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What price brotherhood?, 1926.

"WHAT PRICE BROTHERHOOD?"

The Sacrifices Which Must Be Made for Goodwill
- Between Races and Religions.

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,
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Universal good will is not a legacy of the human race. It is an achievement, a goal still to be attained. Primitive man knew very little of good will. His good will was restricted to his family or to the working unit of a group of families--the tribe. For his kith and kin he had a deep-rooted loyalty and devotion, but beyond that his loyalty and devotion did not extend. Neighboring tribes were his potential enemies, and distant tribes as well. His religion--and religion at all times is a true social reflex--was a tribal religion, and his god a tribal god. Because his world was narrow his sympathies were narrow; because his contacts were few his friendly relationships were few. It is only as his world enlarged that his horizons widened; it is only after the circumference of his interests passed beyond the confines of his locality that he began to experience the need for cooperation with other tribes and other people; and simultaneously his good will increased.

I venture to say that the whole story of mankind, the whole story of human progress, can be told in terms of the widening spheres of human sympathy based upon the growing recognition of dependence and mutual need. The first contacts between peoples were those of conflict. One tribe became aware of the existence of another tribe in war, through the attempted aggression or invasion of the neighbor-

ing tribe; just as Europe became acquainted with Asia, and Asia became acquainted with Europe, through attempted invasions and migrations of peoples through enterprises of conquest. In other words, political and economic competition precipitated the first acquaintanceship between peoples; and that, in a large measure, has continued to this day. The peoples of Europe discovered the New World, explored the Dark Continent, exploited the backward peoples, driven by the competitive instinct. This has led to numerous wars and numerous encounters among people, which culminated in this last and greatest of wars.

This last war was the most widespread contact through conflict that the world has ever seen--contact through conflict. And it is significant to note that the immediate result of this widespread contact through conflict was the League of Nations, which is the most widespread contact through cooperation that the world has yet seen. I say this is significant because it illustrates the basic truth that human sympathy is grounded in human contact and derives from a realization of mutual need and interdependence.

In other words, necessity sublimates conflict into cooperation and rivalry into ~~free~~² will. I stress this thought this morning because I want to make clear to you that good will is not a thing easy of attainment; that it is the slowly evolving and patiently developing quality based upon the growing acquaintanceship among men. The ideal of human brotherhood ~~may~~^{have been} enunciated thousands of years

ago. by those men who had prophetic vision and could see beyond the immediate conventions of life to the ultimate realities and values of life; the vision, I say, may be an ancient one, but the realization of the ideal of human brotherhood is still in the far distant future, still a thing to be achieved; for there is still so much of isolation and segregation in the world; there is still so much that is alien and strange and foreign in human relationships. Brotherhood is now entering not upon its last stage of development but rather upon its first stage of development. The way is long and hard is the road which man will have to travel before he reaches the glorious consummation, and if man is to hasten the day of universal reconciliation and brotherhood, if man will not wait upon the blood conflicts between people to bring about peace and cooperation, then he must be prepared to make tremendous sacrifices for brotherhood; he must be prepared to pay the price in terms of the surrender of long cherished tradition, and in terms of the suppression or sublimation of deep-seated memories and ancient ways of thinking and doing. Brotherhood is not a legacy but an achievement.

The first thing which man will have to do in order to bring about universal brotherhood will be this: he will have to extend his local tribal loyalties so as to include the whole world. There are two loyalties which, somehow, more than all others, have resisted and do now resist this extension and universalization. I refer to the

loyalty to one's religion and to the loyalty to one's race. All other loyalties have extended their boundaries--art, literature, science, have already succeeded in creating a sort of international fraternity; they have passed beyond national boundaries. Peoples today are frequently extending their gifts of mind and soul. The artistic creation of one people, even though it bears the stamp and imprint of that people's soul, of that people's personality, is none the less welcomed by another people. There has been a broadening of the sphere of human relationships in terms of art and literature and science. But religion still seems to be monopolistic; religious loyalty still seems to be an exclusive kind of loyalty; it still seems to demand repudiation,--not only repudiation but condemnation of all other religion. There are still many circles in the world where it is regarded as rank heresy to speak respectfully of another man's faith. Certain groups, certain religions have arrogated unto themselves supreme, absolute and exclusive religious truth. They have accordingly been compelled to deny these same excellencies and these same claims to other religions. Religions seem to have appropriated heaven, each one for its own faithful adherents, while they permit the gates of hell to be wide open for the adherents of other faiths.

