

CD-1074 Transcription

The Killeen Chair of Theology & Philosophy Lecture Series,

St. Norbert College [2]. 19 March 1992.

Marc Tanenbaum:

-- (inaudible) as a way of diverting from the real problems of the people. Following the eve of Passover, we were sitting together, my father, my mother, bless her memory, my older brother and myself, in our living room on a Sabbath afternoon. And it was that practice in our family after we came back from Synagogue services on a Saturday to sit around and my parents would invariably want to recall the old country, the old home, what it was like living in the glories of the (inaudible) and the mud piles and the poverty. And I remember Italian friends who go through this, and Irish friends who go through this. (laughter) Same poverty. (inaudible) same kinds of (inaudible) [01:00] Jewish hostility was, on this occasion, something traumatic to me. So on this eve of Passover and we were on the verge of Good Friday at the time, my father told us the story. It was almost as if he were seized by the story. He and his family lived in a small town called [Dominica?], Ukraine. His father was called the [Starister?]; he was the de facto mayor of the town, appointed through the czar of the administration to collect taxes and found people up in the community to do their

military service. And on this Good Friday day, as my father told it, [02:00] they heard a great noise outside of their little home in Dominica and as they looked out they saw the Russian Orthodox Priest from the church down the road marching up the road, holding his staff, his pectoral cross glinting in the sun, followed by his entire congregation which by now had become a (inaudible) mob. They descended on my father's house, the priest rapped on the door of my grandfather, Rabbi [Keva?], caused the whole family to come out of the house and then the priest pointed his staff at my Uncle [Aaron?], who was a poet who had come from Odesa to visit his family for Passover. And then there were some words [03:00] exchanged between the priest and my grandfather and the whole family was forced to come down to the edge of a lake around which the village was built and then the rest of the congregation, now a mob, forced the 300, 400 Jews of the village to come down to the edge of the village to stand beside the family. And there, eve of Passover, this priest who had apparently worked himself up into a passion after the Good Friday liturgy, in telling the story of that passion, he screamed out the (inaudible) of (inaudible) Godforsaken Jew and the members of his congregation with sticks and rocks grabbed my Uncle [04:00] Aaron, forced him into the water in the presence of the entire Jewish community, into the water, covered his head, and he drowned before the eyes of the entire village.

"This is what we do to a Jew whom we offer up for ransom for the murder of Jesus Christ by the Jewish people." My father told that story, I was about four or five years old, I was traumatized. And it became very painful for me to reconcile that with other life experiences. We lived in a predominately ethnic Christian neighborhood, Italians, Poles, and Irish. My closest playmates in the street and the ballpark were these Christian kids, and we loved each other. But this became an overwhelming context and contradiction [05:00] with which I could not cope. I have to say this because if we're going to be honest with each other, our feelings must be placed on the table with care and prudence. But for a very long period of time after that experience, I began to feel that most Christians thought the Jews were a deicide people, a God-killing people, a Christ-killing people. As a four- or five-year-old child I thought that most Christians were a homicide people who specialized in killing Jews.

October 28, 1965, closing days of Vatican Council II, Pope Paul VI arose before the [all in?] St. Peter's Basilica, and read the text of [06:00] *Nostra Aetate*, In Our Time. "This sacred senate as it searches the mystery of the church," and I'm paraphrasing here, "acknowledges its patrimony with the Jewish people. It deplores anti-Semitism by anyone at any time at any place." It

called then for joint biblical studies and fraternal dialogue that would lead to mutual respect between the Catholic Church and the Catholic people and the Jewish people. There were ambiguities in the text as I gather Archbishop Weakland referred to them. I was working in those days very closely with Cardinal [Shehan?] in Baltimore who was then the Chairman of the American Bishops [07:00] Committee dealing with those issues, and then with Cardinal [Beya?] in Rome, and my colleague [Zach Schuster?] who was a genius working in Europe in seven languages. But as I stood in Rome, heard those words of Pope Paul VI, expressing the mind of the entire magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, Vatican Council II on the issue of Jewish-Catholic relations, was the greatest creative seminar in Catholic-Jewish relations in 2000 years of history. The church faced issues that had been buried and distorted and exhorting denial for much of those two millennia. And the price that was paid [08:00] was oceans of blood and worse than that -- and I don't mean to be offensive -- it became very difficult for me to understand how it was that Christians who proclaim a gospel of love could teach a gospel of hatred to the Jewish people.

