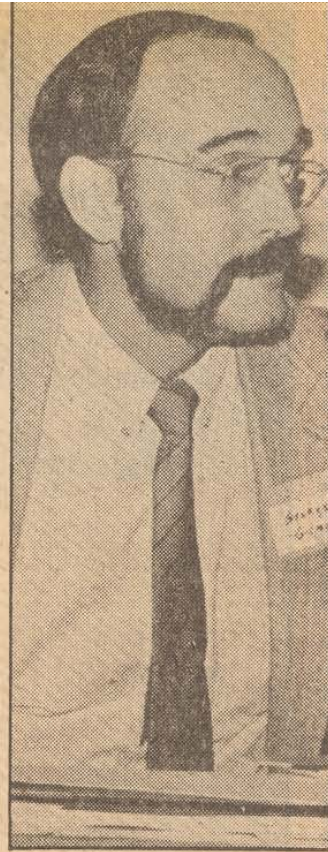




Maureen Kennedy



George Gilmore



Aliza Gerstein

Local Jews and Christians together

By SYLVIA HART
Press Register Reporter

Jews and Christians in Mobile sat together viewing a film about a period in history in which the relation between the two religions was antagonistic.

"AS I look at this film, I think it probably was a good one for us to preview because it sets before us probably the most emotional period of the Jewish-Christian relationship," said Sister Maureen Kennedy, director of the office of religious education of the Mobile Catholic Archdiocese.

Sister Kennedy was a member of a panel that discussed the film. Other panelists were the Rt. Rev. Charles F. Duvall, bishop of the Central Gulf Coast Episcopal Diocese; Aliza Gerstein, a local Jewish leader; Dr. George Gilmore, a faculty member of the theology department at Spring Hill College; Barbara V. Paper, administrator of the Mobile Jewish Welfare Fund; and Barry Silverman, a local Jewish lay leader.

THE FILM, which centered on the Middle Ages, or the ninth to 15th centuries, described a flourishing Jewish culture in Islamic Spain and deteriorating circumstances of Jews in Europe beginning with the first Christian Crusade in 1096 and ending with the expulsions of Jews from Western Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries.

THE FILM is one in a series of nine that will be shown nationally on public television. The series is scheduled on public television in Alabama and Mississippi at 9 p.m. on Oct. 1, 2, 8, 15, 22, 29 and Nov. 5, 12, 19.

Titled "Heritage: Civilization and the Jews," the series was produced by WNET Television in New York.

The American Jewish Committee, a human-relations organization with national headquarters in New York and Southeastern offices in Atlanta, assisted the local Jewish-Christian Dialogue in making arrangements for previewing one of the segments of the series.

DURING THE local panel discussion, one member of the audience contended the film on the Middle Ages glossed over some events.

Saturday, September 15, 1984



Barry Silverman



Press Register photos by Sylvia Hart

Charles F. Duvall

express emotions about historic ties

The member of the audience said the film did not show jihads, or Moslem holy wars that were aimed at exterminating all Christians in Europe. "The Jews were on the coattails of that."

Mrs. Gerstein responded, "When you mentioned 'coattails,' you implied that the Jews came right behind the Islamic people and persecuted the Christians in Europe."

SHE SAID, "I do not hold the Jews as blameless, but I don't want any more guilt put upon anyone that is not justifiably there. I don't ever remember the Jews persecuting the Christians at any time, during Jesus' time as well. The Jews never persecuted the Christians."

Another member of the audience said, "There were many things the film glossed over. It doesn't mean the film was bad. The film was beautifully done, and it highlighted many segments of history."

HE CONTINUED, "A question I have that I can't answer because I haven't seen the other eight segments of the film series is what will be the plight of the Jews in the Moslem world."

"The implication so far is that it was a glorious period. It was not a glorious period. Segments of it were. If you take a look at the Jewish history in the Moslem countries, especially the North African areas, persecutions were unbelievable. They matched anything that happened to the Jews in Europe."

"Yet a lot of people think that the period when Jews and Moslems lived together was a glorious period. It was not a glorious period."

Gilmore said, "I think probably one could say the Jews were not responsible for any persecution, but simply their being a part of the East or the non-Caucasian West is a source of complexity."

IN VIEWING the film, Gilmore said, "I found something I've admitted to myself."

In today's society, he said, the



Barbara V. Paper

Christian may view the Jew as an older brother since Christianity emerged from Judaism.

"We're competitive. We admit it and love each other in our competition, but we don't masquerade it. We don't pretend that it's not there."

A MEMBER of the audience said Christians and Jews still seem to be entrapped by their own history and traditions. "How can we escape our history? Can we liberate ourselves from what have been clearly mistakes of the past?"

Sister Kennedy said all her education has been in Catholic institutions, which tended to glorify the Inquisition and the Crusades, in which Christians persecuted non-Christians during the Middle Ages.

SHE SAID, "Anybody in my era who went through Catholic education heard about the Inquisition and the Crusades, but they were described as a glorious time. We never saw the other side of it.

"I think we need to sit down with one another and re-

examine our history and reclaim it because until we claim it we can't get out of the trap. If I don't know I'm in a trap, I can't get out."

MRS. PAPER said, "All of our history isn't negative on both sides, and there is so much positive to share."

She said that for young Jews, the film "can evoke such pride in knowing we did have a most important role to play." The film described Jews as making contributions in philosophy, poetry, biblical studies, commerce and many other areas.

Mrs. Paper noted that several years ago public educators began to pay more attention to the history of black people, and textbooks were augmented with additional materials.

"I CAN see this series as maybe being a stepping stone for this type of movement to augment what is being taught in the schools from a Jewish perspective."

Silverman said the use of the "Heritage" series in the classroom could make learning stimulating because of "the art

that is used, the music that is used, the beautiful photography."

DUVALL SAID, "I think there are going to be a lot of people who get out some books and do some studying because their curiosity has been piqued by what has been said.

"There are a lot of us who not only don't know about our Jewish neighbors but who don't know about the varied history out of which we come, and so from that point of view I think this film series will have a good educational impetus."