This exclusive type of religious loyalty regards religion as an accomplished fact--not as the groping of the human soul for the dwelling-place of God; not as the

eternal pilgrimage of man; not as an evolving experience in the life of man, but as an accomplished fact, perfected at one historical moment and with us in perfected form for all time. These exclusivists also look upon their creed as possessing eternal validity--not as upon a temporary formulation of truth to serve as a guide for men, but as something eternal and perfected; and these same exclusivists look upon ritual as upon something possessing a sacramental character, an almost magical character, instead of being merely the visual aid to exalted living and thinking and feeling.

So that these people possessing the perfect faith and the perfect creed and the perfect ritual naturally look upon themselves as perfect in the sight of God. All others ought to be persuaded to relinquish their faith and their creed and their ritual and accept this one, for this alone is true. They should be persuaded by reason, by argument, if necessary, by force, for the salvation of their own soul.

Now, in the Middle Ages this missionary zeal, this religious imperialism, assumed the ugliest kind of form, and persecutions of the ghastliest types were indulged in--the rack and the torture, the inquisition and the auto da fe, anathema and ex-communication,--every means was employed to force men into an acceptance of what was regarded by the proponents of that faith as the one faith, the only truth. In modern times this persecution has taken on a less noxious

form. It expresses itself in political discrimination; it expresses itself in social discrimination; it expresses itself in organized hostility, in vile denunciation and pamphleteering; it expresses itself in the propaganda of hate.

Now, the point is that religion cannot be blamed for these crimes. Many crimes have been committed in the name of religion; many wars have been fought in the name of religion. But so have many crimes been committed in the name of liberty, and many sins been perpetrated in the name of art. Every worthy cause has had its unworthy advocates, and every noble effort of man has in every instance been thwarted by the zealous or the fanatic or the spurious advocate of that effort. The competitive instinct in man is always seeking an outlet, a channel for expression, and when it finds an outlet in religion, which gives it not only scope but also sanction, then that competitive instinct becomes unbridled and the most devastating of all; for a man can then kill, destroy, maim, hate, and at the same time feel exalted, because his work is then sanctified by some noble goal, by some holy cause.

Think of the Crusades, for example. The Crusades gave the untamed peoples of Europe an opportunity to express their bellicose, their barbaric instincts. They could kill and they could butcher and they could perpetrate all manners of cruelties upon the heathen, the Turk and the Jew, and at the same time feel the sense of justification,

the sense of sublimation, because these acts were committed for the sake of a noble cause. And so we are told the Crusaders, entering the city of Jerusalem, butchering and killing all day, wading ankle-deep in blood, at night knelt sobbing for very joy at the holy sepulcher and sang psalms of praise to the Prince of Peace. And in their mind there was no contradiction in terms at all; for religion sanctified what their barbarism prompted them to do.

That was not religion's doings; that was the medieval barbarian giving vent to his instincts under the guise and under the cloak of religion.

