of conversation among the inhabitants of far isles and many peoples.' Unfortunately, Jewish-Christian dialogue remains a narrow conversation among experts whose advances are too often simply unknown to American Jews — and Christians."

Fear of Religion

American Jews, sadly, "believe they will be at risk if religion becomes a visible factor in American life," Abrams writes, "but they cannot demonstrate why anyone should believe this.... It is founded in fear, and though that fear can easily be explained by Jewish history, it cannot be defended by reference to Jewish interests today. It freezes American Jews into a pattern of thought and behavior that is unfair to their neighbors and damaging to their own future. It is, to say the least, morally offensive to see Jewish groups displaying a combination of class prejudice, political intolerance, and real difficulty coming to grips with Christianity. Religious fervor is being associated with ignorance and lack of education. Christians whose faithfulness to their religion, and ability to keep their children faithful to it, should be a model for Jews, are instead seen as bumpkins and bigots."

The fact is, Abrams shows, that as religion has been driven to the margins of American life, Jews have become less Jewish. In the end, Abrams believes that Jews cannot survive in the American society as an ethnic group, as a group committed to the false religion of Israel or commemoration of the Holocaust, or as a result of fear of prejudice which rings false to the vast majority of American Jews. Only Judaism, the religion, can hope to survive in the diverse and open American society: "Whether American Jews can commit themselves anew to the goal of survival, to reversing the demographic patterns that threaten their collective future, depends on whether they still believe they are above all else members of a religious community. As an ethnic, cultural or political entity they are doomed. Such identification erodes from one generation to the next; it cannot be sustained against the pressures of a society seeking relentlessly to include them within larger groups of citizens who do not share their religious heritage.... American Jewry will survive as a religious community or not at all."

There is much that is persuasive in Elliot Abrams' analysis, and he is surely correct in pointing to the various false gods that have replaced genuine religion in American Jewish life. Those American Jews seeking genuine spirituality have abandoned institutions which devoted their time and energy to Middle East conflicts, Holocaust commemorations and liberal politics. Throughout this book, however, the reader gets the feeling that Abrams believes in promoting an Orthodox, isolationist version of Judaism — which he does not practice himself — largely as a tactic for group survival rather than out of a sincere belief in its religious precepts.

Orthodox Day Schools

He expresses support for Orthodox Jewish day schools largely, it seems, because the products of such schools are less likely to marry those of other faiths. His argument in behalf of Orthodoxy is utilitarian, not a matter of faith. Thus, he writes that, "...the Orthodox are doing something that should in principle attract the admiration and support of the American Jewish community: staying Jewish. They do not have a 52 percent intermarriage rate.... The good Jew is ritually observant and resists assimilation, in some sense living apart, never fitting comfortably into American or any other society."

Understanding the problem with the logic of his own argument, Abrams asks: "And what of faith? Is it not a prerequisite for such religious activity? At first glance, it does not appear to be so for Jews can turn to Judaism as a matter of Jewish survival. Judaism can be for them if not a faith then an instrumentality for achieving the social goal of perpetuating the group. Can Jewish nonbelievers troop off to synagogue, or light Sabbath candles, not because they are considered divine commands but because they make it more likely that the next generation will perform the same empty rituals?... From the perspective of the individual Jew, this conduct might seem hypocritical; he or she appears to be feigning a faith no longer held. Yet from the community's perspective, and indeed from the perspective of Judaism itself, the entire enterprise is very different and far more promising."

Elliot Abrams' analysis of the problem of Jewish continuity is persuasive and well argued. His belief that Jews can survive in the end only as a religious group is almost beyond question. Yet what kind of religious group is it that he wants to survive, and for what reason? To argue that those who do not believe in the strictures of Orthodox Judaism embrace its practices as a means for the survival of a system of thought and way of life in which they do not believe, is hardly likely to attract large numbers of adherents.

Universal God

What Abrams has not considered is the possibility of a Judaism envisioned by the 19th and early 20th century reformers who believed in a universal God, the creator of all men, and in a religion which had something important to say about man's meaning and purpose in the world. They sought to promote a prophetic vision of justice and moral values, a vision much in need in the contemporary American society. They did not lament the decline of the ghetto or seek to segregate Jews in schools and communities of their own lest they be corrupted by the larger society of which they were an integral part.

Judaism is not a hot-house plant which requires special isolation to thrive. It is one of the pillars of Western civilization and is the source of the very values embraced by our larger society. The emphasis on righteousness, for example, remains at the heart and soul of Judaism. This prompted the English critic Matthew Arnold to remark that "the intense and convinced energy with which the Hebrew threw himself upon his ideal of righteousness has belonged to Hebraism alone ... moreover as long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration."

