

CD-1093 Transcription

20th anniversary of Vatican II - A Jewish perspective,

Rockhurst College [1]. 5 May 1986.

Marc Tanenbaum:

-- Great Synagogue, stopped his car, so that he could bless the crowd of Jews who were coming out of this very temple. And Pope John Paul II said, "And I would like to take up this heritage at this very moment, when I find myself not just outside, but thanks to your generous hospitality, inside the synagogue of Rome."

And then he told another story. He said that he had been thinking about this visit to the Great Synagogue in Rome for a long time. And then he said, "I recall I am well-aware of the fact that the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Rabbi Toaff, on the night before the [01:00] death of Pope John, did not hesitate to go to St. Peter's Square, and accompanied by members of the Jewish faithful, and mingle with a crowd of Catholics and other Christians who stayed there most of the night as Pope John's life was ebbing away, in order to pray and keep vigil, as it were bearing witness, in a silent but very effective way to the greatness of the soul of that pontiff, who was open to all people without distinction, and in particular, to the Jewish

brethren. I would commend your attention, as Bishop [Helmsing?] said to me earlier this evening, he's had occasion to read, in English in the [sovator?] Romano, the three addresses, the address of Pope John Paul II, [02:00] of Chief Rabbi Toaff, and Mr. Saban, who is the President of the Jewish Community of Rome. The pope said several things, which need to be affirmed, and then I were to conclude after that.

The pope began his address, in reiterating the principles of *Nostra Aetate*. He spoke of acts of discrimination, unjustified limitation of religious freedom, oppression also on the level of civil freedom in regard to the Jews, where from an objective point of view gravely deplorable manifestations. "Yes, once again through myself, the church," the pope said, in the words of the well-known declaration of *Nostra Aetate*, "deplores the hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism [03:00] directed against the Jews of any time, and by anyone" -- I repeat, by anyone. Then the pope went on to say, "I would like once again to express a word of abhorrence for the genocide decreed against the Jewish people during the last war, which led to the Holocaust of millions of innocent victims." The pope recalled his visit to Auschwitz, when he stood before the Hebrew inscription in Auschwitz and said before this inscription, "It is not permissible for anyone to pass by with indifference." And

then he spoke with a common spiritual patrimony that links Jews and Christians together, and he said in a very significant way, "The Church of Christ discovers her bond with Judaism by searching into her own mystery. The Jewish religion is not extrinsic to us, but in a certain way, it is intrinsic to our own religion. With Judaism, therefore, we have a [04:00] relationship which we do not have with any other religion." And he added, "You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers." And then he dealt with the things that we've talked about. He joined in rejecting the ancestral or collective blame that can be imputed to the Jews as a people for what happened in Christ's passion, so that any alleged theological justification for discriminatory measures, or worse still for acts of persecution is unfounded. The Lord will judge each one according to his own works, Jews and Christians alike.

And then, he went on to talk about the fact that the Vatican has adopted guidelines of 1974 and Vatican notes in 1985, which give concrete guidance on how to implement the spirit of *Nostra* [05:00] *Aetate*, and finally he concludes with the fact, "It must be said then, that ways are now open for our collaboration in light of our common heritage, drawn from the law and the prophets, that are various and important which we wish to

recall, first of all, a collaboration in favor of Man, his life from conception until natural death. His dignity, his freedom, his rights, his self-development in a society which is not hostile, but friendly and favorable. And then the great field of collaboration between Catholics and Jews is in individual and social ethics. And he says, "We're all aware of how acute the crisis is on this point, and the age in which we are living, and society, which is so often lost in agnosticism and individualism, and which is suffering from the bitter consequences of selfishness and violence."

