



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Is one religion for all mankind necessary or desireable?, 1928.

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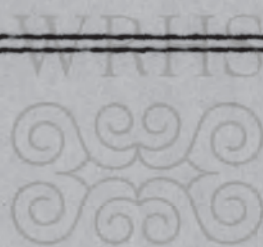
"IS ONE RELIGION FOR ALL MANKIND  
NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE?"

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

JANUARY 22, 1928, CLEVELAND, O.

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JOSEPH T. KRAUS  
Shorthand  
Reporter  
CLEVELAND

A Great effort is now being made by the many denominations in Protestant Christianity to unite. A conference is being held this week in our own city--the First National Church Comity Conference, whose object is <sup>to</sup> ~~establish close contact between~~ ~~clearly the greater consolidation of the many disrupted~~ ~~and~~ disunited communions in Protestant Christianity. The motives back of such a conference are easily ascertainable. In the first place, it is hoped that by means of a consolidation of one kind or another <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ needless dissipation of resources and energy which is now going on may be ~~avoided~~ <sup>averted</sup>. This dissipation is especially apparent in the smaller communities, where the presence of half a dozen or <sup>more</sup> ~~a dozen~~ Protestant churches, <sup>downs</sup> ~~destines~~ each one of them to poverty and ineffectiveness. It is hoped that by ~~a~~ merger greater strength would be added to the organized churches of Protestantism.

Another motive back of this movement ~~towards~~ ~~consolidation~~ is the desire to present a solid front against the forces ~~which are~~ hostile to religion; ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> there may be yet a third motive, <sup>a</sup> rather vague but nevertheless <sup>real</sup> ~~a fixed~~ conviction <sup>union</sup> ~~that united~~ is the ideal, and <sup>disunion</sup> ~~disunited~~ is undesirable.

A few years ago an heroic effort was made in the United States to organize all the churches of Protestantism. The movement, which was known as the Interdenomination-

al Church Union, was strongly reenforced by the presence in its midst of laymen of great wealth, ~~who favored the idea of a strong union among all the churches.~~ Each church was to retain its doctrinal characteristics, <sup>but</sup> ~~and yet~~ all ~~the churches~~ were to unite on the basis of the things and ~~the tasks and the missions~~ common to all of them. This movement, however, died <sup>aborted.</sup> ~~prematurely.~~ Various reasons <sup>in explanation,</sup> have been put forward. It has been maintained that the report which this Interdenominational Church Union published concerning the famous steel strike of <sup>2</sup> ~~a few~~ years ago, which ~~report~~ defended the strikers and severely criticized the steel magnates, ~~it is maintained by some that this report, which~~ proved distasteful to the men of wealth who were backing this interdenominational ~~church~~ movement, <sup>and therefore</sup> was fatal to the movement. But be that as it may, the movement died, ~~aborted.~~

✓ Last summer a great international conference was held in <sup>Luzerne</sup> ~~Luzerne~~, Switzerland. <sup>For two weeks</sup> ~~Representa-~~ tives of the <sup>world's</sup> Protestant <sup>groups</sup> ~~denominations~~, the Greek Catholics, ~~Church~~ and other denominations, except the Roman Catholics, were present. It <sup>struggled valiantly</sup> ~~was a great attempt~~ to discover a basis for unity in Christendom. Nothing <sup>substantial</sup> ~~concrete~~ resulted from the conference, except the miracle that so many different denominations <sup>actually</sup> ~~have~~ met in peace and adjourned <sup>in peace.</sup> ~~in peace.~~ In the last few years there <sup>a movement has been on foot</sup> ~~has been going~~ <sup>High Church</sup> ~~on~~ in the circles of high church people, especially in England, ~~a movement to unite with the Roman Catholic Church.~~

Conversations were held between high dignitaries in both the Roman Catholic Church and in the Anglican Church looking towards ~~a~~ union. This movement, however, has received a very serious setback, if not a death blow, at the hands of the head of the Roman Catholic Church himself, Pope Pius XI, who some ten or twelve days ago sent broadcast an encyclical, ~~an official church pronunciamento~~ concerning unity in Christendom.

