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Central Conference of American Rabbis, mixed marriages, 1947.

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CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS URGES DISCOURAGEMENT OF MIXED MARRIAGES

MONTREAL, June 27. (JTA) -- The Central Conference of American Rabbis at its 58th annual convention here today reaffirmed its resolution of 1909 declaring that mixed marriages "are contrary to the tradition of Jewish religion and should therefore be discouraged by the American Rabbinate."

This almost unanimous action was taken after another resolution, which would have prohibited under any circumstances marriages between Jews and unconverted Gentiles, was barely defeated by a vote of 74 to 72. The defeated substitute resolution declared: "The Central Conference of American Rabbis does not sanction mixed marriages between Jew and non-Jew, without conversion, and it therefore calls upon the members of the conference to discourage such marriages and to refrain from officiating at them."

A third resolution, which would have left the decision up to the individual rabbi, was soundly defeated by the rabbinical group, as it was felt that the passage of this resolution would open the doors to more mixed marriages.

The desire to formally forbid mixed marriages under any and all circumstances by the Reform Rabbinate was largely advanced by the younger rabbis while the older group, most of whom declared they never officiated at mixed marriages, preferred the slight leeway in special cases which is allowed under the provisions of the 1909 resolution.

Another resolution said: "The Central Conference of American Rabbis considers all sincere applicants for proselytizing as acceptable whether or not it is the intention of the candidate to marry a Jew." Other actions taken on marriage and conversion of children follow:

1. "We recommend that whenever a civil marriage between Jews has taken place, it be followed as soon as possible by a Jewish religious marriage ceremony."
2. In the case of civil marriages between a Jew and a Gentile, the fact that the couple is already married by civil law does not obviate the necessity of conversion of the Gentile party before the Jewish marriage ceremony can take place."

Recognize Validity of Common Law Marriages, but Urge Religious Ceremonies

3. In the case of common law marriages between Jews, the rabbis ruled them valid but urged that, just as in the case of civil marriages, "they be changed to regular marriage by license and religious ceremony."

4. In the case of common law marriages between a Jew and a Gentile, the rabbis ruled that the "couple be remarried after securing a regular license, according to the Jewish faith if the Gentile party sincerely desires to be converted."

5. On the matter of children, the rabbis ruled that "with regard to infants, the declaration of the parents to raise them as Jews shall be deemed sufficient for the conversion of the infants." Regarding children of religious school age, it was ruled that they "not be required to undergo a special ceremony of conversion but should receive instruction as regular students in the school. The ceremony of confirmation at the end of the school course shall be considered in lieu of a conversion ceremony." For children over confirmation age, there should be no conversion without their own consent and "if he or she consents sincerely to conversion, should receive regular instruction for that purpose and be converted in the regular conversion ceremony."