPPED THE SAINTS AS MODELS WHOM THEY TRIED TO FOLLOW. DOESN'T THE MATERIALIST WORSHIP AND PROJECT AS HIS MODEL THOSE WHO SUCCEED IN AMASSING FUNDS BETTER THAN HE, AND DOESN'T HE TRY TO IMITATE THE FINANCIAL SAINTS WITH ALL HIS HEART, WITH ALL HIS SOUL, AND WITH ALL HIS MIGHT? IS NOT THIS DEDICATED IMITATION THE ESSENCE OF RELIGIOUS FERVOR?

NOW, LET US UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER. THIS IS NO CALL TO ASCETICISM. I AM NOT ASKING YOU TO DO WHAT JESUS ASKED OF HIS FOLLOWERS. JESUS TAUGHT, "SELL ALL THAT YOU HAVE, GIVE IT TO THE POOR, AND FOLLOW ME". I AM NOT ASKING YOU TO SURRENDER THIS WORLD, OR TO MOVE OUT OF YOUR BEAUTIFUL HOMES. WE'RE TALKING NOW ABOUT WHAT IS PRIMARY IN OUR LIFE AND WHAT IS SECONDARY. EVERYBODY MUST WORK TO EARN A LIVING. INTO HIS VOCATION, HE PUTS MUCH ENERGY, AND A GREAT AMOUNT OF TIME. BUT TO WHAT PURPOSE? THIS IS THE QUESTION! AFTER YOU HAVE FED AND CLOTHED YOUR FAMILY REASONABLY WELL, THEN WHAT DO YOU DO FOR YOUR GROUP, FOR YOUR SYNAGOGUE? HOW MUCH DO YOU GIVE TO CHARITY? WHAT THOUGHTS, WHAT TIME, WHAT MONEY DO YOU HAVE TO HELP ALLEVIATE SLUMS; TO UPGRADE THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM; TO FIGHT CRIME; TO WAGE PEACE? AFTER PERSONAL SECURITY, WHAT?

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT WHATEVER A MAN IS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT CONSTITUTES HIS RELIGION. A MAN'S PRAYER, SAID THE REVEREND FOSDICK, "IS THAT FEELING, THAT NEED OR YEARNING WHICH HE EXPERIENCES MOST DEEPLY". THERE IS MUCH TRUTH IN THIS VIEW. IF WE ACCEPT, FOR THE MOMENT, THE DEFINITION OF RELIGION AS "MAN'S ULTIMATE CONCERN", THEN WE CAN SEE HOW MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS ARE PRACTICED ALL AROUND US. HITLER, FOR EXAMPLE, WAS A RELIGIOUS MAN IN THESE TERMS. HITLER'S ULTIMATE CONCERN WAS DEATH, THE DEATH OF ALL WHO PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING THE SUPREME PROPHET. HE LIVED BY THE STANDARDS AND THE ETHICS OF DEATH. IN THE END, HITLER STRETCHED HIMSELF OUT ON THE ALTAR OF HIS GOD, AND IN COMMITTING SUICIDE, PERFORMED THE DEED HE WOULD HAVE ALL MEN PERFORM AS THE HIGHEST GOOD. BECAUSE HE HATED HIMSELF, HE WAS CONVINCED OF THE ESSENTIAL EVIL OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS, AND HE REVELED IN THEIR DESTRUCTION.

