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Blast From the Past: Compton's 1970 Encyclopedia on Judaism

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Distinctly Catholic

Yesterday we looked at the miserly way the old encyclopedias dealt with Islam. The same cannot be said for their treatment of Judaism.

The entry for "The Jews: An Eternal People" runs to four pages, not five paragraphs, and features photographs of a family celebrating the Seder, a mother lighting Sabbath candles, the opening of the Ark of the Covenant at Temple Emanu-El in New York City, and the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashana. Here is the opening of the entry:

"Jews. In the United States one of the great religions is Judaism, the religious beliefs and practices of the Jews. American Jews are thus citizens of the United States who follow the religious precepts of Judaism. In Israel Judaism is both a nationality and a religion. Israeli Jews are citizens of Israel, where religious and national life are intertwined. Elsewhere in the world, especially in western Europe, Jews are citizens of the lands in which they live, keeping their faith in God and their faith in nation separate as they do in the United States.

"The Jews have a long and continuous cultural and religious history. Broken into small groups, exiled to unfriendly lands, and subjected to many misfortunes, they have nevertheless continued to grow and contribute much to the world. They number less than one percent of the world's population, but they have given world leaders in every field of human activity. They have been called the "eternal people."

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