I want to come back in a few moments to Jesus, the Jew, and the early church, early Christianity, in ancient Palestine. The point I want to make is that after I heard Pope Paul VI

proclaiming this, and I have been in touch with many members of the hierarchy in this country, Cardinal St. Louis, Cardinal Cushing in Boston, whom I love [09:00] and is a wonderful Irishmen, never lost his Irish qualities and his great Irish accent, which I am sure Archbishop Weakland will recall. I remember once when he came out of the hospital. I visited him in Boston, I asked him how he felt. He said, "Rabbi, considering the shape I'm in, I guess I'm in pretty good shape." The American Catholic hierarchy to its unbounded credit played the most important creative and productive leadership role in helping bring about the text of *Nostra Aetate* which changed the course of history between Catholics and Jews and Jewish history books, among other history books, will record that forever in unbounded gratitude. [10:01] But what did happen, which I think is really critical, is that this was not just another text. Even in encyclicals, beautiful encyclicals, as powerful encyclicals as I've had the privilege to read from various popes including this pope, and pastoral letters, including the excellent one to come out of the American Catholic Hierarchy in particular on all kinds of moral spiritual human issues. Danger always with these kinds of texts that it happens all the time, often, in my community, our community, as well. As (inaudible) communities, people invest enormous energy in creating beautiful words and beautiful texts and they end up on the library shelves. [11:00]

They have no effect on the lives and consciousness, the day-to-day behavior, where people act out their beliefs and their convictions toward one another. The genius of Vatican Council II and the several popes beginning with Pope John XXIII, in my belief was especially sent by God. Because he called Vatican Council II and I must take a moment to say something about the impact of his person. During World War II he was an apostolic delegate in the Balkans. I was told this story, confirmed for me by Ira Hirschmann, who represented the American government in bringing food and clothing to people at the end of the war. It was learned that Adolf Eichmann was preparing [12:00] some three, four thousand Jewish children to be rounded up, placed in cattle cars, and sent off to Auschwitz and certain death. And Ira Hirschmann, who was a Jew, but an American diplomat, asked then Monsignor Roncalli could anything be done to save these innocent children's lives. And according to Hirschmann, Archbishop Roncalli called in one of his aides and instructed him to make out as many Catholic baptismal certificates as were necessary so that these children could be presented to Eichmann as being Catholics, and therefore not Jews, and not automatically earmarked for extermination. [13:00] And Pope John XXIII, as he was later to become, literally saved the lives of those several thousand Jewish children and the Chief Rabbi, the late Chief Rabbi of Israel, Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, who was

former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, came after the war to express his personal gratitude for his incredible moral, spiritual acts of love and caring.

The point I want to make is that what is really significant on several levels during the course over the past year since 1965, is that the Holy Father and the church and several of the Secretariats of the Curia, have set about systematically creating documents and instructions [14:00] on how to make sure the *Nostra Aetate* does not remain a library document for the archives. So there was a 1974 set of guidelines created by the Vatican Secretariat of Catholic-Jewish Relations. I was a member of that Secretariat, I still am, and at that time Cardinal Willebrands presented a set of guidelines which were mind- (inaudible). Except this text is not meant to be simply a matter of literary artifice, but here is how it is to be implemented. You shall not teach about the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees as if the Jews altogether were enemies of Jesus. Shall not teach the deicide charge; textbooks are to be revised so that does not happen. And over the years as we've been working with Catholic authorities and Catholic publishing houses, one of the concrete achievements -- and this is virtually unknown in the Jewish community, [15:00] perhaps in much of the Catholic community -- is that to my knowledge not a single Catholic

textbook used today has a single anti-Semitic reference in it. And to compare that to the [volume of?] catechism of 1937 you can see the light-years that were traveled in attitudes and change of feeling and openness and respect. And a whole series of documents emerged after that, catechetical notes on how to teach about Jews and Judaism and the Pharisees, which was adopted by the Vatican Secretariat after we've had a number of joint meetings. The American Catholic Bishops drafted the first set of guidelines on how to change textbooks, liturgy, homilies, to make sure that the spirit of Vatican Council II was not contradicted, even accidentally, by preachers or teachers [16:00] or others.