In this letter the Pope frowns upon what he calls the pan-Christians, and looks upon their efforts at church unity through federation as a dangerous ~~illusion~~ <sup>delusion</sup>. Those who wish to return to the Roman Catholic Church will be welcomed, but they must return and submit to the authority of the church. There is but one true religion, says the Pope, there is but one true revelation; there is but one divinely constituted church, and in that church there is but one divinely sanctioned government whose primary jurisdiction is vested in the Roman See. ~~All~~ other churches and religions, by implication, are false, and to join hands with them is to join hands with error. There can be only one faith, one authority, one law; and the Roman Church will not surrender one iota of its dogmas or of its authority for the sake of unity in Christendom.

So much for that. <sup>P</sup> From time to time ~~we~~ <sup>expressed deep</sup> ~~have~~ a similar longing for unity among our own people, in our own religion--in Judaism. For we too have our denominations and our sects, even though they are not as numerous,

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as yet, or as sharply defined, ~~delineated~~, as they are in Christianity; for, after all, back of and ~~beneath~~ the differences in religious convictions among our people is a basic racial unity which holds us all together--a racial unity which does not exist in, say, Christianity or ~~in~~ Mohammedanism. But we too have our orthodox and our ultra-orthodox; we have our conservatives and <sup>the</sup> thirty-two degrees and kinds of conservatives. We have our reform and liberal *groups, ranging from those having well-defined theologies to those who keep* ~~each~~ *groups,* ~~and~~ *each* group has its own synagogue or temple, and its own mode of worship, ~~and~~ its own schools, and, in some instances, its own national and international organization.

So that we too have our denominations. And very frequently there arises some one who says, "Why so many different kinds of Judaism? The basic principles of Judaism are the same. Why not have one Judaism?" <sup>It</sup> Among the liberals of the world this idea is pushed even a step further, so as to <sup>include</sup> ~~impress~~ not only unity among denominations within a given religion but <sup>among</sup> ~~within~~ all religions, the idea *Frequently one hears the wish expressed that* ~~being that~~ *inasmuch as religious truth is one, therefore* there should be but one religion. The ~~other motives are,~~ first, ~~that~~ *the* forms and the ~~peculiar~~ institutions of the different religions are, after all, incidental and of secondary importance, <sup>therefore</sup> ~~and~~ for the sake of a universal religion, ~~a world merger,~~ these incidental features of religion may well be ~~overlooked~~ and sacrificed, ~~and,~~ *again* ~~secondly,~~ *that* the presence of so many religions in the world has always made for intolerance and bigotry, for hate,

their theologies is this ~~same~~ <sup>the</sup> Rabbi's name-  
 who is now likely to be a land with artist there  
 a Rabbi.

WRHS



There is no true religion and there is no false religion.  
Some religions may have <sup>carried over</sup> ~~as~~ a ~~large~~ number  
of obsolete and discarded intellectual notions  
To that extent they are out of alignment with  
contemporary thought

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*Human*      *long and*

for fanaticism and war, and history has a rather ugly  
and long chapter on religious warfare