The pope [06:00] concluded that remarkable sermon, which I comment to your reading, reading a Psalm in Hebrew. If after this history of 1900 years, if after the burden of so much alienation, mistrust, suspicion, and worse on both sides, it is now possible for Catholics and Jews to begin to unravel that bad, and at times terrible history, to begin to recover not only common affirmation, spiritual and moral, but to approach each other in their simple human dignity, their [07:00] humanity in the spirit of mutual respect, which *Nostra Aetate* calls for, it is an act of transcendent importance in itself. But I would suggest to you that what Catholics and Jews, Christians and Jews are about here in this room, as in many rooms like this throughout the world, is of surpassing importance to the future

of the human family. No one with his or her eyes open, who looks about the world seen today, cannot but agonize over how much human suffering, how much violence, how much destruction is taking place between members of different religious, racial, and ethnic groups all over the world. How many people pay attention to the fact that in Lebanon over the past several years, 100,000 [08:00] Maronite Catholics have been massacred before the eyes of the world, and the world seems to be impotent to contain that hatred between Christians and Muslims and Druze, and Jews when they were involved in Lebanon? Who pays attention to the fact that over the past five years alone, in the war between Iran and Iraq, nearly a quarter of a million human beings created in the image of God have been destroyed by people who claim they're doing the will of God, even believing that if they commit suicide in killing someone else, they will be assured a way to paradise? Who pays attention to the fact that in the Sudan, five, six years ago, nearly a million Christians and animists were destroyed by the tribes from the north of the Sudan? Or that in Uganda, under Idi Amin, a half million black Catholics and [09:00] Protestants, Anglicans, Presbyterians were massacred by Idi Amin and his Nubian Muslim tribes who constituted five percent of the population? The Christians were 85% of the population. There is an epidemic of dehumanization in the world.

There is also much generosity, and no one knows that better than Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Because the Christians and Jews of America have been at the backbone of the generous movements of taking care of world refugees. We have brought a half million refugees from Indochina alone to these countries since 1978, and restored them to their human dignity. America has been the most generous nation in the world in providing food, clothing, medicine, saving human lives.

But, that's the health of the world. The sickness of the world is the notion that human beings [10:00] can become dehumanized, de-legitimized as persons. And so as Catholics and Jews have learned to go through this process, and to affirm that which they have in common, to affirm their fundamental dignity as creatures of God, to affirm together that which is central in this Torah and the Gospel, that every human life is created with sanctity, that every human life is precious, that no human being is expendable. That experience of that affirmation of Biblical humanistic ideals and values, which Jews and Christians share in very special ways, that message and the experience, the model of Jews and Catholics and others approaching each other in that spirit of mutual help and mutual caring, and mutual [11:00] sharing can become a model, which if replicated in many parts of the agonized world can help save humanity from possible imminent

disaster. So, whatever the history has been, in the words of Santayana, "History is not intended to be a hitching post to the past. If we're to learn from history, it is to be a guiding post to a future, a more humane and civilized and moral future."

I close with the Psalm that Pope John Paul II recited in exactly this way, in the Great Synagogue on the Tiber River: "*Hodu l'adonai ki tov, ki l'olam chasdo, [12:00] yomar na yisra'el ki l'olam chasdo, yom'ru-na yirei adonai, ki l'olam chasdo.*" "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His steadfast love endures forever. Let Israel say his steadfast love endures forever. Let those who revere the Lord say, his steadfast love endures forever." God bless you. (applause)

M1:

--very much, Rabbi, for so graphically, and in a way, beautifully portraying the crimes and the love in history. I only regret, not that we have a beginning down in the [rock room?] in 1963, but that it hasn't grown [13:00] more, but at least it was a beginning of the healing. And I hope that tonight, will once again be a new beginning to our healing of ourselves, and our neighbors, and that we might even consider indeed that the only way for peace is simply to follow the way of Mahatma Gandhi. We cannot win any other way. We need to pray,

but we need also to work. Rabbi Tanenbaum will entertain any questions that you would like to ask him.

Marc Tanenbaum:

I'm not sure "entertain"'s the right word at this [14:00] hour.
(laughter) I'll field any questions that -- Yes, tell me your name, please.

Saul Yarowski:

My name is Saul Yarowski, and I'm of the Jewish community here, and --

Marc Tanenbaum:

I thought you were a Presbyterian. (laughter)

Saul Yarowski:

-- I'm overwhelmed with your remarks, and your sentiments, your feelings, in association to the relationship between the Catholics and the Jews. I wondered if this movement has gone forward in relation to the other Christian bodies. In other words, have they "caught the rays of the rising sun," as Harry [Overstreet?] used to say, and gone forward with the same fervor, the same dedication to the healing as the Father has spoken [15:00] in the relationship between the Christian -- the

Christian that is not guided by Catholicism, and the [in
cyclical?], or the --

Marc Tanenbaum:

The Vatican Declaration, yeah.