I have to tell you a story that actually happened. It happened in Detroit, a lovely city in which I spent half of my life (inaudible). (laughter) There are two Sisters in Detroit who head up the center called the Pope Pius XII Religious Education Center. And they were seized by the spirit of Vatican Council II on all kinds of issues -- religious liberty, human rights, ecumenism -- and they prepared a new set of textbooks for Catholic elementary parochial schools. Doctrinally sound because they shared these with theologians and got approval for the Catholic doctrinal side of it. They removed every anti-Jewish reference that had existed almost unconsciously in many cases in

many of the textbooks, and then they brought in an artist to portray [17:00] Jesus, the early Church, the Virgin Mary, and they did it because they found that in all of their classrooms that the children, whenever they would talk about who Jesus was in first century Palestine, they always got feedback. They thought he was an Irishmen with blonde hair and blue eyes. (laughter) There was no sense of his being a first century Palestinian Jew, that the church was a first century Palestinian institution, which I'm going to come back to in a few moments. So they had this artist portray Jesus as he was, historically, humanly. And so Jesus was portrayed wearing a skull cap, a prettier one than I have, with his skin swarthy as a first century Palestinian may well have been. [18:00] He was standing in a synagogue with the menorah behind him, the Hebrew phrase on the bottom of it, (inaudible), "All who listened to him were astonished," which was the language that the early disciples would have understood. And then I said to the Sisters, "This is magnificent, but I've got a problem with it. This first century Palestinian Jew called Jesus, you have given him a rather large nose." (laughter) And I said, "You know, you keep that up and the Anti-defamation League is going to (inaudible)." (laughter) (inaudible) (laughter). Anyway, it was not corrected. It just is an exquisite book. It's called, *Come Lord Jesus*, put out by (inaudible) & Bacon, and there's a whole series of them. But

what is magnificent is the spirit of love and openness, it purified it. Cleaning itself of hatred [19:01] and these traditional images of hostile stereotypes, it made for a loving book which manifested the spirit of the gospel, as I understand it is to be.

So I think that is one of the great achievements. Mainly that a culture, a new culture has begun to be created by Catholic authorities of the intelligence and wisdom and standing of Archbishop Weakland and almost every other archbishop and bishop and many priests and nuns whom I know all over the country and, in fact, in Europe, in France, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Brussels, in Belgium, in Latin America. The Brazilian Cardinal of Bishops, the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, have written a magnificent document [20:00] on Catholic-Jewish relations. And in Argentina. So this has become, in a sense, a universal movement led by the leadership of the Church that is seeking the truth of the authenticity of the relationship between the early church and the synagogue of Jesus and the Jews in ancient Palestine. I think that, and what has since emerged in terms of a scholarship on Catholic-Jewish relations and Christian-Jewish relations is now one of the staggering intellectual achievements of this generation. If you look at the books, the studies, the search documents, I just

picked this up, this is produced by a Protestant scholar, Dr. James [Charlesworth?], as a collection of essays by some of the leading Protestant and Catholic and Jewish scholars [21:00] on almost every aspect of Christian-Jewish relations. The names of the scholars are among the galaxy of intellectual stars in the world today. [Crister Stenfield?], W.D. Davies, Ren Brown, a brilliant Catholic biblical scholar. It is an enormous list of people. And the literature, one cannot keep up with it anymore. Thank God, that is the truth of *Nostra Aetate*.

But I want now to turn from what has been achieved thus far in the past, and it's very impressive, and what is also very impressive is that what is happening here today, at this college, which [22:00] to my understanding has been called together for the sake of honoring the 100th anniversary of the community, and while that is a special occasion, it's important to share with you a knowledge if you don't know it already. What is happening here is happening in every major city in the United States, and most of the major cities of Europe, including Germany and Austria, (inaudible) Catholic-Jewish relations. It's not exactly the highest record of performance, but all over Europe, in Latin America I count among my dearest friends the Cardinals of Brazil, Argentina. We embrace each other every time we meet. [23:00] and they have a kind of openness and

spontaneity in wanting to deal with hard issues in the most constructive way. But beyond that, perhaps one of the most important achievements in which my greatest sense of personal pride, is that there is now a network of Christians and Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox, increasingly Muslims, Blacks, Black Christians, Black Muslims, and Hispanics who meet together in every major city in the United States. It doesn't mean they all love each other, there hasn't been instant conversion, but there's now human contact. The practice of stereotypes, the notion of looking at the other as an enemy or as a gargoyle, as a monster, increasingly [24:00] has begun to be transformed by these personal human contacts.