Now to achieve brotherhood among men, that for which this world today is so desperately hungering, man must learn to extend the boundaries of his loyalty so as to embrace all religions, all men and women who are groping, each in his own way and according to his own life, for the dwelling-place of God and of truth. Man is not asked to surrender one iota of his adherence and of his loyalty to his own, but he is called upon to grant the self-same privilege to others to adhere, to be loyal to their own. That is all. Let men believe; let God judge. If a man is so convinced of the basic truth of his faith, and so anxious to impart that truth to other men, let him preach it by precept and example, especially by example, to others, and in so doing he will perhaps discover that in matters of spiritual truth it matters very little what a man's protestation of faith is. Good faith is vocalized or

symbolized or expressed. What counts is moral conduct; what is supreme and primary is the doing of justice and the loving of mercy and the walking humbly with God. Even if he believes that it is essential that other men should accept his formulation, his creed, then let him through love and kindness persuade, and not through force and hate, for error is never destroyed by force, and love and faith cannot be commanded by superior power. Let them be satisfied that they are in possession of the great truth, and let them be happy as a result of it.

The great French philosopher and jurist, Montesquieu, in one of the passages of his immortal work, "The Spirit of the Law," says, "If you have been so beloved by heaven as to be favored with a knowledge of the truth, you have been highly privileged; but should those who possess their father's inheritance hate others who are not so happy?" The religious man, if he is true to the informing ideal of his faith, will think very little about driving men into creedal conformance, but will think a great deal upon organizing men into moral and ethical cooperation. A truly religious man will try to discover the common human needs underlying all faith; he will try to reach down into the basic and elemental truths which inspire them all, and he will try to discover a common basis of cooperation between them. The truly religious man will look about him and see in the world injustice and wrong and hate and sin and crime, which are the enemies of all religion. He will

look about him and see materialism and the worship of wealth and power and position rampant in the world, which are eating at the very heart of spirituality.

These are common enemies, common alike to Judaism, to Christianity, to Protestantism, to Catholicism, to every faith. And the truly religious man will therefore seek a basis of voluntary organization among all religions in order to meet this common enemy; he will try to pool the resources, the organization and the inspiration of all denominations and of all religions and center them upon the one important social task of improving life, of elevating life, of enriching human life. In place of conformity and creed he will seek cooperation in deed; and then brotherhood among men will be brought perceptibly nearer.

And then again, friends, if we are to have good will among men, men will have to make sacrifices in terms of their racial conceits; they will have to stretch their racial loyalty so as to include all races. Now, that is not easy, especially among peoples where the ideal of racial superiority has found deep roots. There are some people who arrogate unto themselves religious excellencies; there are other people who arrogate unto themselves racial excellencies. Now, in the sight of God and in the sight of history there are no superior races and there are no inferior races. There are only advanced races and backward races, helped or retarded by the circumstances and the conditions of their life. Biologically, there are but insignificant

differences among races--differences brought about by climate and resources and racial experiences. There are no races which have been continuously superior. The races of Western Europe who are regarding themselves as endowed with superior qualifications were the backward races of the world a few centuries ago, and the so-called backward races of today--China, India, the Arabs, other races, were the advanced and masterful people a few centuries ago or many centuries ago. Of course races are not equal any more than individuals are equal. But superior advantages in race do not warrant conceit or exploitation or domination; rather do they compel obligation and helpfulness and service. Of all forms of intolerance racial intolerance is the most unfair, and socially the most futile; for a man cannot change his race, and the racial purist is as furiously opposed to racial blending as he is opposed to other races. We are what we are--various, diverse, different, as God meant us to be; and therefore there is need for mutual understanding and for sympathetic cooperation among these races. Excellency is to be accredited for living and thinking, not for being.

There is no priority in race, for all have a common origin and all must share the common destiny. "Are we not all brothers? Hath not one God created us all? Why, then, should we deal treacherously one with another?" If special credit is to be awarded to one race as against another it must be awarded on the basis not of blood or of

ancestries, but of socially beneficent achievements, of having contributed the most to social values. The Jew, who prided himself upon his racial stock, was yet broad enough to say that the learned Gentile is higher on the scale of human worth than the ignorant high-priest in the temple who traced his descent from Aaron himself. The learned Gentile was higher in the scale of human worth than the very high-priest; for in one case there was achievement, there was human enterprise, there was the creation of social values, there was the accumulation of cultural assets--a boon to mankind; and in the other case there was only the accident of birth. And the Jew, who prided himself very much upon his racial purity, was nevertheless broad enough to permit the non-Jew to share in all the great prerogatives of his race--in priesthood, in prophecy, in the messianic role. Melchizedek, ~~said~~ the king of Shalom, a non-Jew, is called "the priest of the Most High"; Balaam, a non-Jew, is called "prophet"; Cyrus, a non-Jew, is called "the anointed of the Lord."

