



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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### **MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Reel  
174

Box  
63

Folder  
215

The only basis for good will between Jew and non-Jew, 1929.



1929 29-10  
for Jewish Advocate

"THE ONLY BASIS FOR GOODWILL BETWEEN JEW AND NON-JEW"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D.D., Litt.D.

There are people who would like to acquire good will through assimilation. They know that intolerance, in the last analysis, is due to the existence of differences - religious differences, racial differences, cultural differences. They would therefore do away with intolerance by obliterating these differences.

But that is paying too high a price! The thing gained is less than the thing surrendered. To use Benjamin Franklin's phrase, "That is paying dear, very dear, for the whistle."

I like to be on the best of terms with my neighbor. I invite his friendship even as I proffer mine - but only on one condition: that he respect my individuality even as I respect his. He must take me for what I am even as I take him for what he is; not for what each of us would like the other one to be. I am what I am. I have been molded by centuries of distinctive cultural experiences. I am a unique racial precipitate. I wish to remain what I am. I am ready to acknowledge that my neighbor has the same right to retain his individuality and his racial and cultural distinctiveness. It is on the basis of such contrasts which are not conflicts that I would build a real comradeship of good works.

I am Hebrew and not Anglo-Saxon. I am Hebrew and not Teuton, Gaul, or Slav. I never will be anything else.



I do not wish to take on, as protective coloration, the manners, attitudes and points of view of the Anglo-Saxon, Teuton, Gaul or Slav. I do not wish to take on the livery of any man in order to enjoy the privilege of being in his retinue. I wish to be myself. Any other basis for good will is spurious. Any movement for good will which demands of me self-abnegation, is an hostile attack. The man who would be my friend only if he can convert me to his way of living and thinking and believing, is not my friend. He is my enemy. He does not like me for what I am. He would like to see his own reflection in me.

The Jew who casts aside his distinctiveness for the sake of human fellowship will bring nothing to that ultimate communion of minds which alone makes up human fellowship. He will bring to that hoped-for fraternity nothing but a masquerading self, a spurious and washed-out personality. He will have nothing to give. He has destroyed his uniqueness. It is only an integrated, vibrant and affirmative personality which has something to contribute to a community of personalities.

There is a type of good will which is based on indifference. "I am a Jew but I do not care very much about my religion. You are a Christian and you do not care very much about yours. Why, then let us be broad-minded about it." This is not good will. <sup>It</sup> ~~This~~ is unconcern. For an unbelieving Jew and an unbelieving non-Jew to be tolerant of each others non-belief is no achievement. It is when a believing Jew, who is profoundly moved by his faith, and a believing Christian, who is profoundly moved by his, discover a common basis for good will, that a significant event is consummated.



# "The Only Basis for Good Will Between Jew and Non-Jew"

By RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D. D., Litt. D.



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# The Only Basis *for* Good Will Between Jew and Non-Jew

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This pungent article on "the only basis for good will between Jew and non-Jew" is from the pen of Rabbi Silver, the eminent leader of the Temple of Cleveland, Ohio.

In his years spent in the ministry, Rabbi Silver has had ample opportunity to devote thought to the ever present problem, the promotion of tolerance and good will between the Jew and the non-Jew.

In this article, Rabbi Silver gives the results of that experience. In a few compact, well-chosen sentences a world of truth is told. He truly says, "The Jew who casts aside his distinctiveness for the sake of human fellowship will bring nothing to that ultimate communion of minds which alone makes human fellowship."

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