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At the Crossroads

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Jerusalem. Jew reading the Talmud.

People of God

By AUGUSTINE STOCK, O.S.B.

THE Old Testament is the literature of a whole people, written gradually over a period of more than a thousand years, telling one consistent story: the story of God's plan of salvation, of His election of a particular people for that purpose, and of His great works, in time and history, for the salvation of that people and, through them, of mankind.

One of the principal, ever-recurring themes in this long history is that of the divine "election" and God's Covenant with His elect. It was an act of divine initiative, in accord with God's absolute sovereignty over the affairs of men, that made this helpless group of slaves in Egypt into a "people." Israel did not owe her historical existence to any natural circumstance. She was neither a race nor a nation, but a mixture of racial strains from the beginning, and in no way essentially different from her neighbors. Her existence as a free and independent "nation" was a very brief one. In other peoples, cultural unity is determined by common language, common religion, common habitat and historical experience. Such was not

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The Council and Judaism

By RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

In the 15th century, the Jewish community of Provence in southern France incorporated in their Sabbath prayer book a blessing for the Pope. Based on a traditional prayer known as the MI-SHEBA, this special blessing is translated from the Hebrew as follows: "May He who blessed our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron, David and Solomon, the Prophets of Israel, and all the Righteous

of the world, bless the Pope, and send blessing and prosperity on all the work of his hands" (From the Hebrew monograph the TEXTS OF THE VARIOUS MI-SHEBERACHS, by Abraham Yari, published in Jerusalem).

There is no reliable way of knowing whether such formal blessings have been pronounced by Jews for the present Pope, John XXIII.

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Yet, as one senses from expressed attitudes and informal conversations of Jewish leaders, respect and affection for the present Pontiff are such as to be in effect a collective Mr-SHEBERACH for him and for "All the work of his hands."

Many Reasons For Friendliness

While they share with many non-Catholics the general regard for Pope John's warm human qualities, Jews have additional reasons for their friendly attitudes.

Actions and pronouncements of the Pope have impressed Jews with his serious desire to improve relations between Catholics and Jews.

Many were deeply moved by reports that toward the end of World War II, the Pope, then serving as the Apostolic Delegate in the Middle East, made available baptismal certificates that enabled the rescue of thousands of Jewish men, women, and children from Nazi death camps. Shortly after ascending the Papal throne, the Pontiff ordered the removal from Catholic liturgy of several references regarded as offensive to Jews.

His reaffirmations of Christianity's rootedness in Judaism have also strengthened Jewry's positive feelings. The Pontiff's most recent statement regarding this historic bond was contained in his seventh encyclical, *Paenitentiam Agere*—(To Do Penance) in which he

appealed to Catholics throughout the world to fast and offer penance for the forthcoming council. He pointed out that the practices of fasting and penance are based on Jewish traditions, the teachings of the Old Testament, of Moses and the Prophets.

The sympathetic attitude of Jews toward Pope John has been extended toward the Ecumenical Council which he has summoned. Jews generally recognize that the council is a Christian meeting convoked to consider doctrinal and organizational problems confronting the Church and also to explore questions of unity with the "separated brethren" of Protestantism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

