

Where Did Christianity Come From?

✘ Christianity would not exist if it weren't for the Jewish people. I know this concept flies in the face of the anti-Semitic poison that has filled the mouths of church leaders for centuries. But it's true: Christian values we now hold dear are rooted in theology practiced by the Israelites for thousands of years before Christianity was ever in the picture. Their contributions are the bedrock of our very faith.

It's essential for anti-Semites to separate Jesus from His Jewish roots. If you do that, then hatred becomes fashionable and anti-Semitism becomes a Christian virtue. If Jesus can be separated from His Jewish roots, then Christians can continue to praise the dead Jews of the past such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while snubbing the Goldbergs across the street.

But when you correctly see the Jewish people as the family of our Lord, they become our extended siblings, and we are commanded to love them unconditionally.

Adolf Hitler knew he needed to destroy the Jewish roots of Jesus in the minds of the German people. Out of his demented mind came the Mischlinge Regulation, which legally defined a Jew as someone with two Jewish parents. Hitler did this for two reasons: One, he had to absolve Jesus of being Jewish by recognizing Jesus was born exclusively of the Virgin Mary. Nazi goons would never have enthusiastically murdered 6 million of our Lord's relatives. Second, Hitler feared he was partly Jewish.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian John Toland records that Hitler's father's birth certificate declared him to be "illegitimate." The space for the father's name on his birth

certificate was left blank, generating a mystery that remains unsolved.

There's a distant possibility that Hitler's grandfather was a wealthy Jew named Frankenberger or Frankenreither. Hitler was so concerned about the matter that he ordered his personal attorney, Hans Frank, to investigate the matter confidentially.

The subsequent report, gathered from "all possible sources," greatly disturbed Hitler. It concluded that the possibility couldn't be dismissed that Hitler's father was half-Jewish. If true, then Hitler would have been a non-Aryan crossbreed, or *mischlinge*. The *Mischlinge* Regulation removed the stigma of Hitler's Jewish past, since it meant he didn't meet the requirements for being a Jew according to his new definition. The Regulation also separated Jesus from the Jews of Germany. Because of Mary's immaculate conception, Jesus had just one Jewish parent-which allowed Hitler to make hating Jews "the will of God."

A Non-Christian Jesus?

Most Christians think of Jesus and His disciples as Christians before their time. Not so! Jesus was not a Christian. He was born to Jewish parents. He was dedicated in the Jewish tradition. He was reared studying the words of Moses and the prophets of Israel. He became a Jewish rabbi and died with a sign over His head that read: "This is the king of the Jews!"

Jesus never heard the word Christian. The Bible first records its use in Antioch, 40 years after the Crucifixion (see Acts 11:26), to describe Jesus' followers. The word was used by the heathen to describe the loving conduct of those who followed the teachings of this gentle Jewish rabbi. I can only imagine what word would be coined by nonbelievers today to describe Christian conduct one toward the other.

If Jesus came to your church, would the ushers let Him enter?

Perhaps not. He would appear small and slender with penetrating dark eyes, an olive complexion and prominent Semitic features. He'd have the long falling earlocks of the Hebrews, His hair uncut at the corners, and a full manly beard, and His shoulders would be draped with a tallit (prayer shawl).

If Jesus identified Himself to your congregation as a Jewish rabbi who befriended prostitutes, who socialized with tax collectors and other outcasts, who was hated by the government, and who surrounded Himself with 12 full-bearded, unemployed men with shoulder-length hair, could they get a seat?

If He commanded your wealthiest church members to sell all they had to give to the poor, or if He entered your beautiful church gym and turned over the bingo tables, shouting, "My house is a house of prayer" (Luke 19:46), would your ushers call the police? I have no doubt they would.

The simple truth is, after 2,000 years of anti-Semitic teaching and preaching, we have lost sight of the Jewish nature of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

All in the Family

Jesus of Nazareth was of the tribe of Judah, which is linked to King David, Abraham and Moses (see Matt. 1:1-2). His name was given to Mary by an angel of God. Jesus (Yeshua in Hebrew) means "the Lord saves." Christ is the term that identifies Him as the "Anointed One."

Mary and Joseph raised Jesus according to the cultural and spiritual traditions of Jewish society. He was taken to the temple to be circumcised on the eighth day, which today is still a very Jewish event (see Luke 2:21). At the end of His 12th year, which would've been His 13th birthday, Jesus was taken to the temple for His bar mitzvah, which still is the custom of the Jews (see Luke 2:42). Jesus went into the temple

a boy but came out a man.