A MAN'S RELIGION IS DETERMINED, IN LARGE PART, BY WHAT HE FEARS MOST. IF HE FEARS POVERTY MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THEN HE FLEES FORWARD IN PURSUIT OF MATERIAL RICHES, AND THIS GOAL BECOMES HIS HEAVEN AND DETERMINES HIS STANDARDS AND HABITS. IN FLEEING FROM WHAT HE FEARS MOST, A MAN SOMETIMES MAKES HIMSELF OVER IN THE IMAGE OF THAT WHICH HE FEARS. THE RICH PERSON WHO CANNOT GIVE EASILY AND GENEROUSLY TO CHARITY, FOR EXAMPLE, IS OBVIOUSLY A PERSON RIDDLED WITH THE FEAR OF POVERTY. HIS LACK OF GIVING SCREAMS OUT FOR HIM, "SEE, I AM AFRAID TO LET GO OF EVEN A SMALL PART OF WHAT I HAVE". LOOK DEEPLY INTO WHAT A MAN SEEMS TO WANT MOST, SEEMS TO ENJOY MOST, AND YOU MAY FIND THE KERNEL OF A FEAR. THE FEAR IS UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THE MAN SEEMS TO WANT MOST. THE MAN WHO PURSUES SEX, THE DON JUAN OR THE MAN WHO MUST CONQUER WOMAN AFTER WOMAN, THIS WORSHIPPER OF SEX IS QUITE POSSIBLY FLEEING FROM THE FEAR OF IMPOTENCY. HE HAS THE COMPULSIVE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE A POWER THAT, DEEP DOWN, HE FEARS HE DOES NOT HAVE. THIS KIND OF FLIGHT FROM THE THING WE FEAR, IS A FORM OF SERVITUDE. IT IS A NEGATIVE WORSHIP, AN IDOLATRY, BUT WORSHIP IT IS.

SO WE CONCLUDE THAT THAT WHICH A PERSON WANTS MOST, WHETHER IT BE OUT OF FEAR OR LOVE, DETERMINES HIS STANDARDS AND HIS ACTIONS. ALL PEOPLE CAPABLE OF INTENSE FEELING ARE RELIGIOUS IN THIS SENSE. THE ONLY QUESTION IS - WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THEIR RELIGION? IT WAS HITLER'S MISTRUST OF HIMSELF THAT MADE HIM SO MISTRUSTFUL OF OTHER MEN. JUDAISM, THE FOE OF THE RELIGION KNOWN AS HITLERISM OR FASCISM, POSTULATES THAT MAN IS POTENTIALLY GOOD. IT TEACHES THAT MAN'S TASK IS TO IMITATE THE STANDARD OF LOVE AND JUSTICE THAT WE ASSOCIATE WITH GOD. IT IS THIS THAT HITLER CONSIDERED WEAKNESS AND DANGEROUS TO HIS INSTITUTIONS AND TO THE BLOOD-LETTING RITUALS OF FASCISM. THE TORAH OF FASCISM TAUGHT MEN TO HATE, TO BE SUSPICIOUS OF ONE ANOTHER, TO STRIKE BEFORE ONE IS ATTACKED. SOMETHING OF FEAR-BASED RUTHLESSNESS WAS PRESENT IN STALIN'S VERSION OF COMMUNISM. STALIN'S DAUGHTER HAS RECENTLY COMMENTED PUBLICLY, "I CAME TO BELIEVE IN GOD AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO WHAT MY FATHER BELIEVED ABOUT MAN AND THE WORLD." "I HOPE", SHE SAID, "FOR THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF GOODNESS AND COMPASSION OVER EVIL." "I SUPPOSE," SHE HAS WRITTEN, "THAT THIS IS THE SAME THING AS BELIEVING IN GOD". JUDAISM HAS ALWAYS TAUGHT JUST THIS. TO BELIEVE IN GOD IS TO LOOK FOR THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING OVER HATE AND DIVISION. THE TWO BELIEFS ARE ONE AND INSEPARABLE. BUT ONE CAN BE RELIGIOUS BY HOLDING TO AN OPPOSITE VIEW, IF THAT VIEW DOMINATES ONE'S ACTIONS AND FEELINGS. IT IS RELIGIOUS TO PROCLAIM AS MANY DO TODAY, "MANKIND COMES FROM NOTHING AND WE REEL TOWARDS NOTHINGNESS." JUDAISM SEEKS TO MAKE OF THIS WORLD A HEAVEN. THOSE WHO FOLLOW ANOTHER KIND OF RELIGION TEACH OF THIS WORLD WHAT DANTE TAUGHT OF HELL, "ABANDON HOPE ALL YE WHO ENTER HERE."