So that the question naturally presents  
itself to thinking men: <sup>is neither</sup> ~~is~~ one religion for the whole of  
mankind necessary <sup>or</sup> ~~or~~ desirable? <sup>Only the religious monopolist</sup> ~~And in answering this~~  
who is convinced that there is but one true faith and  
question in the negative I take my stand not at all on the  
one true church need insist upon one universal  
premise, say, of the Pope, namely, that there can be only  
one true religion and one true revelation, and therefore  
who can find in no religion ~~the~~ <sup>how</sup> ~~exalted~~,  
only one true church. I do not believe in that. I do not  
believe that any religion has a monopoly of God, or of  
truths about God. I do not believe that any religion has  
the final and the absolute and the exclusive revelations <sup>of God</sup>  
~~concerning God.~~ <sup>and man, but who find in all religions the identical passionate</sup> ~~I believe that all true religions.~~ I am  
not now speaking <sup>of the quest for truth and illumination,</sup> ~~of superstitious faiths, or idolatrous~~  
faiths, of mythology. I am speaking now of the religions  
as something <sup>yearning for universality and uniformity</sup> ~~quite naive and of no importance,~~  
of modern thinking men and women--all true religions,--all  
religions, rather, are interpretations, attempts at inter-  
pretation <sup>of the universe and of man's place in the universe,</sup>  
~~and in so far as these religions conceive of the universe~~  
as the manifestation of personality, ~~of mind and will and~~  
power and beneficence, ~~in so far as all religions do that,~~  
~~they are true religions.~~ <sup>and in</sup> ~~as it~~  
impel human beings to the maximum of moral idealism--  
right living and right thinking and right conduct, they  
is <sup>a</sup> ~~to that extent true religion.~~ <sup>And every church</sup>  
which <sup>itself</sup> ~~churches~~ look upon ~~themselves~~ as corporate agencies for the  
expression of these ~~beliefs and the inculcation of these ideals is~~  
~~true churches.~~

*proposition*

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~~You see~~ Religion is not a science. It is an art--the supreme art of the human spirit. In science truth is universal in the sense that a mathematical truth is cogent here and in China ~~and in India~~, yesterday and for all time. Science is the observation of physical phenomena and processes, ~~and~~ Therefore there can be an absolute ~~sameness in~~ identity in scientific truth. It is objective and not subjective.

Of course science, too, <sup>is a sense</sup> is relative. <sup>all</sup> human knowledge is relative. ~~There is no absolute human knowledge.~~ <sup>But</sup> it is relative not to this man or to this race but ~~it is relative~~ to mankind. There is a universal element <sup>with concept of scientific</sup> ~~even to the~~ relativity, ~~of science~~. But religion is an art. Religion has to do not with the observation of physical phenomena but with the interpretation of these phenomena <sup>with judgments, values, spiritual appraisals,</sup> ~~and with the projecting of mind into those~~ <sup>intuitive inferences,</sup> ~~spheres which are undisclosed to the physical eye of man,~~ and <sup>thus</sup> in the process of interpretation ~~the personal element~~ <sup>and race variations, differences of culture,</sup> ~~of the individual~~ <sup>temperament, history,</sup> ~~even geography, enter,~~ <sup>inevitably</sup> ~~and oftentimes become decisive~~ <sup>they are</sup> ~~factors.~~ <sup>the decisive factors in distinguishing</sup> ~~one religion from another.~~  
~~We can say of art, for example, that art~~ <sup>art</sup> too, is universal. All ~~artists, I assume, will agree that~~ <sup>through the medium of line, color, rhythm and mood</sup> ~~art is an effort to interpret life and to increase the~~ <sup>beauty and the wonderment of life.</sup> ~~and yet just stop to~~ <sup>think how different and various are the ways which artists</sup> ~~at this task.~~ <sup>arrive</sup> ~~pursue in their interpretation of life and in their attempt~~

to increase the beauty of the world, different not only  
as regards the media employed but <sup>also</sup> ~~different~~ as regards <sup>technique,</sup>  
~~form and style.~~ <sup>and style.</sup> ~~one goal, that is true. There is~~

~~but one goal to all art, yet how many and sundry are the~~  
~~ways. There is the classicist; there is the romanticist;~~  
~~there is the realist; there is the primitist; there is the~~  
~~futurist, each approaching the one goal from different~~

*Every true artist reads*  
*philosophy,* ~~ways, and each one reading into his work himself, his life, his~~  
*and often his racial heritage*  
~~his past, his environment, his tradition. His work is~~

~~subjective.~~ Very often artists will use the same theme,  
~~the same subject,~~ but they will be worlds apart in their <sup>to</sup>  
treatment ~~of the same subject;~~ and the <sup>differences</sup> ~~greatness of the~~  
work of art is to be found not so much in the <sup>them</sup> ~~subject~~ as  
in the treatment of the <sup>theme</sup> ~~subject.~~

