

REMARKS, NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF  
CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

BALTIMORE

February 1, 1960

This great organization, which has done so much to acclaim the noblest of human virtues—the love of fellowman, has paid me a high honor by asking me to serve as honorary chairman of Brotherhood Week for 1960 and by inviting me to come here today to attend its annual meeting. I assure you that I am deeply grateful for the privilege.

All of us, I know, share a feeling of sadness coming from the knowledge that it was Bill Hilgenberg who was to have presided at this meeting, his last as chairman of the Maryland Region of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Perhaps more than anyone else I have ever known, Bill Hilgenberg personified the high purpose of this organization—the brotherhood of man. His whole life is the story of a man who worked hard all of his life not for personal aggrandizement or selfish fame, but to bring a happier life to those around him. He was humble, generous, understanding and self-effacing. He was a friendly man—so friendly, we all recall, that his countenance shone with kindness and amiability.

In the various positions which I have held in this State, I had numerous occasions to call upon Bill Hilgenberg for help. My experience was the same as many, or perhaps most, of you had. Bill's response was always: "Yes, I'll do the best I can." And the best that he could do always was better than we had any right to expect of him. On becoming Governor, it was a genuine satisfaction to me to be able to appoint Bill to a high office in our State government—to the position of Bank Commissioner. He served in that post, the same as he had served in all other positions and in all other assignments, with great distinction and with a deep devotion to duty. The news of his death last December came as a severe shock to me. I know that all of you were grieved just as I was. It was particularly saddening in that it came just before Christmas, when Bill, as usual, was in the midst of many activities to make the holidays happier for his friends and fellow citizens.

I can think of no higher tribute to this man, whose life was an exemplification of the brotherly spirit, than that we here today, and during Brotherhood Week which will come next month, pledge ourselves to a renewal of efforts to spread brotherhood throughout the world.