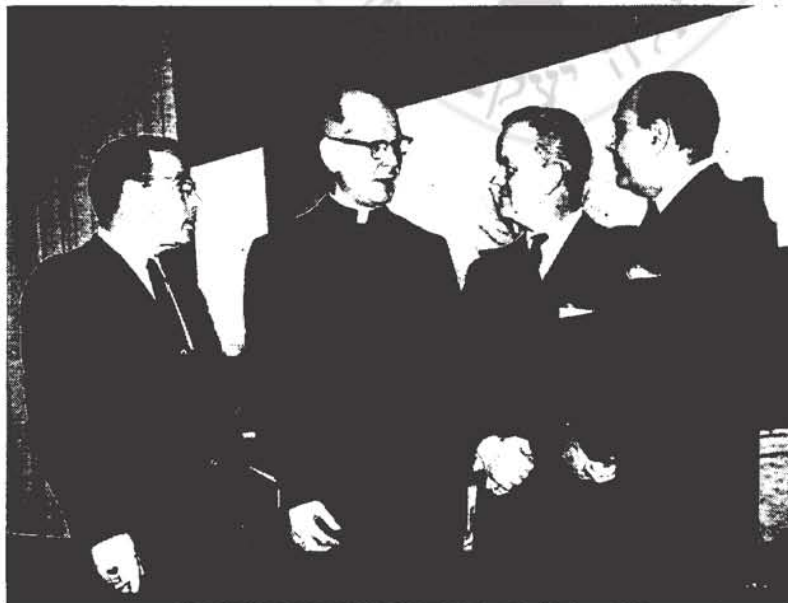
To the extent that the council deals with questions of theology and doctrine, of significance to the Catholic faithful and to other Christians, it is evident that Jews are not involved.

In a similar sense, Catholics and Protestants would not be involved in an international rabbinic or synagogal synod convened to deliberate questions of Jewish religious law. This feeling for propriety explains why responsible Jewish groups, religious and lay, have not sought invitations to send observer delegates to the Council.

Deliberations Might Involve the Jews

At the same time, it is conceivable that the council's deliberations could involve the Jews in fundamental ways. First, in exploring

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ENCOUNTER. January 29, 1963. From left to right: Philip Scharper; Most Reverend Charles Helmsing, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph; William Ball; Joseph L. Lichten.

Encounter: Face to Face

The ecumenical spirit, spirit of truth and charity, breathes upon us and from different points of the world come echoes of ecumenical meetings, Judaeo-Christian encounters, exchange of ideas, discussions, etc.

Without speaking of the well-known agape at the Pro Deo University in Rome and other official manifestations, we mention only some facts less well known.

In Western Canada a Rabbi invites priests, sisters, and students to a Sabbath dinner and explains to them the symbols of the synagogue. In Eastern Canada Le Centre Ratisbonne of Montreal organizes Judeo-Christian meetings. In Costa Rica, La Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana, founded in collaboration with the late Bishop Ruben Odio and Rabbi Klepfisz at Nuestra Señora de Sion, San Jose, for the purpose of counter-acting anti-semitic manifestations, now extends its activities to South America, especially Montevideo, Uruguay and to Madrid in Spain. In Brazil also similar reunions are held particularly in Sao Paulo.

In the United States, on an intellectual level, Universities in Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Omaha, Milwaukee and in other cities, Jews, Protestants, Catholics gather together in a climate of understanding and friendship. Even the television medium is used for bringing this same message to greater numbers. Numerous efforts of many religious groups unite to dialogue. One locality near Chicago invites a priest annually to address the members of the synagogue.

Kansas City also has experienced the heartening realization that old prejudices are making place for mutual understanding. On January 29, 1963, a program entitled: "Encounter: Catholic-Jewish Confrontation," was jointly sponsored by Rockhurst college, and the Jewish Community Relations bureau, and the Ratisbonne Center at Notre Dame de Sion. (See photos pages 2 and 8.) We cite here excerpts of the *Catholic Reporter* story of February 1, 1963, by Michael Greene.

An overflow crowd for each of the four sessions of the day-long meetings heard six principal speakers who in turn,

1. Beat their breasts in a recital of historical sins of both Catholic and Jewish communities . . .

2. Appealed hopefully for a response to the new sense of rapport between all religious bodies in America . . .

3. Asked for a wakeful and loving awareness of the new implications of varying religious commitments, and

4. A consideration of how these commitments relate to the common good.

The less-than-intimate atmosphere taxed the speakers' efforts to manifest in the tone of their remarks the underlying personal element in the event, while, at the same time, boring through what one speaker, Philip Scharper, called "the mask" which characterizes "the usual encounter between Christian and Jew in our society."

Scharper, editor of Sheed and Ward publishing house, and president of the Religious Education Association of the United States, struck a theme in his luncheon address which was re-investigated throughout the day.