*It would therefore be naive for some to appear*  
*to say, that,* ~~So that it would be naive for some to appear~~  
*style* ~~to say,~~ <sup>as much</sup> as art is universal, let us have one *art, one*  
~~type of music, one type of architecture, one type of~~  
~~sculpture or painting.~~ Let us take an example a little

closer home. Take the matter of morality and ethics. All  
philosophers, students of ethics, agree that morality is  
the attempt of man most happily to adjust himself to his  
social environment and most fully to express his own life  
in his own personality. This is the one goal, the one  
object of all humanity,--how to live most happily in the  
world and how to fulfill one purpose in life most adequately.  
And yet just consider how many ethical theories and doctrines  
we have in the world; and these theories and doctrines, mind

you, are not merely abstract speculation, but they determine conduct for influencing lives of men.

There is the stoic system of ethics--the guiding principle of "follow nature"--submit unquestionably, without whimper or complaint to all which happens to you in the world, but all that happens is right. That is the Stoic philosophy. On the other hand there is the Epicurean or the Cyrenaic philosophy, which says that the sole criterion of life is absence of pain and the presence of pleasure, and that the ideal of life is not truth or knowledge but the quest of pleasure and the release from pain. And there is again the philosophy of the cynic, which maintains that the goal of life, or rather the means of attaining life's goal, which is happiness, is to free oneself from all the impedimenta of life--from pain and from riches and from the pursuit of pleasures. The cynic holds pleasures in contempt and the satisfaction of the natural desires of man almost as indecent.

There is the great stream of individualism in ethics, and there is another great stream of socialism in ethics--the one maintaining that man is the center of all morality and the other maintaining that the group or the society is the primary concern of morality. Now they are all thinking in terms of morality, and they all subscribe to a basic principle of morality, and yet their approach to the goal is various and different.

And so with religion. God is one ~~to be~~

"All the prophets" declared an ancient sage, "prophesied  
one thing but their styles were all different".

He will not struggle and aspire for all aspiration

~~for that means~~ effort and effort is pain as well as  
~~for that~~ <sup>variety</sup> in all existence is inevitably evil. He  
will long ~~to escape~~ for release from the  
narrow round of existence and for  
complete <sup>personal</sup> ~~total~~ existence after death.

The Occidentals, living in a world ~~where~~ <sup>where</sup>  
climate and physical conditions compell and stimu-  
late action and enterprise, will conceive  
his deity as a dynamic ~~God~~ <sup>Creator</sup>, everlastingly  
~~renewing his universe~~ <sup>renewing his universe</sup>,  
~~and will crave for himself the privilege~~  
of being a co-worker with ~~God~~ <sup>God</sup> in His  
~~marvellous~~ <sup>cosmic</sup> laboratory.

What single religion will satisfy the spiritual  
needs of these ~~two types~~ <sup>intellectual and emotional</sup> ~~men~~ <sup>whose backgrounds</sup>  
are so different? And what single ritual?

~~sub~~ but man's views of God are not one and cannot be one.

~~Because the moment you speak of a man's view you are introducing that man's subjective being into that view,--and men~~

~~differs.~~ I make bold to say that the religion of the Buddhist, for example, will never be like the religion of of Western European,--can never be, is not. The Buddhist

is an Oriental; The Buddhist, <sup>where God-idea was evolved in</sup> ~~came from~~ the warm lands of

the <sup>earth</sup> ~~world~~, where <sup>physical</sup> effort and exertion are <sup>irksome</sup> unpleasant and ~~undesirable~~. ~~And so the Buddhist thinks of his God not as~~ <sup>will not conceive of his deity as an active creative energy,</sup> ~~eternal becoming.~~

~~We do,--as the God continually creating, as the active~~

~~and the forceful being: the Buddhist thinks of his God as eternal~~

<sup>He will</sup> ~~absolute existence in peace.~~ <sup>at rest.</sup> ~~And all that the Buddhist~~

<sup>He will crave for himself</sup> ~~asks of his God is not the privilege to be a co-worker~~