Saul Yarowski:

-- (inaudible). Have they come around to the same people?

Marc Tanenbaum:

Got your question. In fact, I think that, as many Catholic scholars here who have been involved in the ecumenical movement will attest, the ecumenical movement, in point of fact, began with the Protestant churches, not only in this country, but overseas. In fact, the first major ecumenical movement, which was essentially pan-Protestant began in 1928 in Scotland. It's a meeting of missionary bodies joining together. What, to me, is remarkable, and I think probably has sustained me over [16:00] the period of the past 30 years of my work, have been the cycles, the kind of mosaic almost of how pieces began to fit in over a period of decades into the mosaic which I call "the people of God." Before the Vatican Council, Vatican Council II took place in 1962, before it began, when you talked about Jewish-Christian dialogue, we were talking essentially about

Protestant-Jewish dialogue. It was mainline liberal Protestants who had the only dialogue game in town going with the Jewish community.

In fact in New York, it was one of the ironies, and I honored him, since passed away, that in the 1950s, before it was permissible for Catholics to take part in ecumenical dialogue, and certainly in any possible kind of religious service, [17:00] there was one priest in New York that was allowed by Cardinal Spellman to engage in moonlighting, ecumenical moonlighting, Father Ford, a wonderful man with great spirit, great liberal spirit, who believed in pluralism in American democracy. Poor Father Ford was bused in to every Protestant-Jewish dialogue in town whenever there was need to have a Catholic, or to feel what it would be like to have a Catholic as part of discussion. And by the end of the day, after he did six or seven dialogues, the poor man was exhausted. And I had the feeling [you better?] clone him or something, or call the Vatican Council so you could get somebody else to help him. So the first cycle of Jewish-Christian dialogue was essentially liberal Protestant-Jewish, went through the whole of the 1950s down to 1965.

After Vatican Council II, there literally, thank God, took place an explosion [18:00] of Catholic-Jewish dialogue. In fact, if I

have any -- the whole tradition of Abraham taking God on, and asking, will the judge of all the earth not too justice. If I had any complaint that I want to lodge with the Almighty, it would be, "Look, it's wonderful having Catholic-Jewish dialogue, but why all at once, and why now?" Because dialogues began breaking out after what was begun here in Rockhurst College, and at St. Mary's Seminary, which were the first two Catholic-Jewish dialogues on a national level in the United States. The godfathers were here, incidentally.

After those two dialogues, it became extraordinary. The dialogues began exploding in every city. We did not have enough rabbis to go around. We were busing rabbis around all over the country. The dialogue in Chicago, and then in Milwaukee, and then Los Angeles, and then San Diego, then in Atlanta. And, the Catholic-Jewish dialogue moved front-and-center after 1965, and down until [19:00] the early 1970s, Catholic-Jewish dialogue dominated the ecumenical inter-religious scene, and began doing the deepest work in terms of biblical, theological, historical, and sociological studies together, the greatest work in social justice began to bring together Catholics, Protestants, and Jews.

I don't have the time to begin to tell you, and I regret to say that I find many Catholic friends who are not aware of the incredible healing work of Catholic Relief Service in saving lives, in ending hunger, in bringing relief to people, we have a program with Catholic Relief Service at Ethiopia today, as part of an overall program that Jews and Catholics and Protestants have in the whole of Africa. Hunger is coming to an end in some countries, and it is Catholics, Protestants, and Jews who are doing that. [20:00] And the work of Caritas, and the work of what we have in Ethiopia now, that are Catholic Relief Service people, where we have problems of getting to some communities, are helping save black Jews in Ethiopia. And we are doing things in Mozambique with black Catholics in that part of the world. There's an extraordinary outreach together in areas of common social justice work that we've been building on.

Well, to make this long story short, or short-er, after the Catholic-Jewish dialogue began to become structured, institutionalized, it literally began to develop its own bureaucracies. Catholic bureaucracy, Jewish bureaucracy, the Catholic Bishop's Commission on Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue, first Father Flannery, now Dr. Eugene Fisher, and then representatives of the Jewish community who are engaged in this activity.