I want to say a few more words. All of the points that I had heard Archbishop Weakland refer to, are in fact at the heart of the theological transformation that has been taking place and, at the risk of being characterized as I have from time to time as being a pope lover, (laughter) and rougher moments I'm called a Catholic lover, (laughter) it's OK, I've worked a long time at it. I have read every major writing of Pope John Paul II dealing with Judaism (inaudible) other documents (inaudible). [25:00] In all of his writings, there are seven themes that emerge as the foundation of Catholic-Jewish relations. One is that of Judaism as a living heritage; the second is that of the permanent

validity of the covenant of God with Israel, which has not been displaced as Archbishop Weakland has referred to it; the third is the vigorous and repeated, repeated condemnation of anti-Semitism and an insistence on facing the Nazi Holocaust and what that has meant for the collapse of morality in Western civilization. The fact that the Nazi Holocaust could take place in a country of advanced culture and [26:00] (inaudible) ancient Christian civilization, the Holocaust that was not carried out by crazies and idiots, but carried out by many PhDs, with the most advanced knowledge of the twentieth century. He addresses himself to those issues over and again. And then the pope has made a special point in talking about the land in the state of Israel, its importance to the Jewish people and indeed to Christians, and he has said two things which are worthy of recalling. First of all, in terms of these themes, which include in the final fifth and sixth items that he refers to, [27:00] which he talks about the importance of making the catechetic and liturgy documents of love rather than separation and alienation, and then an appeal for joint action between Catholics and Jews working in the human community. But one of his earliest statements which captured the spirit of all of these seven themes, Pope John Paul II expressed that new spirit during a February 15, 1985, audience with the American Jewish Committee which I helped arrange at that time with Cardinal Willebrands.

The pope said the following: "I am convinced and I am happy to state on this occasion that the relationships between Jews and Christians have radically improved in these years. Where there was ignorance and therefore prejudice and stereotypes, there is now growing mutual [28:00] knowledge, appreciation and respect. There is, above all, love between us. That kind of love, I mean, which is for both of us a fundamental injunction of our religious traditions in which the New Testament has received from the Old." And then, in a quite remarkable document because of all of the public agitation and conflict which has appeared around the issue of diplomatic relations between the Vatican, the (inaudible), the State of Israel. In [Otanto?] in 1980, the pope linked for the first time the Nazi Holocaust and their birth of the Jewish state. And he says in these words which I quote, "The Jewish people, after tragic experiences connected with the extermination of so many sons and daughters, driven by the desire for security [29:00] set up the State of Israel." And then he went on to say, in an apostolic letter of April 20, 1984, (inaudible), "Jews arguing love for Jerusalem and in every age (inaudible) from memory, abundant as she is in many remains and monuments from the time of David who chose her as the capital. [Adolf Solomon?] who built the temple there, and therefore they turn their minds to her daily when they say, and point to her as a sign of their nation. The Jewish people who

live in the State of Israel and preserve in that land such precious testimonies of their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the new tranquility that is derogative of every nation and condition of life, and of progress for every society." The pope also referred [30:00] to the importance, which I support and many other Jews support, of assuring justice and human rights for Palestinian refugees. If anybody understands what it means to be a refugee, Jews have understood that over the past 1900 years. And for us, the issue is how do we achieve security for Israel which is constantly threatened by Scud missiles, and now possibly by nuclear weapons. And intifada. We saw these recent killings. How do you put an end to that killing and move forward to try to bring some measure of justice and an end to the suffering of Palestinians and we are committed to trying to bring about those kinds of balances.