~~himself in it as a drop of water loses itself in the ocean.~~

~~with him in creation, as the Western religion does, but~~

~~He will not aspire after the development of his personality~~

~~the privilege of being absorbed in him, the privilege of~~

~~and will not wait for survival after death.~~

~~having his own personality wiped out and destroyed,~~

~~completely annihilated, so that he will have no need for~~

~~effort and exertion and moral enterprise.~~

That is the religion of the Buddhist; and

the geography and the climate and the history and the

temperament of that race have impressed themselves

indelibly upon the religious concepts of that race. On

the other hand, you take the Westerner, the Occidental, <sup>European</sup> ~~where~~

where the climate is stimulating and compels action, where

man has to fight with the forces of nature in order to hold

his own, the Westerner is likely to conceive of his God as

he has conceived of him--as the great doer, the creator, who

The most potent arguments for religion come from  
the <sup>direct</sup> personal experiences of men. ~~and~~ "Come, and  
hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will declare  
what He hath done for my soul." Into the basic  
faith a people will read the cutting experiences  
of its life. The religions of different peoples must  
therefore to a degree at least be distinct, auto-  
dithonous, reflecting their <sup>several histories and experiences</sup>. Every  
universal religion is sooner or later ~~is~~  
localized, transmuted by the alchemy  
of ~~the~~ <sup>the racial psyche</sup> ~~and~~ absorbed into the life-  
pattern of each group.

Thus Judaism is <sup>certainly</sup> a universalistic  
religion and yet <sup>markedly</sup> ~~is~~ and national  
it is. It mirrors the unique history of  
a people. ~~It voices the most cherished hopes~~  
~~of a race~~ <sup>of oracles</sup> ~~of the race.~~ <sup>The ancestral</sup>  
voices of the race.

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renews every day the works of creation, and he will ask of his deity the privilege of being free to work with him, of being privileged to struggle in the world to overcome evil.

Now the Westerner's religion will be determined largely by his life, by his circumstances, by his history, by his geography, and to ask, therefore, for a universal religion which would be superimposed upon all types of races and peoples is to ask for a religion that will never reach down into the very life and being of peoples and races.

Stop to think how much history has to do with religion. How much history has to do with Judaism, for example. When the great philosopher Halevi wrote his philosophic book "ha-Kuzari", in which the king of the Chazars, the tribe in Southern Russia which later on turned to Judaism, asks of the Christian and the Mohammedan and the Jew to put forward the strongest arguments for the veracity of their respective faiths, the king of the Chazars asks the Jewish philosopher, the Rabbi, to define his faith and to present arguments for it. The very first argument which this Rabbi makes, as presented by the Jewish philosopher Halevi, is, "Our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who brought us out of Egypt, the God who led us forty years in the wilderness, the God who brought us into Canaan, the God who was with us in all of our vicissitudes and in all of our great racial experiences."

To ask the Jew to surrender this unique religious  
 dogma for the sake of a compilation of rarified  
 theologic abstractions which would be acceptable  
 to all, is to rob him of that which is the  
 most precious and magnificent quality of  
 his faith.