And the world to come is opened wide for the reception of all the righteous among the non-Jews; for they, too, by their work have merited immortality. And the shachina, say our Rabbis,--the Holy Ghost--is the privilege of no group and no sect and no race, but of all aspiring children of God. "I call heaven and earth to witness," says the Rabbi, "be ye man or woman, young or old, rich or poor, Jew or non-Jew, white or black, according to his

deserts will the spirit of God descend upon him.

Unfortunately, tribalism is very rampant in the world today; the war seems to have stirred the slumbering embers of racial egoism and chauvinism, and there are men abroad in the world today who are deliberately fanning the flames of racial antipathies and racial suspicions; they are retarding the day of universal reconciliation; they are bringing about a cultural atrophism--a throw-back to ancient jungle standards and codes of conduct. And surely in no land in the world has racial idolatry so little room as in these United States; for here a hundred races have poured their substance of body, mind and soul; for here nigh all the races of mankind have invested their physical and their spiritual being. It matters not whether these races have blended; it matters not whether they have fused; it is important to remember that America is what it is because of these diverse elements which have gone into its composition. Its power, its prestige, its prosperity, its promise have been made by races who have come here from all parts of the earth, each bringing a gift and each bringing a hope, and it was the dream of the founding fathers to build on these shores a nation based not upon racial homogeneity, not upon similarity in ancestry, but upon common devotion to basic ideals based upon principles, based upon vision; based not upon the past but upon the future; not upon what was but upon what might come to be. If ideals are served and if high hopes come true, this

dream, we pray, may yet come to be.

I should like to read you, in closing, a prayer which was written by a man who prayed very seldom,-- a man often called an agnostic, an atheist, a cynic; who, nevertheless, wrote an historic treatise on toleration, a book which helped the cause of good will tremendously. This is the prayer of Voltaire.

"I no longer look up to men; it is to thee, the God of all beings, of all worlds and of all ages, I address myself. If weak creatures, lost in immensity and imperceptible to the rest of the universe, may dare to ask any thing of thee, who hast given all things, and whose decrees are immutable and eternal, deign to regard with pity the errors inseparable from our nature; let not those errors prove our calamities. Thou hast not given us hearts to hate, and hands to destroy each other; dispose us to mutual assistance, in supporting the burden of a painful and transitory life. Let the little differences in the garments which cover our frail bodies; in all our imperfect languages, in our ridiculous customs, our imperfect laws, our idle opinions, in our ranks and conditions, so unequal in our eyes and so equal in thine: let all those little shades which distinguish the atoms called men, be no more signals of hatred and persecution. Let those who light tapers at noon-day, to glorify thee, bear with those who content themselves with the light of thy sun. Let not those who throw over their garments a white surplice, while they say it is the

duty of men to love thee, hate those who say the same thing in a black woolen cloak. Let it be equal to adore thee in a jargon formed from an ancient or from a modern language.

"May all men remember that they are brethern. May they regard with horror the tyranny exercised over the mind, as they do rapine, which carries away by force the fruits of peaceable labor and industry. If the scourges of war be inevitable, let us not hate and destroy each other in the bosom of peace; let us employ this moment of our existence to praise, in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, thy goodness which hath granted us that instant and this moment."

A worthy prayer, my friends, to repeat today. Let each man walk in the name of his God, just so each man recognizes that what God desires of him is only to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with him.

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