

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA AT THE MID-WINTER CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 3-5, 1964

We are pleased to note that in recent years there has evolved in our country as well as throughout the world a desire to seek better understanding and a mutual respect among the world's major faiths. The current threat of secularism and materialism and the modern atheistic negation of religion and religious values makes even more imperative a harmonious relationship among the faiths. This relationship, however, can only be of value if it will not be in conflict with the uniqueness of each religious community, since each religious community is an individual entity which cannot be merged or equated with a community which is committed to a different faith. Each religious community is endowed with intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth. Its historical experience, its present dynamics, its hopes and aspirations for the future can only be interpreted in terms of full spiritual independence of and freedom from any relatedness to another faith community. Any suggestion that the historical and meta-historical worth of a faith community be viewed against the backdrop of confrontation with another faith, and the mere hint that a revision of basic historic attitudes is anticipated, are incongruous with the fundamentals of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and can only breed discord and suspicion. Such an approach is unacceptable to any self-respecting faith community that is proud of its past, vibrant and active in the present and determined to live on in the future and to continue serving God in its own individual way. Only full appreciation on the part of all of the singular role, inherent worth and basic prerogatives of each religious community will help promote the spirit of cooperation among faiths.

It is the prayerful hope of the Rabbinical Council of America that all inter-religious discussion and activity will be confined to these dimensions and will be guided by the prophet, Micah (4: 5) "Let all the people walk, each one in the name of his god, and we shall walk in the name of our Lord, our God, forever and ever."

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(From: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik CONFRONTATION, TRADITION: A Journal of Orthodox Thought)

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, is the acknowledged intellectual leader of and spokesman for halakhic Judaism. That more of his original scholarly insights and creative philosophical ideas be made available in print has been the long-cherished hope of the many who seek his guidance on the baffling problems of our age. The Editors of this journal are deeply grateful to the revered mentor of the Rabbinical Council for having chosen TRADITION for the publication of his first major essay in English. Widely acclaimed as "The Rav," Dr. Soloveitchik, in his capacity as Chairman of the Halakhah Commission, is also formally recognized by the Rabbinical Council as its authority in all halakhic matters. Because of Rabbi Soloveitchik's preeminent position, his approach to one of the most delicate and sensitive issues that faces world Jewry is bound to have far-reaching repercussions on future developments". Portions of this paper, which was specifically prepared for TRADITION, were read by Rabbi Soloveitchik at the 1964 Mid-Winter Conference of the Rabbinical Council. Its presentation led to the formulation of a Rabbinical Council policy statement dealing with the major issues Rabbi Soloveitchik had discussed. **The text of this statement is therefore appended to this essay.**