

TR-1556 Transcription

Speaking on religious education in the future tense. undated.

Announcer:

As you are seated, we can go on with the rest of our religious service. As Barney told you, we now have our homilist with us. And I think it's very odd that we were just singing "Where the Rainbow Ends." I'd like to tell you that if you're listening to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, it really should be "Where the Rainbow Begins." (applause) (pause)

Marc Tanenbaum:

[1:00] What an act to follow. I thank God that Ray [Smoliver?] is not the cantor in my synagogue. (laughter) I think a Sabbath morning service like that, week after week, as beautiful as it was this evening would probably stone a rabbi to death. There is a sign -- (sound of fumbling with microphone) that also must be a sign (laughter). There is a sign over a Quaker meeting room in Vermont, I am told, that says, "No one is allowed to speak unless he or she can improve on silence." [02:00] I have something of that sense of dread about wanting to speak after what, in effect, happened here tonight, which, in many ways said far more eloquently -- was experienced far more eloquently, what I

should like to address myself to this evening. There's almost a sense I had for a moment, as we were watching all the multi-media offer a hermeneutical commentary on the biblical text of creation, I began to feel like the doctor who had just come back from China and had witnessed his first exposure to acupuncture. And when he landed in this country and was asked for his opinion, he replied, "I have seen the past, and it works."

[03:00] I must begin with something of an apology, and I think perhaps the best way for me to state something about my orientation, and almost diffidence in addressing as auspicious an audience as this is here, this evening of religious educators, is to tell you a story that my friend, Fulton Sheen, likes to tell, and somehow always seems to tell it when I'm around. He told this story not too long ago in this city, when we shared a platform together at a conference, of how, one evening, he came to Philadelphia in order to give a lecture at the Town Hall. And as he came out of the hotel, on his way to his appointment, [04:00] he found that he was getting lost. And so he turned to some of the children who were playing in the streets of Philadelphia, and he asked them, "Can you tell me the way to Town Hall?" And so the children told him, very clearly,

very explicitly. And then one of the kids turned to Archbishop Sheen and said, "Say, Father, what are you going to be doing there?" And good archbishop responded and said, "I'm going to deliver a lecture." And the kid said, "On what?" And Sheen responded, "On how to get to heaven." And the kid said, "To heaven? You don't even know how to get to town hall!" (laughter)

I have a certain diffidence in wanting to address myself to the subject, which our chairman Barney [Cafin?] had asked me to talk about, namely that of [05:00] religious education in the future tense. Because in the first instance, I am not a professional religious educator, at least not for the past 10 years or so. And so that doesn't exactly qualify me to have extraordinary and widespread credibility with you this evening. And to talk about the future tense, in a sense, involves prophecy. And a very long time ago, in the Jewish parochial school that I attended as a child in Baltimore, it was constantly dunned in my ear that only fools, women, and addlepatated people engage in prophecy, since the close of prophecy with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. So I have a feeling that either I should abandon the subject matter, or else begin

with such qualification that [06:00] you will endure me during the course of the next few moments of my remarks.

Let me say that, at the outset, to talk about religious education in the future tense presupposes that we are interested in not just academic education alone, but in that broader religious formation that involves the total growth direction of a person's life. Given the widely held and valid assumption that such formation should prepare young people for life, it goes without saying that they, and all of us, need to be made aware of the major developments that are strong probabilities or even virtual certainties in the emerging world order. The literature on [07:00] futurology has become little short of staggering. And out of that welter of documentation, I choose two texts, written by incisive minds that set the stage, I believe, for an effort to comprehend the nature of the changes which encompass us, as well as to probe their far-reaching implications for religious education.

The first text is from a study entitled "Between Two Ages," by Professor [Z. Brzynsky?] of Columbia University, who is also head of their Institute of Russian Studies. Professor

Brzynsky, who is a political economist, writes the following:

The paradox of our time is that humanity is becoming simultaneously more unified and more fragmented. That is the principle thrust of contemporary change. [08:00] Time and space have become so compressed that global politics manifest the tendency toward larger, more interwoven forms of cooperation, as well as towards the dissolution of established and ideological loyalties. Humanity is becoming more integral and intimate, even as the differences in the condition of the separate societies are widening. And under these circumstances, proximity, instead of promoting unity, give rise to tension, prompted by a new sense of global congestion.