Finally --

(break in audio)

[31:00] -- possibly the question of the future of Catholic-Jewish relations, that would not be bad if we simply continue to do more of the same. The kind of scholarship that is going on

will take us a hundred years to absorb the power of its intellectual insight and its truth. Charles (inaudible) a study, without going into too great detail, and I would encourage you to read one of these books, *Jews Hate Christians, Jesus's Jewishness*. There are literally thousands of books now, many of them in paperback, on Judaism and Christianity in early Palestine. But what emerges out of that is a recognition as emerges out of this study, that you really cannot understand Jesus, you cannot understand the early Church, [32:00] you cannot understand all of the ideas and values and beliefs and customs which shape the church, unless you grasp the depth and the root of this, of Jesus and the disciples as first century Palestinian Jews. And according to many of the scholars in this book, including (inaudible), who has a wonderful essay on Jesus, the Jew, that in point of fact, the conventional scholarship is not enough. We need to recognize that prior to the year 70 when the Temple was destroyed, the pre-70 Palestinian Judaism, pre-70 Levitic Judaism, was the mother religion of both early Rabbinic Judaism and the mother religion of early Christianity as well. [33:00] Jesus prayed in the Hebrew prayer book. It's the only prayer book he knew. Jesus read in the synagogue from the Torah scrolls. That's the only Bible he knew. And many of the ideas and values emerges out of his experience of living with Jewish teachers and commonplace people in Palestine. It's important to

have that sense of how the early church understood itself, and for Jews to understand that as well because the alienation has been such there's been denial on both sides. It's time that on a scholarly basis and on the search for truth and honesty, we come to acknowledge the depth of our bond, spiritually, morally, humanly, and a common mother, [34:00] and how that has affected all of us.

My last word is this: Pope John Paul II refers in one of his documents to the importance of Christians and Jews joining hands together to create a community of compassion in the world. If you will indulge a personal reference, I have spent a good part of the past 30 years in a parallel career to that of Jewish-Christian relations, namely working with the problems of world refugees, world hunger, and international development. I cannot begin to tell you the scandal of what it means to live in this kind of world today where there are 16 million refugees in the world, six million of them in Africa, three million of them in Pakistan. I belong to a group called [35:00] International Rescue Committee. We've sent people. We have 3,000 people working in the field. We sent people to every refugee center in the world. Every conflict, in order to relieve suffering and contain the deaths. The conflicts in the Middle East are terrible, but in a month 1e healing and repair of a broken world

0,000 Croatians and Slovaks and (inaudible) were massacred. In Lebanon, probably more than 150,000 people were destroyed in the conflict. How long can a world go on with that kind of destruction? And remain almost virtually unknown to so much of the rest of the world. But I must tell you, in my experiences of going into refugee camps, Japanese boat people of Cambodia and throughout Southeast Asia, and then in large parts of Africa, and then in Latin America, the barrios of Brazil and Venezuela, Argentina [36:00], one of the most heartening signs to me personally when I feel like some days that it's impossible to cope with this, in every refugee camp I entered into the first people I met were Christians and some Jews. Priests, nuns, Protestant ministers, nurses, evangelical people, Greek orthodox, and the ministry of self-giving, of seeking to save human lives, which is grounded in our prophetic tradition in the Bible, these people may come alive today. [37:00] They give hands and feet, they give life to many of the abstract pronouncements of liturgical phrases we recite and then pass by. Now, in the Jewish community, some years ago organized American Jewish World Service, which is an overseas development program in third world countries for people who will never become Jews. We see that as our mission of self-giving, self-emptying-out, in order to uphold the central thesis of both of our traditions. Namely that every human is created in the sacred image of God.

Every human being. Black, white, colored, brown. They're all created in the sacred image of God. They are brothers and sisters in the family of God. [38:00] And we, if we're faithful to our traditions in the Torah and the Gospel, must find ways of joining hands not only to give life to what happened at Vatican Council II, but to give life and meaning to all of those affirmations which we recite every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. They're not simply liturgical passages for nice voices. They are marching orders from God from his prophets and from Jesus of Nazareth. And I hope that these experiences together will help us join hands in this life-affirming work which we in the Jewish condition call *tikkun olam*, the healing and repair of a broken world that desperately needs [39:00] our brotherhood and our love and compassion and caring, not only for each other, but for so many other members of God's family. Thank you and God bless you. (applause)

**Michael Lukens:**

We're going to have a dialogue and a period of discussion between Archbishop Weakland and Rabbi Tanenbaum.