Thomas Huxley, the 19th century English biologist declared that, "The Bible has been the Magna Charta of the poor and oppressed.... All that is best in the ethics of the modern world ... is the direct development of the ethics of Israel. There is no code of legislation, ancient or modern, at once so just and merciful, so tender to the weak and poor, as the Jewish law."

In the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, Reform Jewish leaders in America declared that, "We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, not the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."

Reforming Process

In his book *The Leaven of Judaism,* Rabbi David Goldberg writes that, "...this reforming process has been an integral part of Judaism from its beginnings. In fact, it is Judaism's reforming process which has been the leaven of Judaism throughout history.... Judaism is ... characterized by process and sensitive response to living reality. It progressed from epoch to epoch and journeyed from country to country. It gave birth to two daughter religions, Christianity and Islam. It went through several major developments while retaining a basic religious philosophy. And it could do so because the reforming principle, the principle of progress, acting as its spiritual leaven, as silent but potent internal force, perpetually stimulated growth and development."

Elliot Abrams is right in believing that religion — not the substitutes for it which constitute so much of contemporary Jewish life — is the only thing which is likely to survive in the long run. But his view that the survival of Judaism requires a narrow religion and an isolationist posture in which people hypocritically observe rituals without faith, is a prescription which not only will not work but is indicative of belief in a God who may be too small for the task at hand. Perhaps Abrams would do well to consider the universal God who created all men, the God Judaism bestowed upon the world and who is so much needed in our contemporary society.

Despite a prescription which will not solve the problems he sets forth, Elliot Abrams has, nevertheless, identified many of the real challenges facing the American Jewish community at the present time. Hopefully, his book will become the basis for much discussion for no problem can be resolved if it is not properly diagnosed. *Faith or Fear* represents a beginning of such a diagnosis. •

GOD'S ELECT
(continued from page 4)

that Yahweh ceased to be a mere tribal deity, biased in favor of Israel, and became the God whose glory filled the entire universe. Allan Tarshish, author of the book *Not By Power,* calls the years 740 to 590 BCE vital to the development of Judaism. "It was during this era that a large group of people came to accept the idea of the moral relationship between man and man, man and God, and the idea of a universal God," he writes.

Thus the 8th and 7th centuries BCE called forth not only a purification of the Yahweh cult and a return to ritual, but also a spiritual revival that stressed compassion over ritual. Jeremiah the prophet began to preach in the 13th year of Josiah's reign. At first he was pleased with the reforms, but then he realized that the reformers were more interested in the Temple cult than in improving the morals of the followers of Yahweh. God had chosen the Hebrews for greater tasks than the performance of rituals:

"Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.'" Jeremiah 7:21-22.

Social Justice

Jeremiah then denounced the evil he perceived in Judaean society. A concern with social justice and compassion above the rituals of Temple worship, however, began long before Jeremiah with the first of the literary prophets, Amos. The prologue to the perpetual moral outrage expressed by the literary prophets was complex. It was not until the time of King David in the year 1000 BCE that the Hebrews gained full control over Canaan. During the following 250 years they adapted all too well to life in Canaan, adopting many of the gods and religious practices of their neighbors. By 750 BCE syncretist worship was entrenched. When Josiah sought to purify the worship of Yahweh, he had to eliminate altars to Baal, the god of heaven, Ashtarte, the goddess of the earth, and Adonis the child of their union. At the same time that the cult of foreign gods flourished, there emerged an ever widening gap between the rich and poor. Among the disadvantaged this disparity bred envy and hatred. Among others it stimulated a sense of injustice and a cry for compassion. The time was ripe for the entry of the literary prophets, beginning with Amos in 760 BCE, Hosea in 750 BCE and Isaiah in 740 BCE. Amos associates chosenness with God's mission of justice and righteousness:

"Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt: 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.'" Amos 3:1-2.

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an everflowing stream." Amos 5:21-24.

Isaiah begins the description of the vision which led him to prophesy by depicting a world permeated by God's divinity:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3.

Sense of Holiness

But it is precisely this sense of holiness of which the people are deprived. During the seventh century Temple rituals all but excluded any but the priests from any role but that of observer in the sacrifices and worship. The prophets argued that everyone be allowed to worship God directly without mediation of the priests. This concept of holiness is important for the development of Judaism away from an attachment to a particular place as God's domicile. Isaiah depicts a universal God who has chosen the Israelites to enact this concept of holiness, to carry out the mission of justice and mercy toward others. According to Tarshish, Isaiah "was not concerned with a ritual holiness, or holiness limited by pious observance of certain