The second text is from "The Abstract Society," by the Dutch theologian and social scientist, Anton Zijderveld, who writes the following:

The structure of modern society have grown increasingly pluralistic and independent of man. [09:00] Through an ever-enlarging process of differentiation, modern society acquired a rather autonomous and abstract nature, confronting the individual with strong, but strange forms of control. It demands the attitudes of obedient functionaries from its inhabitants, who experience its control as an unfamiliar kind of authority. That means societal control is no longer characterized by a family-like authority, but dominated by bureaucratic neutrality and unresponsiveness. The individual often seems to be doomed to endure this situation passively, since the structures of society vanish in abstract air, if he tries to grasp their very

forces of control. No wonder that many seek refuge in one or another form of retreat.

And, Zijderveld adds: [10:00]

Modern society has become abstract in the experience and consciousness of man." Modern man, that is, does not live society. He faces it as an often strange phenomenon. This society has lost more and more of its reality and meaning, and seems to be hardly able to function as the holder of human freedom. And as a result, many modern men are turning away from the institutions of society and are searching for meaning, reality, and freedom elsewhere. These three coordinates of human existence have become the scarce values of a continuous existential demand.

These two authors reinforce a shared conviction about what is the paradoxical and contradictory predicament in which contemporary person finds himself or herself [11:00] today. The planetization of the human family, through electronics, information, instant mobility, and satellite communications has made mandatory that everybody adjust to the vast global environment, as if it were a global city. And at the same time, that globalization of the human consciousness has led to the undermining of loyalties and dependencies on the more limited local loyalties, such as the nation-state. The effects of that are to be seen especially among our young people, who feel a weakened sense of national patriotism, have little emotional fervor about our national flags, and

other national sancta and rituals, while feeling very much at home roaming about Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, as if they were born as natural citizens of the world. [12:00] To many of them, the global city is already a dominant fact of contemporary life.

The human situation is complicated by the fact, however, that those of us who live in the advanced western societies, based on scientific and technological foundations, confront bureaucracies and vast organizations as the crucial and all-pervasive structures, through which we sustain all the material conditions of our existence. And as Zijderveld rightly indicates, the dominance of these bureaucracies in our lives has resulted in a profound identity crisis. By and large, we do not dominate these structures. We do not control them, or direct them completely. Rather, they control us. And we are often the object of their manipulation. [13:00] We have very limited roles in the decision-making in these vast systems. Our functions are generally partial, fragmentary, frequently frustrating, leaving most of us with a little sense of mastery or control or direction over this large segment of our lives.

In the pursuit of personal meaning and a desire for wholeness, for clarity about one's identity, it is no accident that there has emerged in recent years such a spontaneous growth of youth communes, and encounter, and human potential movements. I don't think any one of you who has visited New York City, for example, in the recent past can help but be impressed by this reality among the lives of our young people, as you walk on the corners of Lexington avenue and 59<sup>th</sup> street before Bloomingdale's department store, [14:00] or Alexander's, and see literally dozens of young people standing on the corners, hawking their wares. Belts that they have made themselves, jewelry that they have made themselves, clothing that they have made themselves. There is a new kind of artisanship among young people, who, in reaction against the vast anonymity and abstract character of living in that bureaucratic society, have moved impulsively to create those products of their own hands, which they stamp with their own personalities, and where they feel they have a sense of control over that which they produce, for the sake of their own livelihood.

Indeed, on another level, this search for identity is also reflected in the growth of ethnic group self-assertion, and



the growing support of denominationalism, rather than inter-denominationalism, especially on the local community level; [15:00] inter-denominationalism and ecumenical headquarters being found increasingly abstract and distant, as [Koku?] tragically has learned. It is also a factor in the movement of peoplehood among the black community.

[Ladasa?] among the Spanish-speaking groups, and the mystique of peoplehood among the Jewish community. There is evidently a vast yearning for human-sized communities, in which the individual can relate to another person on a face-to-face basis, in an environment of caring, mutual confirmation, and shared concern.

Now, if their comments of analysis about our situation are reasonably accurate, although sketchy, what then are some of its implications for religious education for today and tomorrow? I suggest that the following four issues at least are deserving of our [16:00] priority attention.