THE HIPPIES HAVE NOT ABANDONED HOPE, BUT THEY HAVE ABANDONED OUR SOCIETY. MUCH ABOUT THE HIPPIE MOVEMENT IS NEGATIVE, MUCH OF IT IS DIRTY, SHALLOW, AND CONFUSED, BUT THE HIPPIES ARE TRYING TO FASHION A NEW RELIGION. IN A WAY, THEIR MOVEMENT IS A COLLECTION OF THE OUTCASTS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS. ESPECIALLY DO THEY CATER TO THE REJECTS OF OUR DOMINANT RELIGION, MIDDLE-CLASS MATERIALISM. SOME OF THE HIPPIES LEAVE COLLEGE BECAUSE THEY ARE UNABLE, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, TO BECOME EXPERT IN THE HABITS AND RITUALS THAT OUR SOCIETY DEMANDS OF THEM. CRUSHED BY THE LACK OF CONCERN WE MANIFEST FOR THE AVERAGE AND BELOW-AVERAGE PERSON, THEY GRAVITATE TO A NEW GROUP WHICH HOLDS OUT ITS ARMS IN WELCOME TO EACH NEW BROTHER, REGARDLESS OF HIS PEDIGREE, I.Q., OR ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY. THESE UNFORTUNATE YOUNGSTERS MAY BE MISGUIDED, BUT THEY SEEK AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CURRENT FUNDAMENTALISM, AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE ETHIC THAT SAYS, "NICE GUYS FINISH LAST", AND "LET'S BOMB THEM BEFORE THEY BOMB US".

MANY OF THESE KIDS HAVE QUIT THE PREPARATION FOR THE PRIESTHOOD AND NUNNERY OF OUR MATERIALISTIC ORDERS TO GO IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER GOD, THE GOD OF LOVE-INS, THE GOD OF GIVING AND SHARING. SOME OF THEM ARE REACTING TO THE LIES AND DECEIT WHICH MARKS THE DAILY LIVES OF THEIR PARENTS. SO THEY, LIKE THE PATRIARCH JACOB, SET UP THEIR OWN

ULTIMATE CONCERN -

LADDER TO HEAVEN. THEY SEEK A NEW VISION. UNFORTUNATELY, THEY HAVE NOT YET LEARNED THAT A VISION WHICH LEADS THEM AWAY FROM SOCIETY ULTIMATELY BECOMES SELF-DEFEATING. IT IS ONE THING TO WORK TO CHANGE THE STANDARDS OF A SOCIETY, WHILE REMAINING WITHIN THE SOCIETY. IT IS QUITE ANOTHER THING TO SEEK A SOLUTION IN ESCAPISM.

AS SICK AS SOME OF THESE HIPPIES MAY BE, ARE THEY MORE SICK THAN SOME OF US? WE DISLIKE THEIR RITUALS OF LONG HAIR AND DIRTY CLOTHES. THEY ARE REACTING TO OUR RITUALS OF COSTLY LABELS AND EXPENSIVE GADGETS. THEIR DISDAIN FOR WEALTH, THEIR GLORIFICATION OF POVERTY, IS OBVIOUSLY AN ATTACK ON OUR OBSESSION WITH WEALTH. IN OUR SOCIETY, THE GREAT SIN IS NOT STEALING OR DISHONESTY, BUT POVERTY! THE HUGE INCREASE IN THE CRIME RATE, THE AMAZING INCREASE IN BUSINESS FINAGLING IS A DIRECT OUTGROWTH OF THE GREAT PRESSURE IN OUR SOCIETY TO AMASS RICHES. THE ONE THING THAT THE DUTIFUL TRAINEES OF OUR MORES CANNOT TOLERATE, IS POVERTY. ARE THE HIPPIES MORE WRONG THAN WE, OR, HAVING EXPERIENCED POVERTY, AND FOUND IT NOT SO CRUSHING, PERHAPS THE HIPPIE IS MORE EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH LIFE'S REAL PROBLEMS THAN WE ARE. PERHAPS HE IS LEARNING BETTER THAN WE HOW TO GIVE OF HIMSELF AND HOW TO HELP ANOTHER HUMAN BEING. AT THE VERY LEAST, THE HIPPIE GOD IS THE GOD OF THE POOR. THE GOD OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS WAS UNDERSTOOD AS THE GOD OF THE POOR AND THE GOD OF THE OUTCAST. DOES YOUR GOD CARE ABOUT THE POOR? DOES HE DEMAND THAT YOU SHARE YOUR BLESSINGS WITH OTHERS LESS FORTUNATE THAN YOURSELF? OR, IS YOUR GOD PASSIVE AND UNDEMANDING-LIKE THE UNFEELING IDOLS OF OLD?