~~That is a profound observation of this~~  
~~Rabbi. Because all religion has within it a tremendous~~  
~~reflection of the critical experiences of the race. The~~  
~~spirit of Israel utters its oracles in its religion, in~~  
~~its Judaism. The Jew thinks of his God not alone in~~  
~~relation to the whole of humanity, to the whole of creation,~~  
but quite specifically in relation to his own people, ~~and to~~  
*God has covenanted with Israel. The Jew's mission is*  
~~his own life. He considers himself as standing in a~~  
~~has been placed upon him.~~  
specific relationship to his God--a covenant. He is ~~the~~ *to be the*  
*His mission is to be a light unto the nations, to open the blind eyes, to*  
~~servant of God, he has a mission to perform for his God in~~  
~~bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and then that out in~~  
~~the world; and to ask of that people to surrender all this~~  
~~darkness out, the prison-house, even if that mission makes~~  
~~him "despised, and forsaken of men, as one from whom men~~  
~~be subscribed to by all the peoples in the world is to ask~~  
~~hide their face".~~  
~~the Jew to surrender something which is intrinsically~~  
~~precious and to take on something which is already inherent~~  
~~in his religion: the universality of God.~~  
*So also with*  
~~Take Christianity. Quite apart from~~ *the question*  
~~beliefs concerning~~ *the indisputable fact that*  
the divinity of Jesus, the personality of  
Jesus has been a glowing, luminous fact in the life of  
Christianity. It *has profoundly lives*  
~~stirred the life of~~ hundreds of millions  
of people. It has moved *myriads to emulation,*  
~~thousands to self-sacrifice,~~  
~~emulation,~~ *and* to martyrdom. This glorious personality which *is radiantly*  
*central* ~~is sacred~~ to the Christian, *means less, much less*  
~~and may not at all be sacred to~~  
the Buddhist, ~~to~~ the Mohammedan, ~~to~~ the Confucianist, ~~to~~ the  
Jew. ~~To ask of Christianity to read out of its historic~~  
~~religion this personality,~~ *so as to make it acceptable*  
~~of its faith, for the sake of a set of abstractions to which~~

Confucianist

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Buddhist, and Mohammedan, and Jew and Christian alike  
~~should subscribe, is to ask of Christianity to surrender~~  
~~distinction and its historic service to mankind.~~  
~~that which is intrinsically precious for the sake of that~~  
~~which may not at all be dynamic in its life.~~

~~I cannot~~  
I ~~can't~~ think of a religious man in a  
~~vacuum. I can't think of myself in a vacuum.~~  
vacuum. I ~~can't~~ think of myself in a vacuum. If I think  
of my religion I think ~~of my religion~~ in terms of my  
people's religion. I like to pray as my fathers prayed.  
I like the ancient rhythm and the ancient psalm. I like my  
people's festivals. ~~for the~~ <sup>their</sup> mood, which they give me, the ~~in~~  
atmosphere, ~~with which they surround me, which is congenial~~  
<sup>their associations</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> congenial  
to ~~the highest~~ <sup>deep and joyous</sup> religious sentiments. I like the ceremonies  
of my faith, into which ~~many~~ <sup>many</sup> ages and ~~numerous~~ lands  
have poured ~~in~~ their rich color. They bring beauty into  
my life, ~~and meaning~~ and inspiration. They are the heritage  
of my people. ~~to me they are mighty vehicles for arriving~~  
~~at religious idealism.~~ <sup>they are mighty streams of</sup>

Why should I surrender them? Why  
should the Christian, ~~why should the Mohammedan,~~ <sup>or any other adherent of any historic faith</sup> be asked  
to surrender ~~these~~ <sup>his</sup> intimate religious institutions, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> customs,  
~~habits of his people which have,~~ <sup>because of their venerable, cherished</sup>  
~~become sacred and moving and helpful in the life of these~~  
~~people?~~ <sup>associations have become powerful springs of action in</sup>  
~~their lives~~ <sup>his life</sup>

No, one religion for all of mankind is not  
desirable, just as one nation for the whole of mankind is  
not desirable. It is not at all necessary or desirable to  
amalgamate all nations into one amorphous mass; it is not at  
all necessary to require that each nation destroy its

In place of religion for all mankind,  
civilization should foster an reverence  
for all religions. A man's faith is his  
innermost sanctuary and ~~in~~ its presence  
we should ~~to~~ remove the sandals from  
off his feet for the place upon which he  
stands is holy ground. Mutual respect  
will lead to mutual cooperation in common  
tasks and opportunities.

WRHS



individuality, its racial or national memories--not at all necessary. What is necessary is to teach nations the art of living together as distinctive units, to teach them friendship and cooperation.

And so with religion. All religions must learn--and they are hard in learning; many of them have not learned as yet,--all religions must learn, first and above all, to look with reverence upon the religion of their ~~Maker~~; that when they stand in the presence of another man's religion, to stand as Moses stood before the burning bush: "Remove the sandals from off thy feet, for the place upon which thou dost stand is holy ground." You are in the presence of the sanctuary of a man's life, and one must speak of another man's religion not merely in toleration but in reverence and respect, even if one differs in this or in that item or dogma or principle with that man's religion.