**Announcer:**

We're going to continue now with a few moments of dialogue between Archbishop Weakland [40:00] and Rabbi Tanenbaum and we will begin with Archbishop Weakland.

**Rembert Weakland:**

At the beginning of my talk I mentioned the fact that one of the peculiarities of our age is that the generation that experienced the Holocaust was dying out. I'd like Rabbi Tanenbaum to reflect a bit on what's going to happen when the generation that created Vatican II begins to die out. (laughter) I was elected as superior, became a major superior in the Catholic Church in 1963. I don't think there's anybody who has survived now 29 years like I have as a major superior. The generation who were superiors, who created Vatican II, the names you mentioned, Shehan, these people, [41:00] are all gone. I feel like a real old-timer! Functioning after 29 years. What could happen if that spirit of Vatican II, what created Vatican II, and the people involved in Vatican II, die out? How are we going to perpetuate the attitude?

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

I think it's a very real problem. And it's also a problem in the Jewish community. We had, after all, a lot of good people we worked most closely with in connection with Vatican Council II.

The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was my teacher and practically my father; I regarded myself as his disciple. And we worked with him and Rabbi (inaudible) at seminary, (inaudible), and others. And one after another has reached their eighties and nineties. [42:00] They pass away and a very large chapter of history --

**Audience Member 1:**

Will you speak louder or closer to the microphone?

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

I haven't said anything yet! (laughter) This is merely my brother. (laughter) But I'm glad you woke me up. We have a parallel problem in the Jewish community when we agreed with the late Cardinal Beya who was then president of the Vatican Secretariat on Christian Unity and also the president of Catholic-Jewish relations, that we would collaborate in as fraternal a way as we could [43:00] because he needed certain information from us and we tried to be as responsive as we could. And we brought together some of the leading Jewish scholars in the world. We worked on three documents that Cardinal Beya had asked for, and every one of those documents was submitted to these people for their response. And they all became enthusiastically (inaudible). But as they pass away,

there are no substitutes for them. Let me just say on another level, although I don't mean this in a pessimistic note, I think there's a real issue altogether in general public life as well as religious life, this is very difficult to fathom, somehow the age of giants seems to have disappeared. When I think of some of the people in the early days, [44:00] of Heschel and Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich, so there's -- [Beha?] -- (inaudible) American hierarchy of extraordinary people, including yourself. Thank God you're so young. (laughter) But it is a serious challenge of leadership training. Now there are some younger scholars who have entered into the field with real energy and commitment.

(break in audio)

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

-- and less young every day.

(break in audio)

-- much younger. (laughter) But there are people like that in every community. And one simply, somewhere that has to be some center where somebody pays attention to that and works at cultivating those kinds of (inaudible) of energy.

**Rembert Weakland:**

I have one more observation for the rabbi, and then another question. My observation is this: [45:00] You probably didn't know that there is a theory out there that Jesus was Irish. (laughter) The reasons are this: That at the age of 30 --

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Sounds like blasphemy to me. (laughter)

**Rembert Weakland:**

At the age of 30 he was still living at home taking care of his mother (laughter) and he thought he was God. (laughter) That's my observation. My next --

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Can I tell you my Irish-Jewish observation? (laughter) I'm more careful than you were. But there is a theory backed up by some scholarship that the Irish are one of the ten lost tribes of Israel. (laughter) And part of the evidence to that theory is that the -- first of all as a linguistic there's grammatical [46:00] evidence that some of the grammatical forms in the Celtic language are derived from the Hebrew language. For example, the name Donovan is regarded as a joining together

(inaudible) of the words Don Ovan, the Judge of Sin. But the real clinker for making the case is that the theory that the Blarney Stone is one of the stones from the western wall of the Temple that the Celtic tribes took with them when they were still children of Israel. (laughter) And, of course, both Jews and Irishmen have obviously kissed the Blarney Stone and they both talk too much. (laughter)

**Rembert Weakland:**

Thank you. (laughter) My next observation or question would be this, Rabbi Tanenbaum: We've mentioned, both of us, how much [47:00] today the Catholic and the Christian community is learning about its Jewish roots and how proud we are of that, and how we have become -- I said, we Catholics are again a biblical people and how important that is. But how much does the Jewish community know about Christ and Christianity?

