

National Desk

Profile--Solovitchik

(Fenton, Boston)

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SEP 28 1959

Boston, 100---When Ezra Taft Benson, secretary of agriculture, sought to man an advisory committee to implement a humane slaughter law, he found unanimous agreement on a choice as the Jewish religious authority. Organizations representing all shades of Jewish religious thought recommended Rabbi Dr. Joseph P. Soloveitchik of Boston.

Characterized by some associates as the Socrates in Jewish life, Dr. Soloveitchik is the product of the Wolozin dynasty of rabbis. Just as certainly as his father knew he would become a rabbi, so has Dr. Soloveitchik been preparing his son, Haym, now at Harvard, for a ~~major~~ religious career.

Family is one of the strongest bonds of the Wolozin dynasty. Once when Dr. Soloveitchik was visiting some friends in the Roxbury district where he lives, he telephoned home to have his son bring over a book. The rabbi no sooner hung up the instrument than he dialed the number again.

"Be sure," he counseled his son, "that you look both ways ~~and~~ crossing

The problems of the world may disturb Dr. Soloveitchik, but the ~~trans~~ tonsillectomy of one of his ~~grand~~ grandchildren can shake him as little else can until the child has recovered.

None of this side of him can be learned from Dr. Soloveitchik. What appears to be a reticence is considered due to a dislike of personal publicity. Some of his associates find Dr. Soloveitchik ^{to appear} downright uncomfortable in social gatherings. Yet, they have seen him sit down ~~and~~ ~~talk~~ with a child and talk as easily as he ~~can~~ discusses some point of Jewish law with an interested student or fellow scholar.

On a side street in the Grove Hall district stands the Maimonides School which Dr. Soloveitchik founded in 1938 to instruct children from kindergarten through high school. Rabbi Moses J. Cohn, the principal, asserts that school is Dr. Soloveitchik's particular pride, despite his also commuting to New York weekends ~~and~~ to deliver lectures as professor of Talmud and Jewish Philosophy at Yeshiva University.

"Every student is a living volume of his inspiration, every class is a bookshelf of his knowledge, every audience is a library of his great teachings," says Rabbi Cohn.

Dr. Soloveitchik was born in Brisk, Lithuania, 55 years ago.

After traditional training under his father, the late Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, he was sent to the University of Berlin, where he earned the degree of doctor of philosophy.

This experience at Berlin gave Dr. Soloveitchik the opportunity of bridging the area between the learning of the East and the intellect of the West. Thus, he has a sense of the impact of modern science on contemporary life, according to Rabbi Samuel J. Fox, president of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of Greater Boston.

~~Writing~~ in the Jewish Advocate, a weekly newspaper, Rabbi Fox wrote recently, "if there is such a thing as a rebirth of Orthodoxy in the Western hemisphere there is especially one ~~spring~~ spring which gives forth ~~its~~ brilliantly clear and refreshing waters to sustain its flow of ideas. This spring is the person, the wisdom and the educational technique of Rabbi ~~Soloveitchik~~ Soloveitchik."

Dr. Soloveitchik's specialized field is the interpretation of Jewish law. In this, he has the faculty of holding audiences of 1,200 spellbound for hours.

Annually, on his father's Zahrzeit, or the anniversary of his death in 1941, Dr. Soloveitchik delivers a special lecture at Yeshiva. At the university he is the spiritual ~~and~~ mentor of more than 500 rabbis.

Associates at ~~Yeshiva~~ Yeshiva say that although he does not attempt it in public, Dr. Soloveitchik can recite passages of Shakespeare at length. And he has been known at the university to leaf through a book on mathematics and display a thorough knowledge of the subject.

"Judaism," he asserted in a lecture before the 1959 convention of the Rabbinical Council of America, "encourages man to be G-d's partner in all creation. That is why Judaism never had any difficulty in permitting intensive medical research to eliminate disease, and astronomical investigation to ascertain the natural laws of the ~~known~~ spheres." (In ancient ~~Jewish~~ Jewish tradition, he does not pronounce the name of God.)

But while endorsing scientific research, Dr. Soloveitchik counselled that "every new discovery should only make man more humble ...every time we add to the vistas of our knowledge, we increase by geometric proportions the extent of the unknown."

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Dr. Soloveitchik came to the United States in the mid-Nineteen Thirties. He succeeded his father at Yeshiva. Later, he came to Boston to fill the post as community rabbi. This entailed the organizing of ~~six~~ orthodox rituals. But he has continued to commute for his lectures at Yeshiva. Dr. Soloveitchik is chairman of the Halacha, or law, commission of the Rabbinical Council of America. This represents about 700 rabbis.

The rabbi's wife, ~~Essey~~ Tonya, also holds a doctorate of philosophy. They have two daughters, besides their son, Haym. One of the daughters, Dr. Atera Twersky, has two children. The other daughter, Miss Tovah Soloveitchik, is a social worker.

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