Then we must learn how to cooperate. Cooperation does not mean surrender of my conviction as a whole; it means the recognition of our mutual convictions common to all of us, in which we can join. Now for the Jew and the Christian and all other religionists in the world there are common tasks, common problems, common opportunities, and these ought to enable them to get together around a table, a conference table, and discover ways and means how they, by pooling their resources, without surrendering their convictions, may solve these common

~~problems most easily.~~

We need not <sup>be concerned much</sup> ~~worry much, friends,~~ about the presence of many <sup>sects religions</sup> ~~denominations~~ in the world. That is not the serious problem. What we need to worry about is the absence of real religion in the world among the religionists themselves. In many instances religions have become dried bones, embalmed antiquities, echoes of the past. They have lost their burning fire, their crusading zeal, their passion for the kingdom, their devotion to the cause of justice and righteousness in the world.

Religion is not playing <sup>its vital</sup> ~~its~~ role in <sup>the world</sup> ~~life~~ today <sup>as it should</sup> not because there are many religions but because there is too little religion in any of them. <sup>because</sup> ~~because~~ they have wandered far from the sources of their <sup>singular</sup> ~~own~~ inspirations, <sup>because</sup> ~~because~~ they are repeating ancient <sup>battle cries</sup> ~~formulas, elegans,~~ from which the fervor of conviction has fled. <sup>They survive</sup> ~~Think what~~ but do not revive. <sup>They have lost their visions but retain</sup> ~~we Jews could do in the world if we were Jewish! Think~~ their dreams. ~~what millions of Christians could do in the world for peace and for justice if they were Christian!~~ (Cont on page 17)

Our Rabbis said: "All the prophets prophesied one thing, but their styles were different." And so it is with all religion. All religions teach one thing, but their styles may differ, should be different, provided they do not forget the one thing which they are to preach.

--O--

"IS ONE RELIGION FOR ALL MANKIND NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE?"

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

JANUARY 22d, 1928.

No religion has a monopoly of God or of truth about God. No religion has possession of the final, absolute and exclusive revelation. All religions are attempts at interpreting the universe and man's place in it.

In so far as they conceive of the universe as a manifestation of Personality, of Mind, Will and Benificence, they are all true. In so far as they impel men to a maximum moral idealism, they are all true. And every church which acts as a corporate agency for these convictions and ideals is a true church.

It is neither necessary nor desirable, nor possible to have one religion. Religion is not a science. It is an art - the supreme art of the human spirit.

Science which is concerned with the observation of physical phenomena and processes may be one. But religion which is concerned with the interpretation of these phenomena and with the projection of the mind in the realms undisclosed to the physical eye, can not be one and the same.

The subjective element of an individual or of a race enters into religious concepts, just as the artist reads into art which is universal, his own self, his past, his environment, his temperament. So in religion the heart of the individual utters its own characteristic oracles.

God is One, but men's views of God are many.

A set of religious abstractions to which all people, regardless of the specific conditions of their lives can subscribe, will mean little to them.

Historical religions are desirable for the moods which they create and the memories which they stir and the intimate way in which they touch the souls of men.

It is not desirable to make one nation out of all nations - to annihilate their distinctiveness and their group loyalties and memories. Similarly it is undesirable to merge all religions into one at the sacrifice of much of their intrinsic beauty.

What religions should learn is reverence for one another. What they should seek is bases for cooperation in tasks common to all of them.

We should worry less about the existence of many religions. We should be deeply concerned about the absence of religion. Many religions today are dried bones, embalmed antiquities, irrelevant and ineffective. Their burning faith is gone, their zeal, their passion for the Kingdom and the reign of justice.

What could not Judaism do in the world if those professing it were truly Jewish? What could not Christianity do in the world for universal peace and righteousness, if those professing it were truly Christian?