By the beginning [21:00] of 1970, another wave began to emerge. Really the end of the 1960s, but the beginning of 1970. And that was the emergency of evangelical Christians onto the main scene of America. It was the extraordinary growth of evangelical churches in the United States, who continued to be the fastest-growing churches in America. Evangelical Christians now number 40-50 million people. And the Jewish community, like the Catholic community and others, simply ignored them. We had all of these images of Bible-thumpers, of rednecks and crackers, and we began to find out that there's a whole different reality out there. In fact, one of those realities became President of the United States. He was called Jimmy Carter, he was a born-again Christian. And there's a long line of born-again Christians like him moving into the mainstream of America.

I hate to drop names, but since I'm in the mood, tomorrow night, [22:00] at my home, in New York City, we're having a guest for dinner. It's not Elijah the prophet. (laughter) It's come close; it's Dr. Billy Graham and his family. I developed a relationship with Billy Graham in the mid-1960s, and with Southern Baptist convention, and I must tell you, from the Jewish point of view, evangelical Christians have been among the greatest friends of the Jewish people in this country. They want to convert us out

of existence. (laughter) But they're still supporting Soviet Jews, they're still supporting the State of Israel in unbelievable ways, because that's a very important part of their theological scheme. The end-gathering of the Jews to the Holy Land, the reunification of Jerusalem under Israeli-Jewish sovereignty is absolutely crucial to the second coming of Christ in evangelical theology.

Now some Jews who get unhappy about that, and don't want to be a [23:00] pawn in the evangelical chessboard. But look, we've lived with that for 2,000 years, we can live another 2,000 years with that kind of thing. But their support [and love is?] phenomenal. And Billy Graham is unbelievable. He doesn't go to any part of the world without calling me and saying, "What can I do for the Jewish people there?" Before he went to Hungary, before he went to Poland, before he went to Auschwitz, before he went to Russia, insisted as part of what he wanted to carry with him was a message of love and solidarity with the Jewish people.

In any case, since the 1970s, there's now filled out the third part of that mosaic, mainly our relationship with evangelical Christians, and we have dialogues and relationships, and there's growth and evolution on the part of evangelical Christians. One of my great happy moments is, I made it possible at one point

when Father Paul Reinert -- we were talking about him in Saint Louis University, former President of Saint Louis University, very worried about what was happening to Catholic higher education, organized [24:00] a higher education board with Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, to make sure that funding was not cut off from higher education, otherwise, all of you would be pressed out of school -- asked me if I could arrange a meeting for him with Dr. Billy Graham, since Billy Graham had access to all the presidents of the United States. (laughter) So I set up a meeting with Dr. Billy Graham and Father Paul Reinert at an airport in Chicago. I'm just sorry I wasn't there; I would have loved to have taken a picture.

But, the point is that in this whole mosaic now, that all of those pieces that were alienated from one another, fragmented in society, thought of each other only in terms of the worst kind of caricatures and stereotypes, are now coming together increasingly, in this mosaic made possible by America's democratic (inaudible), and by the spirit of Vatican Council II, and by the spirit of the Jewish community, which recognizes fundamental differences in theology, [25:00] and yet acknowledges the similarities, the affirmations of values and ideals on which we can build together a more humane and civil

and just society. Any more simple questions? (laughter)

(inaudible) with that. Yes, Father?

John Smith:

Oh, Father John Smith, (inaudible). Wouldn't the more accurate (inaudible) of this group of the year 700 BC to now bring out understanding and love between the peoples, knowing the background, (inaudible) you give some background. But wouldn't that be true, (inaudible) more active (inaudible)?