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

That's a very good question from Green Bay, Wisconsin. (laughter) No, it's an important question. To respond to it, briefly, there has probably been more honest, sensitive scholarship on the part of Jewish scholars probing the meaning of Jesus, Christianity and Christians for Jews and Judaism during the past [48:00] 50 years than at any time prior to that.

There are now studies, literally now, every couple of weeks by some important Jewish scholars. In very honest ways. Part of that has to do with the fact that increasingly Jewish scholars are coming to the conclusion that Christian scholars have come to, namely that both Rabbinic Judaism, early Rabbinic Judaism prior to the year 70, and early Christianity, were essentially brother or sister religions who were almost indistinguishable at the beginning from each other. Their belief in God, their attitudes toward human dignity, their belief in the observances. Jesus observed the Sabbath, he observed the Jewish Passover. What happened afterwards with Easter came after the period of 70 and certainly the third century. But [49:00] my point is that I just got a book from a friend, colleague of mine from my own seminary, the Jewish Theological Seminary, Dr. Fritz Rothschild, on Jewish perspective on Christianity, which is a very deep philosophical and theological analysis of what some of the best minds in the Jewish community, in the twentieth century -- beginning with Martin Buber, Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig, Abraham Joshua Heschel -- have written in order to dismantle the old stereotypes and look at it in as honest a way as Christians are looking at it. I'll mention just one other thing. When I was working with the American Jewish Committee, I simulated a study of curricula in all the [50:00] Jewish seminaries, what Jews teach about Christians and Christianity. And it really was quite

interesting. All of our major seminaries except for the Orthodox seminaries -- Orthodox seminaries taught essentially about Christianity in historic terms, not theological terms, and that wasn't exactly a great history. But it really was -- and the study's available -- fascinating to see how increasingly our seminarians are being introduced to those studies. And even more interesting is that every Jewish seminary, even in some ways Yeshiva University, has now regular meetings going on between Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Greek Orthodox seminarians, and Jewish seminarians. I organized one for the Southern Baptists [51:00] in Dallas. I knew it was going to be difficult. I didn't realize how difficult it was going to be to get out of Dallas. (laughter) But it turned out to be a remarkable meeting. And you can feel the scales fall from the eyes of the students as they begin to see each other as persons and not as abstract stereotypes. So there is more going on, but the truth of the matter is, at least my own approach has been from the beginning, that this cannot be undertaken with a view of trade-off. You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours. It must be a genuine search for truth, knowledge and understanding as the information is available to the best minds in our communities. It's only with that kind of integrity that any of that scholarship will have any impact [52:00] on our people.

**Announcer:**

I think at this point we are going to open up the floor for questions. Now when I say questions, I mean questions. Please try and keep your questions brief, that way we'll be able to hear from more of you, and we open the floor. Yes.

**Audience Member 2:**

This question could be addressed to either Archbishop Weakland or the rabbi. I was wondering if you feel along the lines of timeframe, if the things are moving along fast enough, the understanding and so on?

**Audience Member 1:**

Would you repeat the question?

**Announcer:**

The question was --

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Do you want to come up front? (laughter) I'm serious. If you're having difficulty hearing (inaudible) a little bit up front and might make it easier. [53:00]

**Announcer:**

The question was --

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Not too close. (laughter)

**Announcer:**

The question was about the timing of the understanding between the two faiths, is it moving fast enough?

**Rembert Weakland:**

The hardest thing I think in ecumenism is not how fast it goes, it's whether everybody's on the train. And my problem right now is that maybe we need a little time to get everybody on board. So it's going fast enough for me, but I don't know if it has everybody as it should going fast enough. There would be nothing worse than the lag, and then you have divisive things, so I think it's going fast enough, maybe not everywhere in the world, but certainly the United States is going fast enough.