OUR FATHERS TAUGHT THAT YOU CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON AT THE SAME TIME. YOU CAN'T SERVE THE COMPASSIONATE GOD AND THE CALLOUS GOD SIMULTANEOUSLY. OUR FATHERS TAUGHT THAT IF YOUR ALLEGIANCE IS DIVIDED, IF YOU DON'T SERVE THE LIVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND SOUL, THEN YOU ARE AN IDOLATOR. FOR THEM, THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS SPLITTING ONE'S "ULTIMATE CONCERN". YOUR CONCERN EITHER MANIFESTS ITSELF IN A CONSISTENT PLAN OF ACTION, OR YOU CANNOT BE NUMBERED AMONGST THE BELIEVERS, AMONGST THE CONCERNED.

ABOUT WHAT DO YOU FEEL SO DEEPLY THAT YOU ARE MOVED TO SPEAK ABOUT IT "WHEN YOU LIE DOWN AND WHEN YOU RISE UP"? WHAT IS THE THOUGHT THAT CLAIMS YOUR HEART, THAT RAISES YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE AND MULTIPLIES YOUR RATE OF HEART-BEAT? WHAT IS THE HOPE WHICH YOU HOLD AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES? --FOR THIS DEEPEST HOPE, THIS MOST DEMANDING THOUGHT IS YOUR PRAYER, AND THE DEEDS THAT FLOW INEVITABLY FROM IT ARE YOUR TRUE RELIGIOUS ACTS.

IT WOULD SEEM TO ME THAT AFTER WE SIFT FROM OUR ANCIENT RELIGION THE EXTRANEOUS VIEWS AND RITUALS THAT CLEARLY BELONG TO A FORMER AGE, THERE REMAINS A PENETRATING INSIGHT AND POWER WHICH CAN WELL SERVE OUR OWN TIME. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THIS PRUNED RELIGION, CALL IT PROPHETIC OR REFORM JUDAISM, CAN PROVIDE A RALLYING POINT, A MEETING PLACE FOR YOUNG AND OLD, FOR RICH AND POOR. WHAT WE SEEM TO NEED SO DESPERATELY IN OUR TIME IS JUST THAT - A MEETING PLACE. A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN AND PARENTS CAN CLASP HANDS WITH A FEELING OF JOINT PURPOSE. A PLACE WHERE THE "INS" AND THE "OUTS", THE "BLACKS" AND THE "WHITES" CAN COME TOGETHER TO MAKE PLANS FOR A JOINT WORK. WE NEED A NEW HOME BASE TO WHICH WE CAN ALL RETURN AFTER OUR SEPARATE WANDERINGS, AND KNOW THAT WE ARE WANTED AND BLESSED IN THAT PLACE. IN THE LANGUAGE OF OUR PRAYER-BOOK, WE NEED TO HAVE OUR HEARTS UNITED. WE NEED TO HAVE THE RIFTS FILLED IN. I KNOW OF NO BETTER MEETING-PLACE THAN IN THE SYMBOLISM AND PERSPECTIVE OF OUR FAITH WHICH TEACHES:

"HAVE WE NOT ALL ONE FATHER,
HATH NOT ONE GOD CREATED US ALL,
WHY THEN DO WE TREAT ONE ANOTHER SO TREACHEROUSLY?"

LET THIS PROPHETIC QUESTION BECOME OUR "ULTIMATE CONCERN". LET THIS BE THE QUESTION WE ASK IN OUR HOUSEHOLDS - IN THE MARKET PLACE - AND IN THE COUNCIL OF NATIONS. IF THIS BE THE CONSTANT MEASURE OF OUR DEEDS, THEN, WE SHALL MEET IN MIND AND SPIRIT ON THE GROUND MADE HOLY BY OUR FATHERS, AND WE SHALL ONCE AGAIN FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE LIVING GOD.