"... Behind the pluralism of Catholic and Jew is another pluralism, an iceberg pluralism, in which the principal factors are not 'What is a Jew?', but what does a Catholic think a Jew to be; not 'What is a Catholic?', but what does a Jew think a Catholic to be?"

Scharper cited fear and sheer ignorance as two of the reasons for the unsatisfactory relations between Catholics and Jews.

Pointing to some sad historical factors behind contemporary attitudes was Rabbi Arthur Gilbert, director of the National Department of Inter-religious Cooperation, Anti-Defamation League:

"It would have been an answer to a dream," he said, "had I been able to visit the ecumenical council and see the Holy Father in his glory . . . for by the example of the present Pope, we have entered a new era in Jewish-Catholic relations."

Dr. Joseph Lichten, an early worker in the dialogue vineyard, and the director of the Department of Inter-Cultural Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League, took note of the "non-ecumenical nature, in the strict sense of the word" of Catholic-Jewish encounters in the new era. "Dialogue is a continuing process towards understanding. The dialogue is the form, but the common good is the content of

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The Council

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ecumenical relations with Protestants, it is theologically inevitable that consideration will be given to the heritage of the Hebrew Bible which all branches of Christianity share in common.

Second, it is hoped that examination of the relations between Catholics and other groups in a growing pluralist world will lead to a condemnation of all forms of bigotry and prejudice, and in particular that of anti-Semitism.

One sees this first possibility alluded to increasingly in "ecumenical literature," such as Catholic "ecumenists" as Dom Bede Griffiths, the Rev. Georges Tavard, the Rev. Paul Demann, and the Rev. Gregory Baum, and such Protestant scholars as the Rev. Dr. Frederick Grant and the Rev. Dr. James Muhlenburg, among others.

History and contemporary trends in religion join to motivate an affirmatively expectant interest among Jews toward the council. This open attitude is in itself a fact of historic significance. The 20 ecumenical councils that preceded the present Second Vatican Council, insofar as they addressed themselves to Jews and Judaism, did so negatively.

Most of the councils passed hostile legislation that contributed to the suffering and persecution of Jews across the centuries. The Third Lateran Council (1179) and the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) reduced medieval Jewry to the status of pariahs through repressive decisions, including establishment of ghettos, the wearing of yellow badges, and other forms of abasement.

Christian-Jewish Links Are Traced

Paradoxically, social and religious historians are beginning to find evidence that much of the church legislation revealed that Christians and Jews, "the common people," had friendly and mutually helpful contact, even during the first four centuries when the early church and synagogue were involved in intensive conflict. Thus, the Provincial Council of Elvira, Spain, which adopted the first church legislation regarding the Jews, ordered that the custom of Christians inviting Jews to bless their fields should be abandoned; forbade clerics and laymen to accept

the hospitality of Jews, and prohibited the marriage of Christian girls to Jews.

It is evident that there must have been a rather significant intimacy between Christians and Jews, to such an extent that official church action was deemed necessary to assure that the distinctions between infant Christianity and established Judaism should not be blurred.

Similar legislation, enlarging the area of prohibition, was enacted by the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.), which undertook further to separate Jews from Christians by forbidding the celebration of Easter at the same time that Passover was observed by Jews; by ordering Christians not to visit synagogues; and by instituting Sunday rather than Saturday as the Christian Sabbath. Numerous provincial and ecumenical councils reaffirmed these prohibitions, thereby indicating that free interaction between Christians and Jews existed for many centuries.

An Israeli social historian, Dr. Jacob Katz, in a recent study, observes that even during that period of enforced segregation in ghettos "Jewish residential segregation did not significantly curb contact with the gentile world."

The conditions of the first four centuries, in which church leaders saw Judaism, then a rival proselytizing religion, as a threat to the emergence of Christianity, have long since passed. Under the radically changed conditions of this generation, church leaders have the opportunity to create the basis for a new chapter of relationships between Catholics and Jews.