In that context, it isn't hard to understand the conversation between Jesus and His mother following the occasion. When Mary and Joseph left the temple and discovered after one day's journey that Jesus wasn't with them, they returned to the temple to find their son in a dialogue with scholars. Mary scolded Jesus, saying, "Son, why have You done this to us? Your father and I have sought You anxiously." Jesus answered, "Why did you seek Me?" (Luke 2:48-49, NKJV).

Some Christians see Jesus' response as being disrespectful to His mother. But He wasn't being disrespectful. Jesus was now a man, and His mother was having difficulty adjusting to the fact.

Many Christian teachers say that because the Bible is silent about the life of Jesus from this event to the beginning of His public ministry, we know nothing about the life of Jesus from His 12th year until He was 30. This absence of a biblical record has even led to some bizarre, esoteric teachings that Jesus traveled to Egypt and studied Eastern-style religions during those years. Yet because Jesus was Jewish, we know exactly what He was doing at every phase of His life.

Everyman's Talmud states: "At 5 years the age is reached for the study of Scripture; at 10 for the study of Mishnah; at 13 for the fulfillment of the Commandments [bar mitzvah]; at 15 for the study of Talmud; at 18 for marriage; at 20 for seeking a livelihood; at 30 for entering into one's full strength [life's work]."

Jesus, therefore, began studying the Scriptures at age 5; He studied the Mishnah, the written record of oral Jewish traditions, at age 10 and was bar mitzvahed at 13 in the temple. At 15, He studied the Talmud, the rabbinic commentaries on the law and received the training necessary to establish Him as a rabbi.

Knowing the cross was before Him, Jesus did not marry at the customary age of 18. At 20, He worked as a carpenter with His father Joseph, and He began public ministry at age 30, having reached His full strength, or what is considered the age of maturity.

The Fruit of Judaism

Those who say that Jesus didn't practice traditional Judaism have no knowledge of history or Scripture. In fact, Judaism was the only faith on the face of the earth during Jesus' life that believed in a single omnipotent Supreme Being. It was the lone voice of Judaism that shouted to a polytheistic pagan world, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One."

It was Judaism that believed humans were created in God's image. Traditional Judaism gave us the concepts of hell, heaven, angels, devils, the acceptance of Adam and Eve as the first man and woman, and the creation of the world in seven days. Judaism taught us to sing while other religions wail in sorrow. It was Judaism that gave us love and respect for life. While pagan religions sacrificed their children to foreign gods, Judaism gave us a loving God who adored the life of every child.

It was Judaism that gave us the Lord's Supper, which is a part of the Passover celebration, commemorating the breaking of bread and taking the communion cup. Early Christians celebrated the Passover for 300 years after the death of Jesus-until Constantine made it illegal in an effort to separate Jews from gentiles. It was Judaism that gave us the patriarchs, the prophets and our Lord.

A Jewish Bible

It also gave us the Scriptures. Every word of the Tanakh, the Jewish Bible, which is the Christian Old Testament, was penned by Jewish writers. It is the light of truth and reason upon which our society and civilization is built. George Washington

said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." Abraham Lincoln said, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good Savior gave to the world was communicated through this Book." Daniel Webster said, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

Before the current obsession with UFOs, the pens of Isaiah and Jeremiah recorded the story of Elijah being transported from earth in a space vehicle in the original "chariot of fire" (2 Kings 2:11). Before Jaws emptied the beaches of the world with its celluloid terrorism, Jonah recorded how he was swallowed alive by a "great fish" and spent three days and nights in its stomach before being vomited out on dry land.

The Bible is a book of poetry, history, love, sex, romance, war, adventure, and an introduction to the living God of heaven. To sum it all up, the Jewish people gave to Christianity the foundation of the Word of God.

Without the Jewish contribution to Christianity, there would be no Christianity. Remember this: the Jewish people do not need Christianity to explain their existence, but we cannot explain our existence without our Jewish roots.

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If it weren't for them ...

10 ways Jewish people shaped modern culture

Society's debt to Judaism goes beyond the Christian faith. Or beyond famous Jews such as Albert Einstein (left) or Irving

Berlin, for that matter. Today's technology, music, movies, books and clothes have all been created with significant Jewish involvement. Jewish researchers and inventors have been at the center of most of the world's medical and technological advancements, including:

- A shunt that provides relief for people with glaucoma
- The first West Nile virus vaccine
- A five-year flu vaccine in the form of a nose drop
- A DNA nano-computer that detects cancer and releases drugs to treat the disease
- Voice mail technology
- Technology for AOL Instant Messenger
- Pentium MMX chip technology
- The cell phone
- The first PC anti-virus software
- Most of the Windows NT operating system