



Press Register photo by Victor Calhoun

**CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE** — Dr. Phillip Culbertson, center, an Episcopal priest, spoke in Mobile Thursday to the Mobile Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Shown

with him are Mary Filben, left, and the Rev. Larry Thorton of St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

By **VIVIAN CANNON**  
Press Register Religion Editor

Looking at Christ as a Jew in the period He lived has proved "very exciting" for an ordained Episcopal priest who is a professor at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn.

But the way Dr. Phillip Culbertson sees the founder of Christianity is apt to turn off a lot of today's Christians.

Culbertson, who spoke to the Mobile Christian-Jewish Dialogue at a meeting Thursday, contends that Jesus' teachings can only be fully understood when people "understand that Jesus was a Jew and that He spoke from inside Judaism.

"JESUS WAS not arguing with his own people the way it has sometimes been preached," said Culbertson, who does not think there was a "Jesus versus the Jews" relationship as many Christians have been taught.

He does not think that Christ identified Himself as the only way for people to reach God either because that is "so contrary to anything in that culture and tradition of Judaism (in Jesus' time)."

Neither does he believe that

Christ died at the hands of Jews as many Christians believe.

"He was crucified by the Roman government," he said. "Jews at that time were not allowed to execute anyone."

His conclusions have developed over the past several years from summer studies of ancient documents in Israel, where he has bought a home.

**HIS RESEARCH** has centered around the "Mishnah," a collection of books dating back to 200 A.D. but including older material,

and the Talmud, dating back to 200 to 500 A.D. and predating the New Testament.

Both are written in Hebrew and are not widely known by religious scholars, said Culbertson.

Jesus, he said, "needs to be studied in Hebrew, and Christians have not always availed themselves of that opportunity."

Culbertson reasons further that Christ functioned in His society as a Jew "so they could listen to Him" or "so He could be heard by anybody."

But he admitted that Jews have still not heard Christ and do not recognize Him as the Son of God.

"I DO BELIEVE (He was God Incarnate)," said Culbertson, "but I had to work through a lot of theology . . . to understand the radical or unexpected gesture of God's love."

Culbertson teaches pastoral theology, canon law and ecumenical and interfaith relations at Sewanee. He received his doctorate of philosophy in religious education and Jewish studies from the New York University.

**—MOBILE PRESS**

Friday, Nov. 22, 1985