

Science and Religion Do Not Conflict, Says Dr. Solovietchik, Head of Boston Orthodox Jews

THERE can be no conflict between religion and science, declared Rabbi Josef Solovietchik, who has just been installed as head of the United Orthodox Congregations of Boston and is now the spiritual leader of 100,000 orthodox Jews in this city.

"It is not necessary," he says, for religious dogmas to have the consent of science. Neither is there any conflict between modern culture and orthodox Judaism."

But he firmly believes that the religious needs and aspirations of the younger generation must be satisfied and that young Jewish people must be taught that they "can see the world and at the same time observe the traditions of the orthodox faith."

Dr. Solovietchik, who is only 28 years old, is a scholar of world-wide reputation and a recognized authority on the Talmud and rabbinical law. The flight and escape of the Solovietchik family from Russia, during the Jewish persecutions that followed the war, which he described, would furnish material for the most exciting sort of an adventure story or a motion picture "thriller." Even when recited through the mediumship of an interpreter it stirs the imagination.

Dr. Solovietchik's father had been a celebrated religious teacher in Poland who had moved to Russia and there found conditions so uncongenial that he determined to return to his native country.

STORY OF HARDSHIPS

The family was living in a small community 20 miles from the nearest railroad and had neither money nor passports. They were already suspect by the soviet authorities and the objects of much petty oppression.

Eventually, with some few possessions, they left the village, travelling by horse and wagon, and managed to reach the railroad without being stopped.

They had to wait at the station for two days before a train came along, and when it finally arrived the refugees found it so crowded that people were even riding on the roofs of the cars. Shelterless, with nothing to eat, their situation seemed pretty desperate.

Most opportunely two of Solovietchik's old schoolmates, who had become soviet commissars, happened to be among the passengers and recognized their old associate. Action was prompt.

The autocratic authority of the soviet officials made room for the whole family, which also included Dr. Solovietchik's two sisters, then 5 and 7 years old, and his 3-year-old brother.

The train carried them to Smolensk,



JOSEF SOLOVIETCHIK

whence they continued their journey to the frontier in a freight train loaded with cattle, horses and soldiers, which took them to Minsk. There they were obliged to resume horse transportation over horrible roads.

Dr. Solovietchik said that it would take the pen of the most gifted descriptive writer to picture the hardships they endured. Their vehicle labored forward through quagmires of mud. They were drenched with rain and often hungry.

In order to avoid the soviet soldiers and bandits they could only journey by night. On account of the father's religious scruples they did not travel after sunset on Friday, the Jewish Sabbath, but remained hidden in a peasant's hut or some other meagre shelter until after sunset Saturday.

Exhausted and nearly starved, they finally reached the frontier, and by extraordinary good fortune managed to cross the border and reach Warsaw and the refuge of their compatriots' hospitable dwellings.

Dr. Solovietchik—the name means "Nightingale" in Russian—is the son of Rabbi Moses Solovietchik, now professor of the Talmud at the Yashiva College, New York city, and a grandson of Rabbi Chaim Brisker, a renowned Talmudic authority, who founded Wolozyn, a Hebrew college in Poland, in which country the new head of the Boston congregation was born.

His home is in Roxbury, with his wife (who also has the degree of doctor of philosophy) and their 7-year-old daughter.