Marc Tanenbaum:

I think that's critical. If you read some wonderful studies by Catholic scholars, particularly Father John Pawlikowski, who's a Polish Catholic priest who has specialized in Jewish-Christian relations, has written a major book published by Paulist Press, a Catholic publishing house, called [26:00] *Catechetics and Prejudice*. And Dr. Eugene Fisher has written a book -- Eugene Fisher is the executive secretary of the Bishop's Commission on Catholic-Jewish relations -- has written a book called *Faith Without Prejudice*. And both of them make the point that the gospels were written essentially as *charigma*, that is, for the telling of a message of faith. The gospels were not history books, were not intended to give the full story of what went on in first century Palestine. In order to understand the reality

of first-century Palestine, it is essential to read the history of both Christian and Jewish scholars of what that world was like, and what the world since that time was like. And one of the things, for example, that you will find out, is that you know, the notion is that [27:00] Jesus had a running terrible conflict with the Pharisees. The Pharisees are the whited sepulchers, they're the symbol of hypocrisy and evil. Well, it will come as a surprise to some, a shock to others, to learn that if you read the Rabbinic sources, in first century Palestine, that there were seven schools of Pharisees. There wasn't just one group of Pharisees. And there were differing disciplines and traditions within the Pharisaic movement. One school was regarded as the Pharisees of the yoke of the law, who believe like fundamentalists in a fundamental reading of Scripture, and were very legalistic. And then there were schools of Pharisees that in gradation moved over to the end school, that was the school of Pharisees called, the Pharisees of the school of love, who believed that the supreme way to worship God was through love and compassion and forgiveness and kindness.

[28:00]

And now historians believe that Jesus in his Jewish identity was school and very close to the Pharisees of the school of love.

The Pharisees of the school of love were vehement in their

criticism of the Pharisees of the yoke of law, whom they believe were imposing a legalism unnecessarily on the interpretation of God's word and sacred scripture. And so Jesus was repeating the criticism of all the Pharisees against the legalistic Pharisees. But he was doing it within a perspective of one of the Pharisees of the school of love. And much of the tradition of what he teaches, and in the parables, and the whole messianic -- the Kingdom of God, all of that is Pharisaic teaching. And to understand the depth of its root in this, one has to look into the historic background to really get a rounded picture, and then much of these stereotypes and caricatures will [29:00] dissolve in the face of that increased knowledge. (applause)
Yes, Father?

M1:

[Amrose?] (inaudible). I wonder if there are others who have the same Bavarian, Austrian, Roman Catholic background who remember from their childhood a lot of the anti-Semitism that came with my parents from German, who are unsettled today, having read the paper about Kurt Waldheim receiving the majority vote, and the paper reported that both he and his (inaudible) acknowledge that one of the reasons for his success was anti-Semitism? Would you address that, or (inaudible)? It disturbs me (inaudible)
Catholic, such as Roman Catholic culture.

Marc Tanenbaum:

It is a very [30:00] deeply disturbing issue in the Jewish community. I would pray to God that it becomes a very deeply disturbing issue for the American people, and for all people of conscience, for all people who care about justice. It has special qualities in terms of the what the Nazis meant to the Jewish, because the Jews uniquely were singled out as an entire people for destruction. Others were killed. Thirty five million other human beings were destroyed in World War II. But only the Jews and the Gypsies were singled out singularly for total destruction, and the Final Solution was only for the Jews. And yet if we don't understand the moral issue that Waldheim raises for the United Nations, and for the governance of the nations of the earth, it means that we will have [31:00] missed the very profound moral issue of our time. And look at what we're talking about: a man is allowed to become the supreme, the premier international civil servant of all of the nations of the earth who was a Nazi, who was a Nazi. Never mind Jewish interest in this, his first acts of involvement were with General Löhr's military brigade, the first people they massacred brutally were Yugoslav partisans, Croatians and Serbians, Christians. The first people he massacred, participated in massacre, were Christians, not Jews. Then they went to Salonica. And there they

deported some 40,000 Jews from Salonica. Now it's a question that's open what role he played in Salonica. [32:00] But look at the beginning of the story. Here is a man who's allowed to become the head of the United Nations, the servant of the whole human community, who in his official biography, autobiography, lies, denies that he was ever a Nazi. He said that he served in the Nazi military, he was -- he joined the riding club, he liked to ride horses, therefore he joined a riding -- he wasn't really a Nazi. Then some of the Yugoslav documents emerged. The Yugoslav War Crimes Commission examined his record in Yugoslavia and Greece. They declared he was an A-1 Nazi, that's what it says on his files at the United Nations, an A-1 Nazi, who engaged in murder in Yugoslavia. And none of the powers of the earth have the capacity [33:00] to screen that man from holding that role.

