

# SCHOLAR DELIMITS INTERFAITH TALKS

## Rabbi Says Theology Should Not Be Discussed

By IRVING SPIEGEL

A Talmudic scholar and Orthodox leader has asserted that any interreligious cooperation between Jews and persons of other faiths must be based on dealing with social and moral issues but must avoid discussion of theological issues.

The scholar, Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, in setting forth last week a set of rules for interreligious consultation and communication between Christian and Jewish communities, said Orthodoxy deemed it "improper to entertain dialogue" on such topics as:

¶ "Judaic monotheism and the Christian idea of Trinity.

¶ "The Messianic idea in Judaism and Christianity.

¶ "The Jewish attitude on Jesus.

¶ "The concept of the Covenant in Judaism and Christianity."

Rabbi Soloveitchik, professor of Talmud at Yeshiva University and chairman of the Halacha (Religious Law) Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America, which held its mid-winter conference at the Brunswick Hotel in Lakewood, N. J., last week, said there could not be any "mutual understanding concerning these topics, for Jew and Christian will employ different categories and move within incommensurate frames of reference and evaluation."

### Response Is Enthusiastic

His paper evoked enthusiastic response from the Orthodox rabbis and from Moses I. Feuerstein, president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the congregational arm of Orthodox Judaism.

Rabbi Soloveitchik said that in the area of "faith, religious law, doctrine and ritual" there could be no discussions with Christians, since Jews throughout the ages had been "a community guided exclusively by distinctive concerns, ideals and commitments."

He said that Jewish love and dedication "to God are personal and bespeak an intimate relationship which must not be debated with others whose relationship to God has been

moulded by different historical events in different terms."

"Discussion will in no way enhance or hallow these emotions," he added.

However, the Talmudic scholar said, when Jews "move from the private world of faith to the public world of humanitarian and cultural endeavors, communication among the various faith communities is desirable and even essential."

### Other Views Held

He said interfaith cooperation was desirable and essential on such topics as "war and peace, poverty, freedom, man's moral values, the threat of secularism, technology, human values, civil rights which revolve about religious spiritual aspects of our civilization."

His views contrast with those of leaders of Reform and Conservative Judaism, who have encouraged interreligious dialogue on all levels in the hope of better understanding among various religious communities.

The increasing effort of such interreligious discussion by Conservative and Reform Jewish leaders has been, in a large sense, a result of the Ecumenical Council's declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions. Orthodox rabbis in the main have avoided such discussions.

Rabbi Israel Miller, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, said Rabbi Soloveitchik's statement would serve as a guide for the council's affiliated 900 Orthodox rabbis.

Leaders of Conservative and Reform Judaism are expected to discuss and debate Rabbi Soloveitchik's statement.

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