These relationships could be improved in a general way by forthright clarification on the part of the council of the Church's position on religious liberty, the separation of Church and State, and religious pluralism.

Authoritative declarations on these issues would help Jews, as well as Protestants and Eastern Orthodox, overcome lingering mistrust and suspicion of what has been called the "Constantinian reflex"—the traditional resort to the machinery of the State to advance the purposes of the Church.

But foremost among the steps which the present council could take to advance the specific end of Catholic-Jewish relationships would be a re-examination of the sources of anti-Semitism which grew out of the polemical period of early church and synagogue history—the "themes of contempt and the sys-

tem of degradation," to use the words of the eminent French historian, Prof. Jules Isaac.

Augustin Cardinal Bea, president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, has indicated in a number of public statements his great sensitivity to the need for making distinctions between the essential teachings of the Church and those that are mainly responses to changing historic, cultural and social conditions.

More explicitly, at a "fraternal agape" sponsored by Pro Deo University in Rome in January, 1962, Cardinal Bea told the representatives of 18 non-Catholic religious groups—including Protestants, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, Copts—that "the greatest challenge to our generation is the problem of group antagonism and that it is the primordial duty of all groups of mankind to unite for the purpose of overcoming hatreds of the past."

World Council's Action Is Cited

In this context, therefore, many Jews believe that the Ecumenical Council could literally start a new cycle in Christian-Jewish relationships by condemning vigorously all manifestations of anti-Semitism, as did the World Council of Churches in New Delhi November, 1961.

In its resolution, the Protestant world body addressed itself to a crucial factor that underlies anti-Semitic attitudes and stereotypes, namely, that Christian teaching which continues to charge the Jews collectively for the death of Jesus, and therefore justifying their persecution. The World Council urged that:

"In Christian teaching the historic events which led to the Crucifixion should not be so presented as to fasten upon the Jewish people of today responsibilities which belong to our corporate humanity and not to one race or community."

The Vatican Council would need but to reaffirm a teaching that already exists within the Church, finding its clearest formulation in the catechism of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Article IV. This interpretation of the Crucifixion affirms the doctrine that Jesus died for all humanity and that all humanity shares the responsibility for his death.

Despite this teaching, however, the concept of collective Jewish responsibility persists and finds expression and reinforcement in certain prayers, passages of the liturgy and in a great



(Photo from JUBILEE by M. Weissman)

In a Conservative synagogue: Holding the hand-shaped YOD, the cantor chants from the Torah for visiting Christians.

many Catholic textbooks.

The still fresh experience of Nazi anti-Semitism which flourished in a country of ancient Christian culture and the present-day eruptions of anti-Semitism in Catholic countries of South America give Jews a particular feeling of urgency about the need of the Church to take decisive action to remove all possible sources of defamation and hatred.

Move to Advance

Pope John's Objective

Jews are encouraged by the fact that in recent years Catholic leaders, clergy and lay alike, in France, Germany, Holland, Brazil, the United States, and, most recently, in Spain have begun serious examinations of catechisms, textbooks, and prayers with a view toward rendering those passages referring to Jews, the Jewish religion and the Synagogue more consistent with the findings of present-day historic research and scholarship.

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Perspectives

Conferences on education are frequently held in present-day Germany; the most recent was convened at Wiesbaden from October 30th to November 3rd, 1962. It had been arranged by the thirty-six organizations for Christian-Jewish co-operation now existing in Germany and it included some sixty representatives of European nations, who belonged to several religious denominations.

Matters discussed were partly theological, partly pedagogical, with two main objects in view: the eradication of anti-Semitism by means of the closest possible understanding between Christians and Jews, and the treatment of prejudice in education. The program included two formal lectures, several reports by the mixed nationality group, and some separate team-work. Lecturing on "Real Authority and Subjection to Authority," Professor Adorno, head of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, laid bare the structure and mechanism of the authoritarian State which has especial significance in the eyes of the German people. Separate groups worked on three subjects: "National Stereotypes"; "Triumph Over Prejudice," and "Religious Teaching." Conclusions on teaching the younger generation, concerned the most important truth to be impressed upon children, namely the common roots of Christianity and Judaism, reinforced with a general knowledge of Judaism itself.