Now the tragedy is that it has been dealt with as it's essentially only an issue between the Jews and Waldheim, and the Jews and Austria. And if that's the way it remains, then I'm afraid that we are in morally greater difficulty than we will ever understand. You know, I think that it's true. I think part of the way -- I give great credit to the World Jewish Congress for getting the information. I happen to differ on the style on how that's dealt with. You don't deal with it every day as if

it's a daily fix of anti-Waldheim stuff. There are other ways of getting that. My own group, the American Jewish Committee today, after the election, after the result of this election, has proposed -- and it's an idea that I'm advocating and will work on when I get back to New York tomorrow -- the creation of an international panel [34:00] of recognized jurists from whatever part of the world, for jurists to be brought together to look at all of the evidence available for them to make a judgment on exactly Waldheim was guilty of or innocent of, so the world will know once and for all, not from Jews' special pleading, but from the mind of the best minds, most respected people in the international juridical community, of what the facts of the case are. And frankly, if the man has any -- a shred of honor left at all, he will retire from office. He will retire from running before June 8th, if such a group makes available a judgment on what the evidence reveals.

I'll just close by telling you that I was so agitated about what was happening and by the rise of anti-Semitism among many of the Nazis who were never de-Nazified in Austria, that two weeks ago I [35:00] took the initiative of calling on Austrian government authorities in New York, the Austrian Consul General on the staff, to talk about the meaning of all this. I'm very worried about a small Jewish community in Austria now, there's 7-8,000

mostly elderly people who were too ill and too poor to leave, to go anywhere else to rebuild their lives, who are now being overwhelmed -- overwhelmed -- by a torrent of hate mail, Nazi graffiti, anti-Semitism, and I've talked to government officials to assure that they do not suffer because of Waldheim. It would be too much after what they suffered with the destruction of their families to go through another round of anti-Semitism.

But, Father, to come back to the point you were making, I know that Bavarian mentality. And I think, in fact, this is what Pope John and [36:00] Cardinal Bea, especially who knew Germany, was about, you can come into Oberammergau, and you'll be greeted in the streets not by somebody saying, "Good morning," that's a secular greeting, "Good morning," you walk through the streets of Oberammergau, and the greeting from everybody is "*Grüss Gott, Grüss Gott*, Greet God, Greet God. Welcome in the name of God." There's the sense that this is a devout community. And this community since 1600 has seen nothing wrong with the Oberammergau Passion Play, which repeats that story over and over again. Cardinal Döpfner understood it, and he tried to stop it and brought about a revision, and he was overwhelmed by a community which produced its own measure of, not somewhere, somebody has got to face the fact that a faith which proclaims ideals of justice [37:00] and truth and love and human dignity

cannot tolerate the contradiction of that in the lives of its people. Either the values it proclaims become meaningless or blasphemous, or the behavior becomes the norm of a new cult, and a new religious way of life. We did that with racism in America. People thought they were good Christians and believed in segregated societies, and blacks were slaves. They're doing it in South Africa. The world will explode from those kind of moral contradictions. It will not survive, unless it finds a way to confront the evil of behavior which [disfigures?] the proclamations of our truth. You cannot proclaim a gospel of love and believe it when its behavior that it leads to is a gospel of hatred! We cannot proclaim a Torah of love, and allow Jews to go around saying in Israel, as Meir Kahane says, "Drive the Arabs out of our country." It's simply unacceptable. It is moral dissonance [38:00] which will undermine either the values or the behavior of a human society. And that's why Vatican Council II is such an important watershed. At least it proclaims standards by which behavior can be judged and held accountable. And that's what we're about, all of us, I think in the kind of world in which we're living in. (applause)

M1:

-- Rabbi Tanenbaum, for being with us. And I, I think I can join all of you for thanking our Father for bringing this together.

I'd also like to pay a little tribute which might be unknown to you to Mark Loeb, the president of the chapter of the American Jewish Community, and Connie [Rigis?], because it was through them that we were able to bring our symposium on Vatican II to a full and fitting climax. [39:00] Thank you all for coming.

(applause)

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