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What Judaism owes to Christianity, What Christianity owes to
Judaism, 1929.

An Abstract of the Address

"WHAT JUDAISM OWES TO CHRISTIANITY? - WHAT CHRISTIANITY OWES TO JUDAISM?"

Delivered at The Unity Club
of
The Unitarian Church
By

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
Monday Evening, Jan. 21st, 1929.

Christianity and Judaism have moved across the face of the world side by side, always suspicious of each other, frequently hostile. And yet how much these two religions had in common! And how organically related they were. One gave birth to the other and both are traceable to the religious genius of Israel. The very Church which was contemning and persecuting the Synagogue was singing Hebrew songs, reciting ancient Hebrew prayers, performing Hebrew rituals, adorning its walls with paintings of Judaeen scenes and Jewish heroes, and kneeling at the shrine of a Jewish teacher and his Jewish mother. And the Synagogue which feared the Church could not help but find in it echoes of its own truth, and ideals and works of which it would thoroughly approve if it were not embittered and resentful. Such is the terrible price which mankind pays for power and intolerance!

Happier times have now dawned. The iron bands of bigotry which constricted men's minds and souls have fallen off. Men have learned that it is a sacred right of men to disagree; that all unity is predicated upon fundamental differences and that all differences are predicated upon a fundamental unity. Many are the ways which lead to truth and to God. It is not the way which matters, but the sincerity of the way-fairer.

Thus Judaism and Christianity have become more courteous to one another. A Jew, Klausner, writes the Life of Jesus in Hebrew and it

is welcomed by non-Jews for its fair and reverent treatment. A Christian, George Foote Moore, writes a work on Judaism in the Time of Jesus and it is welcomed by Jewish scholars for its impartiality and sincerity. The two historic religions are beginning to acknowledge their mutual indebtedness. They are not becoming one. That is unnecessary. They are learning sympathy and the ways of cooperation.

Judaism is indebted to Christianity for spreading the knowledge of the God of the Bible - the God of the moral life - and the Bible itself through the world. Through Christianity the Hebrew influence entered in a forceful way into European civilization. It was Christianity which carried the Jewish ethical conceptions of life into the Pagan world. In place of the static morality of Paganism, Christianity infused the ideal of the Kingdom of God and the abandonment of self for the sake of mankind. Into Roman decadence Christianity injected the rigorous code of Hebrew morality. Christianity gave Europe the Jewish messianic ideal of universal brotherhood and peace. Throughout the ages Christianity sent its missionaries to the wildernesses and the out-posts of civilization and they carried with them the Jewish Bible which they translated into every known tongue of mankind.

Christianity is indebted to Judaism first, for the gift of the personality of Jesus. The whole epic of Jesus is the story of a Jewish mystic who was crucified for his vision. Christianity is inconceivable without the Bible, which is the creation of the genius of Israel. And the whole code of Christian ethics, barring the extremes of pacifism and communism, is derived in its entirety from Judaism.

Neither Judaism nor Christianity are today realizing their greatest opportunities. Both seem to have lost much of the prophetic fire which made of them vast revolutionary movements in the past. Both should join forces to achieve their common ideals.