Lingering misunderstandings still persist and can be traced back to the wrong type of teaching and, in many cases, (as Pastor Pfisterer pointed out), they come from a biased presentation of the Passion, which even in our own days is a "dangerous loop-hole for contempt and hatred." "Nor should one minimize the responsibility of the home atmosphere for clichés and whispering propaganda," he said, "which calls for a long-term education through mass media." Prejudiced people, it was added, are mostly supporters of authority and their rebellious rumblings are usually silenced when they are met by force.

The conference was completed by a visit to the new Worms Synagogue, built through public funds; it is an exact replica of the synagogue the Nazis destroyed after it had existed for nine centuries.

People of God

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the case with Israel. For this people existed from the beginning through and for their God, and it was this fact of their divine election that determined all the other phases of their existence and made them a "peculiar people."

To Little Ones

It is noteworthy that the Lord God did not elect one of the great peoples or nations already existing to be the instrument of salvation, but rather this helpless band of slaves living under oppression in Egypt. This choice of the seemingly unworthy instrument is typical of God's dispensation of grace at every stage of the history of salvation. Jesus was to give thanks to His heavenly Father that He hid the mysteries of His kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealed them to little ones. (Matt. 11:25)

The divine initiative never reduces men to the status of puppets. God created men free, and always respects that freedom. Man must respond *freely* to his task within the divine purpose. Even so with the Hebrews: it was necessary that they respond freely to the election that made them the "Chosen People."

Further, grace and deliverance impose obligations. The Lord's revelation of Himself to His people laid upon them the obligation of conforming their lives to His will. His people's communion with Him obliged them to holy living. Commandments were given: "Thou shalt—Thou shalt not—." The condition of election is obedience.

This brings us to the "covenant" which God gave His chosen people. The word "gave" is significant. Since God is Lord of the universe, He cannot submit Himself to obligations, like men. So His covenant with the Israelites was not a parity agreement—one in which both parties bind themselves to obligations on an equal footing—but rather a "suzerainty covenant," such as a king would give to a vassal. The people of the time of Moses were acquainted with this type of contract, and understood its implications.

'We Will Do'

The covenant was given reality, was validated, by the blood ritual as described in Exodus 24. Moses built an altar at the base of Mt. Sinai and set up twelve pillars, "according to the twelve tribes of Israel" (Ex. 5:4). Animals were sacrificed, and half of the blood

was dashed against the altar as a symbol of Jahweh's participation in the rite. The other half was put in a basin, after which Moses "took the book of the covenant and read it aloud to the people; and they said: 'All that the Lord has commanded we will do, and we will be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'" (Ex. 24:7,8)

As it turned out, all Israel did not fulfill the purpose of the election. Without a doubt, the people thought at times only of the privilege, and forgot the responsibility. They even presumed on their election, supposing it gave them a claim on God—that God was so tied to Israel that He must stand by her even though she dishonored Him. But the election was not the automatic inheritance of all who were born into Israel after the flesh. As the Israelites had to respond freely to God's grace at the time of the Exodus, so had each succeeding generation. The heritage of election and the privileges of the Covenant belong to those who brought their loyalty to the Covenant and fulfilled the purpose of the election. Thus it came about that the stream of the election was narrowed to the remnant. But through this remnant, the Elect, the faith of Israel and the Lord's salvation will be transmitted to all men, even to those who are not of Israel according to the flesh.