First, the emerging transformation of the planet into a global city increasingly makes it mandatory that we establish some living connections for ourselves and for our students, between our theologies and our bodies of religious doctrine and teaching, and the realities of the

emerging unity of the human family, as well as for its pluralism. Never before in human history, in my judgment, have Judaism and Christianity had an opportunity such as the present one to translate their biblical theologies of creation and the unity of mankind under the fatherhood of God into actual living experience. I find myself frequently disturbed as I see religious leadership talking about being tired, feeling a sense of the frustration about being [17:00] unable to make a difference in the life of people. I know of no moment in the history of either Judaism or Christianity, in which the possibilities of that which we have taught and taken for granted as [can't?] has the possibility of energizing the whole human situation as they have today. The very conceptualization of the creation of the human family, of the unity of mankind, which has been the bedrock of our traditions across millennia, now stands not as a metaphor or figure of speech, but stands as potentiality to actuality. Indeed, one might divert for a moment to say that as one looks out upon the human situation today, and sees the relationship of Western Judeo-Christian tradition in relationship to the third-world community, the judgment that one finds a great many social analysts making, decade after decade, that we live in a post-Judeo-Christian civilization, [18:00] a post-

Western civilization, a post-Modern era to be literally false on the face of it.

Because if one penetrates beneath the slogans, which have become so commonplace and paralyzing in their negativism, penetrates beneath the slogans to the reality, which animates Judaism and Christianity today, one comes to a recognition of the fact that the science and technology, even with their ambivalences, with those positive aspects of science and technology, which have brought, indeed, widespread blessing in terms of overcoming poverty and production of goods and housing and shelter for so many millions of people, that western science and technology has taken place uniquely in the Western Judeo-Christian worldview. Because it was the biblical tradition that made possible the de-[divinization?] of nature, [19:00] that brought nature available to man. For as we have said in the biblical story, for man to master it, and to conquer it for human purposes. It ceased to make nature as it was in the pre-monotheistic period. Nature filled with magical divinities which man was not able to touch, but was victimized by it. Man became an agent, able to use nature for human purposes. It was the biblical tradition that gave man a sense of the chaos of history. That history existed

in its messianic possibilities to be shaped, directed, guided for human purposes, ultimately leading to the kingdom of God.

Those worldviews became the preconditions of the developments of science and technology in the Western world. And as we talk today, especially the progressive avant-garde of our religious communities, who speak of the third world as the [20:00] wave of the future, one cannot take that into account without saying, fundamentally, that the third world exists in a pre-Judeo-Christian condition. A world which has been dominated by cyclical worldviews will not be able to mediate the benefits of science and technology for the benefits of all of all of its people. A world which sees history as an endless cycle, turning forever on itself, has led to passivism, quietism, indifference to pain, indifference to poverty, even though it has preserved great spiritual richness and [inwardness?] in much of the oriental religious traditions. But increasingly today, as the leadership of the third world has come to a recognition that if it is to break out of the endless cycles of poverty, illiteracy and disease for its people, it will find it necessary to find some way to mediate the science and technology [21:00] of the Western

world, and in the process of doing that, it will have to radically reconceptualize the basic categories of those traditions, with regard to creation and nature and history.

And therefore it is no accident today, my friends, that there are now, in universities and theological seminaries on the west coasts, Hindu and Buddhists, theologians, historians, who are studying with Western scholars to develop a new philosophy of history and a theology of history that will enable them to work out some kind of accommodation that will provide the intellectual and theological substructure for the mediation of the positive aspects of science and technology for the welfare of the people in that part of the world.

And so we stand, in many ways, at a pre-Judeo-Christian possibilities, in terms of mediating the insights and the wealth of tradition of both Judaism and Christianity [22:00] to the rest of the human family. But that is to say, for us, one of the most fundamental challenges, as to the modalities by which we will be introducing science and technology in a cooperative way to the third world nations of the earth. And here I should like to come in a moment to the whole question of whether it is necessary for Western

mankind to repeat the sins and the ravages and the vandalisms of the imperialisms of the past in the process of mediating that. At the same time that we acknowledge the power of the ideas and the values and the attitudes toward nature and history that adhere in the Western Judeo-Christian tradition as it confronts a growing unity of mankind -- at the same time, we must confess that we are far from adequately prepared, either theologically or humanly, [23:00] to help build a united human community that respects diversity and difference as a permanent good, quite possibly as a god-given good.

To the development of such a theology of human unity and pluralism, I would hope that Judaism, in dialogue with Christianity, and Islam and other world religions, would make a special and distinctive contribution. The seeds for such a theology of creation and of pluralism are fertile and such extensive Judaic teachings that hold that all men are *bnei Adam* -- all men are sons of Adam, who trace their origins back to a common father, and therefore can claim no superiority over one another. It is a basic Jewish doctrine that all who observe the seven principles of moral behavior are regarded as the sons of Noah, who are held to be God-fearers, [*yirei?*] *Adonai*, and are set on a par with Jews

[24:00] and a scheme of salvation. That is to say, those who are opposed and prohibit idol-worship, who are opposed to blasphemy, unchastity, the shedding of blood, robbery, the eating of flesh from living animals, and who participate in the positive commandment of setting up courts of justice. All who observe that in the human family are regarded as the sons of Noah. The midrash declares in Genesis Rabbah, commenting on the verse that the pure of heart are God's friends, that "God will wipe away the tears from off all faces." And this means the faces of non-Jews as well as Jews. The charge to Abraham that, "I will make thee a great nation. In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed," is a recognition of the responsibility of the patriarch and his seed, both according to the spirit and according to the flesh. Their responsibility for the welfare of all the nations of the earth.

The prayer of King Solomon, [25:00] in I Kings 8:41, at the time of the dedication of the temple is a paradigmatic statement of the pluralistic concept which recognizes the claims of the truth and value of non-Israelite forms of worship and cult. Moreover, concerning a stranger, Solomon prayed, "Concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy Name's

sake, hear Thou in heaven, Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for, that all the people of the earth may know Thy Name, to reverence Thee as do Thy people Israel." Judaism, therefore believes in the conversion of mankind to the God of Israel, but not necessarily to the cult of Israel.

Thus, the central issue of teaching about the unity of mankind raises the fundamental pedagogical problem: how to teach [26:00] commitment and loyalty on the part of our youth and adults to one's own faith, and at the same time recognize, respect, and even reverence the claims to truth and value of religious traditions outside our own. And such an approach involves a basic abandonment of traditions of triumphalism and imperialism; of mutual negation, which mark distinctively the relationships between Jews and Christians across two millennia; and a reconceptualization of mission and witness; and bringing the truths of ethical monotheism to the human family.

This is not to call into question the right of conscience, and the right of Christians and others to convert to carry out the grand commission in the world. But one would hope that in the midst of a nation in which there are so many



unbelievers -- people who are untouched by the grace of faith, that this approach of conversion [27:00] would be addressed to those, rather than to those who already are deeply committed and rooted in the faith that is the source of their identity, and of their messianic promise for the future.

In the wake of current revivalist and evangelical movements, most especially the pronounced efforts of Key '73 that will be launched under the slogan of "Calling the confident to Christ in '73." The need for articulating and asserting forthrightly this ecumenical, pluralistic vision of building community, without compromise of the several identities of the various faith traditions, becomes more than an academic undertaking. And that need for a theology of pluralism and religious co-existence becomes especially urgent on college and university campuses, as well as on high school grounds, as the Campus Crusades for Christ, the Intervarsity Fellowship, and the Jews for Jesus sects, [28:00] have emerged frequently as psychologically coercive pressure groups disturbing the privacy of vulnerable and often isolated young people, as well as disrupting the academic process in the classrooms.

Recently as a week ago, a professor at Duke University, who teaches in the Department of Religion, Professor of Judaic Studies, visited with me, to indicate how perplexing the problem of this kind of evangelical fervor, without any sense of limit or proportion or regard for the integrity of the traditions of others, have begun to become troublesome in his own situation at that university. During the course of his regular weekly schedules to his students, suddenly there developed in every session, someone from one of the evangelical movements or from the Jews for Jesus movement, who insisted after the professor completed his lecture, on having equal time to give his [29:00] evangelical version of the truth, in order that the class be exposed to another point of view. And it simply became a disruptive enterprise for that academic undertaking.

This revival of emotional fervor and the evangelistic resurgence is understandable, as a response to the rationalism, often abstract and [arrogant intellectualism?] about much of Western religious experience since the Enlightenment. It is also, in many ways, a response to future-shock, to transience, to the phenomenal novelty and the often unbearable rapid pace of change, which uproots and disorients so many people today. But it also contains

the recovery of religious dimensions of authentic and meaningful human existence. And also, especially among many of the young, who are engaged in aspects of some of the religious revival movements, it has led to [30:00] our recovery of, rediscovery of nature, more honest sexual mores, an emphasis on living in the present, and on freedom from social projects and ambition.

But the swing of the pendulum to unreason, and to apocalypticism, and even to the occult and the satanic in the revivalistic cults frequently renders the religious medicine worse than the element that it is designed to cure. As in the case of the pietistic, romantic, privatistic religious moves that dominated the religious and cultural experience of Germany at the close of the Weimar period, and in the early Nazi experience, such tendencies invariably provide the ground for evasion of social responsibility for religious leaders, their followers, and institutions. "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and unto God that which is God's," often can become [31:00] an invitation to demagogues, totalitarians, and political opportunists to exploit the religious pietistic movements as support for their anti-human politics. There is too much of this pietistic religion in

the air of America today, and my judgment, at this moment of history, and it urgently requires the reassertion of the prophetic, this worldly orientation, and demands of the biblically committed people who recognize that the covenant requires concern and involvement in the affairs of this world, and not a cop-out for the afterlife.

We need to remind ourselves that the biblical tradition rests crucially on two distinctive myths, that of the Exodus, and that of Sinai. The Exodus instructs us that the intervention of the God of Israel was involved in the actual, physical liberation from slavery. And liberation from material oppression and persecution [32:00] was a fundamental precondition to spiritual liberation. Without the liberation of Passover, there could be no Pentecost of the spirit. Thus, there can be no evasion of the obligation to be a partner with God in bringing about liberation from physical oppression wherever it occurs. To evade that obligation is to apostasize from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The covenant at Sinai instructs us that Israel became a theophoric people, a kingdom of priests in a holy nation, by virtue of its collective acceptance to become a

covenanted community, charged with a task of redemption in the world. By living as a model society, seeking to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, it would engage in the messianic journey leading to the kingdom of God. The affirmations and the accents of the covenanted traditions are clear and unambiguous. [33:00] A faithful people has an obligation made with God to shape the events of history, not to evade or transcend them. To build a genuinely humane society that reflects the divine presence in all of its relationships between man and his neighbor. To instruct generations of that way of life, and to act out those values in the daily life of our people is the highest calling of religious education today.

Second, the bureaucratization of urban industrial societies, has created a critical need for bringing into being small communities on a human scale, in which the individual can realize his or her self-hood, personal meaning, and freedom. Given the traditional edifice complex of our large urban and suburban churches and synagogues, and the factory-sized models of our religious schools and general schools, do we have the imagination, the will, [34:00] as well as enough time, to restructure and retool our institutions in order to meet these genuine human and

spiritual needs of our people? Enough models of task forces and communal study, worship and action groups exist to demonstrate that such reordering of structures is possible. When leadership is serious about being responsive to the signs of the times. The continued failure to be responsive on a far greater scale that is commensurate with the obvious need is going to lead inevitably to a condition where the authentic religious institutions and leadership will be swamped by a growing wave of parareligious, revivalistic and evangelistic movements, a number of which do not offer promising in-depth religious alternatives. These apocalyptic Salvationist sects will become effective only because the historic communions persist into remaining ineffective spiritually, in terms of the need for authentic human community, [35:00] where persons realize their full identity and individuality in relationship with one another.

Clearly, there is a critical need for the recovery of the sacred in the historic traditions. As Mircea Eliade has written, "The sacred is an element in the structure of consciousness, not a stage in the history of consciousness." A meaningful world, and man, cannot live in chaos, is the result of a dialectical process which may

be called a manifestation of the sacred. Human life becomes meaningful by imitating paradigmatic models. The imitation of the models constitutes one of the primary characteristics of religious life; a structural characteristic, which is indifferent to culture and epoch. *Imitatio Dei*, as a norm and guideline of human existence was never interrupted. Living as a human being is in itself a religious act. [36:00] Eating, sexual life, and work have a sacramental value. In other words, to be, or rather to become a man or a person means to be religious. The experience of the sacred, by disclosing being, meaning and truth in an unknown, chaotic and fearful world prepared the way for systematic thought.

We know today that the total man, unlike much that was taught during the heyday of secular theology, that the total man is never completely desacralized. And one even doubts that this is possible. Secularization is highly successful at the level of conscious life. Old theological ideas, dogmas, beliefs, rituals, institutions, are progressively expunged of meaning. But no living, normal person can be reduced to his conscious, rational activity. For modern man [37:00] still dreams, falls in love, listens to music, goes to the theater, views films, reads books. In

short, lives not only in a historical and natural world, but also in an existential private world, and in an imaginary universe. It is primarily the phenomenologist of religion who is capable of recognizing and deciphering the religious structures and meanings of these private worlds or imaginary universes.

The third issue that I believe confronts religious education today is the surge in biomedical research and genetic manipulation, which have placed medicine and science on the threshold of creating life in test tubes, of altering sex, of determining mental and physical characteristics of future generations [38:00] of mankind. These developments pose fundamental moral and spiritual issues. The whole belief system that man is created in the image of God is now actually threatened by the possibility of man being created in the image of man.

As Professor Heschel has written in his essay of the sacred image of man:

Something in the world that the Bible regards as a symbol of God is not a temple or a tree, not a statue nor a star. The one symbol of God is man, every man. God himself created man in his image. Human life is holy, holier even than the scrolls



of the Torah. Reverence for God is shown in our reverence for man. Treat yourself as a symbol of God. What is necessary is not have a symbol, but to be a symbol.

And so, on what [39:00] theological and moral basis are such choices to be made today in the worlds of biomedical research and genetic manipulation? By what authority and by what criteria of choice? Religion traditionally has been the custodian of moral and spiritual values, upholding the sacred dignity of the human person as an end in himself. And yet, religious thinkers and leaders, as well as philosophers, literary men, historians, and other humanists have contributed relatively little to this whole enterprise that affects the very future of the human personality and human existence, presumably because they are not equipped with the necessary specialized knowledge and techniques.

One of the most important contributions that religious educators and thinkers could make to education for the future is a basic study of the problems of moral and human values and value judgments. Judgments that students are not trained to make [40:00] in the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences; whose approved methodologies do not lend themselves to such purposes, but rather support the common illusion that true science is value-free. A true

dialogue between religious thinkers and scientists would then be possible and would be long overdue.

Fourth, in view of the compulsive drive to acquire systematically ever more knowledge, and with more power, the question is, what will man do, or ought he to do with his new powers? Is all the change really necessary? Is it desirable? If so, by what standards? The need of being flexible, adaptable, and resourceful is greater for this generation than for any before them. Religious education should help make them so immediately, through a fuller awareness of their fast-changing world, [41:00] and then by developing their powers of choice. There is need to concentrate on efforts to give the young a better idea of what civilized life has meant, and can mean, at its best. In religious language, perhaps, the meaning of the kingdom of God. So that they might help to shape a future in which people would not be condemned to possible unnatural living conditions. One needs only to read about the people of the future, who will be consigned to living in submarine communities or spaceships into the indefinite future. These themes, which futurologists glibly propose, virtually without any critique from any source of moral or ethical value choices.

In the face of the environmental or biological crisis, aggravated by the population explosion, [42:00] many young people have reacted with an understandable pessimism about the future. A hopeful spirit is needed, if there is to be any hope for the future. And here, the messianic impulses and traditions of both Judaism and Christianity may well gain a new lease on life. As people look for the possibilities of hope beyond what is becoming an increasingly absurd world, blueprinted in rooms and laboratories over which the average man has no control and no influence.

Religious education, which concerns the effective communication of attitudes, and commitments about how life can be lived to the fullest, should seek increasingly to go beyond intellectual talk to levels of feeling and choice; of what really counts in relationship to such significant problems of self, and neighbor, and the kind of society and world in which we wish to live. People learn [43:00] in a significant way only what interests them as having some direct bearing on their lives. What often passes for learning is the glib parroting of information and opinion that is unconnected with the vital center of the searching

self. When people can link their inner problematic, their deepest inner concerns with classroom questions, they stand on the threshold of what Gene Bianchi has called, "of that interested yes and no [saying?]" that religion calls conversion. Metanoia.

If religious education wants to touch the deeper dimensions of human becoming, teachers and students must delve in more personal and self-reflective ways into the core questions of existence. There, we confront the mystery of existence, of the marvel of the earth, of mankind itself; calling to new modes of self-hood with integrity, [44:00] and of fellowship with compassion.

And within this limited terrestrial enterprise, we sometimes glimpse and feel the all-embracing mystery, and the meaning of human existence itself. Thank you.

(applause)

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