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Well when you consider what [54:00] Christian-Jewish relations were like prior to Vatican Council II, what has happened since then in terms of some things that Archbishop Weakland and I have been talking about, in a certain sense we have moved light years

away from that prior history. To read some of the Vatican texts, statements of the pope, statements of the cardinals, individual bishops, addresses by Archbishop Weakland, this is not an unusual thing for him. He speaks before many audiences around the country and is loved and respected for his point of view. There is a great receptivity. But I guess I have two things to say. As I said earlier, I think the fact that Christians and Jews are meeting literally in every major city in the United States [55:00] today, and in Europe, in Paris, and Marseille, and Rome, and Milan. There are Jewish-Christian dialogue groups literally all over the world. There's one in Israel, which is really quite remarkable and they're trying to bring Muslims into the dialogue (inaudible), so I think that network of human relationships where people come to know each other as human beings with their hopes and their fears and respond to each other with care and compassion when they need each other, I think that's a very significant achievement. At the same time I must say that I think as Archbishop Weakland has said earlier, there is a logical diversity in each community. [56:00] We have people in the Jewish community, and liberal branches, conservative, reform and constructionists who are deeply committed to dialogue with Christians, who really welcome so much that is going on. We have some people in our more traditional parts of the community, although I must say there

are some liberal persons who mistrust certainly the generation of Jewish survivors that Archbishop Weakland referred to, are filled with distrust as to what all of these loving gestures mean now. Because they lived through a period of time where some of them were saved by Christians, but the overwhelming majority of them were handed over to the Nazis by Christians. [57:00] And that left such deep scars, and I'm distrusted in parts of that community. They don't know what I'm up to and they think that I am somehow not being sensitive enough to their traumas at the Holocaust and I try to deal with it. I think that's an extremely important issue. So and finally I would make this point, while I think I share your auspicious hope for movement forward, it is important to recognize that from the point of view of the history of ideas, the dynamics, the mechanism, of ideas, certainly in Western civilization, as an important study by [Stuart Hughes?] declares, "Ideas always begin in the minds of a few people who think great and important thoughts." That's what happened at Vatican Council II, it happened with [58:00] Pope John Paul XXIII, and those around him, Cardinal Beya, but then it takes a period of time for those ideas, in a sense, to percolate down to other levels of society and culture. And that cannot happen overnight. So that goes through high culture, middle ground culture, and then in the sense, lower ground culture. To use somebody else's term because I would never say

that. So the point is one has to expect there's need for certain urgency and constantly keeping it moving forward, but also to recognize that there's not going to be instant redemption. It's going to take time. But given what has happened in the past 50 years, I think it's remarkable and beyond that I really think it's the inspiration and the work of the Lord in our midst.

**Rembert Weakland:**

(inaudible) bring something up about this and ask Marc a question about it. [59:00] We're all worried about the vestiges of anti-Semitism in the Eastern bloc. The dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, about a year and a half ago, I was amazed at the kind of things still being taught. And so I wonder if it's not important at the moment not just to go through all the catechesis and the textbooks and the seminary things in the United States, but if somehow or another we shouldn't also work together with regard to what's being taught in the Russian seminaries. I felt that the professors from Zborisk were far advanced -- or were far behind, the rest while the professors from Leningrad, now from St. Petersburg, (inaudible) were far ahead. But most of what was happening there was the kind of theology we would (inaudible) in the 1930s. Does the Jewish community have any prospects or any possibility of

opening up that whole [01:00:00] area and the seminaries  
(inaudible)?

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Yes, it's a source of considerable concern to us. In the late 1970s, together with Dr. Bishop [Yakova?], whom you referred to -- he's a very dear friend and in many ways a very great man, and literally almost single-handedly helped establish the Greek Orthodox Church as one of the major churches in America -- we organized together a Greek Orthodox-Jewish dialogue, which a lot of people in both communities approached with some suspicion. It turned out to have been an incredible love affair when scholars began sharing ideas, but also acknowledged the difficulties you referred to. Liturgy and homilies and that sort of thing, textbooks. We produced a book together which Yakova and I co-edited. The whole world [01:01:00] of Russian Orthodox and Eastern Europe are of very great concern to us. And I must say one of the important encouragements for us is that people in the Holy City understand that concern, share it with us, and are working together with us to cope with it. Because there are also very great concerns that --

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