'From the Jews'

When in the fulness of time Jesus, the promised Messiah appeared in the world, He came to carry out the Father's will, which included also the divine plan for the Chosen People. For, as He told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Salvation is from the Jews." (John 4:22) During His public life He preached the kingdom only to the Jews. But their leaders were blinded by their temporal, national aspirations, and the great mass of the Chosen People did not accept Jesus and His fulfillment of the Old Covenant. It was only a very small remnant that accomplished God's eternal purpose by entering the new kingdom, by accepting the new covenant. St. Paul grieved bitterly over this. He wrote: "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the

glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, to their race according to the flesh is the Christ." (Rom. 9:2-5)

Later in the same epistle, St. Paul indicated for all time what the Christian's attitude towards the chosen people should be. The failure of the Chosen People to enter the kingdom, he says, left the way open for the gentiles to enter before them:

"... if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean? ... If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the lump. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches are broken off and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches. If you boast, remember it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you." (Rom. 11:15-18)

Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant and out of this fulfillment came the "new Covenant in My blood," as He said when giving the cup at the Last Supper. (I Cor. 11:15) As the covenant of Sinai made the Hebrews the Chosen People of God, so the New Covenant of Jesus makes the Church the new Chosen People of God. "On this rock I will build My Church," He tells St. Peter; and the Aramaic word *qahal* which He would have used, which we translate as *Church*, is the same as that used for the ancient Jewish community.

The Council

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Should the Second Vatican Council confront seriously the problem of anti-Semitism and set into motion an effective program to combat this complex evil, it would pave the way to increased Catholic-Jewish understanding and co-operation, and to authentic dialogue and community. Moreover, it would advance immeasurably that objective enunciated by Pope John in the June, 1959, encyclical, *AD PETRI CATHEDRAM*, shared by all men of charity and good will, that "Each should tend not towards what can divide the minds but what can unite them in mutual understanding and reciprocal esteem."—Reprinted by the American Jewish Committee, Institute of Human Relations, 165 East 56 Street, New York 22, N. Y.

Encounter

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our efforts towards Catholic-Jewish understanding," Dr. Lichten said.

No one was more specific in singling out a matter of concern for Catholic and Jews in the area of common good than William B. Ball, a widely known expert in the field of constitutional law on Church-state relations. Ball is director and general counsel of the Pennsylvania Catholic Welfare committee.

Children—and their education—is "the one great common interest of Americans," he said. The decision of the Supreme Court in the New York State Regents' prayer case, he said, demonstrates that "the kernel of the Jewish concerns should be of appeal to all: there should not, in a supposedly free society, be compulsion upon children to accept value systems contradictory to their faiths—theistic or non-theistic."

Hoyt, discussing "What is a Catholic?" shared the afternoon platform with Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, director of the Inter-religious Affairs Department of the American Jewish committee, who discussed "What is a Jew?"

Hoyt described negative tendencies to rationalism, formalism, and activism within the Catholic community, and, counterbalancing them, the development of the liturgical movement, and catechetical and biblical renewal.

"In a sense," he said, "Catholics are becoming more Jewish . . . Giving to earthly goods the recognition that they are good . . .

becoming more interested and active in social progress and social order . . . placing a high valuation on things of the mind." Yet, he added, as both Catholic and Jews emerge from their "isms," "there will always be a degree of separatism which most Catholics will defend as legitimate and necessary, flowing from the unique claims the Church makes as to her own origin and meaning . . ."

There is still possible, however, "not a fellowship of beliefs, but the fellowship of men who believe," he quoted from Maritain.

Rabbi Tanenbaum, most concerned that whatever opportunities lie ahead will not be ignored, concluded with the counsel:

"At this high point of ecumenical encounter between Christians and Jews, unparalleled since the first centuries of this era, Christians and Jews have a profound moral obligation to set into motion a cycle of mutual understanding based on a more profound knowledge of their respective histories and traditions . . . The hard work that is still to be done is, on one level, to remove the inherited and non-doctrinal sources of misrepresentation and hostility that still reside in far too much of our textbook instruction about each other, to orient properly teachers in our respective religious schools in interreligious relations, and to educate our parents in how to communicate positive attitudes about others to their children."—(The Catholic Reporter, weekly publication of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph.)



ENCOUNTER. January 29, 1963. From left to right: Rabbi Morris Margolies; Robert Holyt; Rev. Mother Marie Claudia de Sion; Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum.