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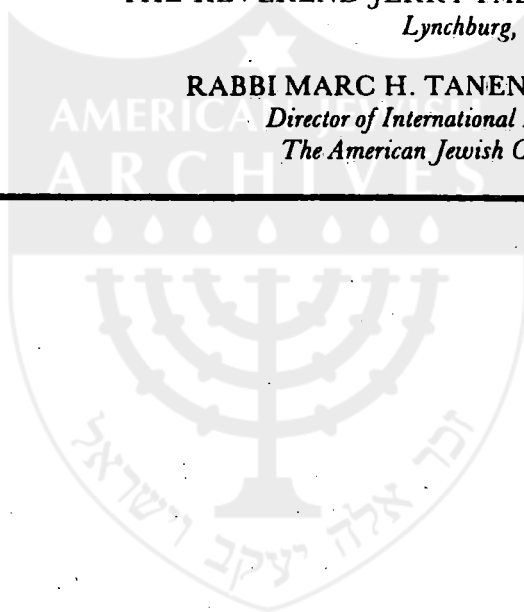
THE REVEREND JERRY FALWELL

Lynchburg, Virginia

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Jewish-Christian Relations

THE REVEREND JERRY FALWELL

Lynchburg, Virginia

I am honored to be here, and I mean that. Having grown up in Virginia with a very provincial attitude and lifestyle, speaking here before hundreds of rabbis, who in my estimation are such a vital part of the American fabric, certainly is an honor for me. I want to thank each of you for allowing me to come. We may not agree on every issue, but I sincerely love you, and I feel privileged to be here in your midst. I hope I can share a few things tonight that perhaps will help us better understand who we are and where we fit—not just into the present but into the future of both our communities.

I returned last week from our fifteenth tour of Israel. We carried a group of some 830 pilgrims through the land. We go each year and stay in Jerusalem for most of the tour, except for our visit into Galilee. We employ Israeli guides. We travel on Israeli buses. We bring members of the Israeli government, if and when they can come, to address our group, as happened during this last experience. The purpose is to bring pastors, ministers, and religious leaders from our community to the land of the Bible, to Israel, to meet the people as well as the land and to come back truly dedicated to the Zionist commitment that is in our breast.

That did happen again this year. We were delighted to have Mr. Moshe Arens speaking to us. We were privileged to meet with the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Prime Minister, and to have Mr. Sharon speak to our group. We were pleased to have Harry Hurovitz participate in a national live satellite show from Jerusalem, which covered the nation on the final Sunday night of our tour, to discuss what is affecting Israel today.

Three years ago Merrill Simon called me to ask permission to trail me all over the country for two years and, in a question and answer format, to write a book on what Evangelical Christians really are up to, what they believe, and the relationship that seems to be developing between conservative Christians and the Jewish community. I'll admit I was somewhat dubious. I was aware of the many questions we would be asked—unavoidable, probing questions, and questions that demanded offensive answers. We agreed to that commitment, and in fact for about two years Merrill would fly into this city and that city to meet with us. We spent scores of hours on airplanes, in terminals, in motel rooms, answering questions to go in that book.

The book was to set the record straight and to determine the stance of today's conservative Christian public, not just toward the State of Israel but toward Judaism and toward contemporary issues, and to determine if any ulterior motives in fact do exist. I was glad when the book was finished. It was hard work. But I tried to do several things in answering the questions in the book.

We addressed Israel, Judaism, and contemporary issues from our own biblical and cultural perspective as honestly as I knew how for the permanent record. I think I shared our perspective, and now for the first time there is a record of reference, perhaps for better understanding.

In the past twenty years there has been developing in this country a phenomenon I call a reversal of roles in the conservative and the liberal church. When I speak of the conservative church, I am not speaking of Baptists *per se*. I am speaking of those millions of American Christians who believe the Bible is the Word of God, Old and New Testament, who believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who profess a New Birth experience in relationship to God through Christ and His gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection—as opposed to the liberal branch of Christendom which also pledges an allegiance to Christ but does not, for example, believe in the infallibility and the authority of the Word of God, as we do, nor take a stand on biblical issues, as we do in the conservative church. I would probably say they are personified mostly by the World Council of Churches and its American counterpart, the National Council of Churches.

From my point of view, in the past twenty years we have watched the conservative church in this country come from a time when it was anything but committed to Zionism and the Jewish people, toward a commitment to the Abrahamic covenant, toward a humanitarian commitment to the State of Israel, an historical commitment, and in some other areas, commitments that are very much American centered. I watched that happening while simultaneously watching liberal Christians in this country move more toward the PLO point of view and away from a commitment to the State of Israel and to Jewish people and their interest.

I say a "phenomenon" because it is rather new. Some ten years ago, we in conservative Christian circles began meeting about how we might express our commitment to Israel. We had been going to Israel for years, taking pilgrimages, but how could we express our commitment? We began speaking publicly. We began inquiring with various lobbying groups interested in the State of Israel. We began offering our talents and what head count we might have for purposes of political persuasion.

But I suppose that only in the last five years has a dialogue been developing between the Jewish community and the Christian community, bringing about things like my speaking here tonight. If I were to accept all the invitations to speak in synagogues that I receive now, I wouldn't have time to speak in the churches. I go as often as I can. I speak in as many places as I am able, whether Reform or Orthodox or Conservative. This is my first time with you, but I know many of you as individuals. I believe that any meaningful and continuing relationships must be based on several premises.

The first premise is total honesty. That is what Merrill's book is all about. It is not an attempt to sidestep issues or compromise our position. What you see in *Jerry Falwell and the Jews* is what I preach in Thomas Road Baptist Church. None of that has been said in a corner; it has been said publicly, openly, and permanently.

Second, any continuing relationship, and I believe this is a continuing one, must be based upon patience. I do not believe for one moment that the Jewish community is monolithic, anymore than the Christian community is. Nor do I expect Jewish people to wrap their arms *en masse* around conservative Christian leaders and lay people. We have not come to this point suddenly, and I rather suspect that our children will really know the wholesomeness of this relationship more so than we. I am here only to tell you that I and thousands of others have made a commitment, and no amount of malignancy from inside your camp or ours is going to break that commitment. It is not based upon ulterior motives; it is not based upon the necessity of the Jewish gathering in Israel to set the stage for the second coming of our Messiah. I will just say in one statement that as I interpret the Scripture there is no such necessity. There is no requirement for Jewish occupation, or the building of a temple, or any other happening in Israel or anywhere else before we experience the second advent of our Messiah.

My commitment, like the commitment of most in the conservative Christian church in this country with whom I dialogue, is based upon, number one, a belief in the Abrahamic covenant—that God deals with nations in relation to how those nations deal with the apple of God's eye. We believe in the chosenness of the Jewish people. And we believe that what God told Abraham is as binding and as true today as when He said it 4,000 years ago: "I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee." Beyond that, my commitment is based upon a belief in the humanness and the human needs of not only the Jewish people in this country but also of the three and a half million in the State of Israel who, through great hardship and great deprivation, have moved into their land. Though

maligned by their European neighbors, totally misrepresented by the international media, looked upon as everything but human beings by many here in our own country, they have nevertheless survived everything that debased human nature could throw at them, and they survived as a strong and a permanent fixture upon this planet. It is the American way as well as the Christian way to help those who need help and those who sincerely deserve help.

I believe, and I feel that history supports this, that the land belongs to the Jewish people, and I further believe that Israel is the best if not the only true friend America has in that part of the world. Every tax dollar we spend in Israel is the best defense dollar we spend anywhere in the world, for any purpose. I do not look on our grants and loans to Israel as charity. I don't look on them as foreign aid. I look on our monies spent in Israel as an investment in our well-being, in our economic and political interests, and I say to those who disagree that if it were not for the Israeli presence, the Soviets would well now own the oil fields of the Middle East, and we would not be sitting here in an economy that is strong and flourishing, enjoying all the privileges made available to us. We as Americans actually owe a great deal more to Israel than Israel owes to us in dollars and cents. I therefore stand here as one who is committed to Israel, for those and many other reasons, and I can say to you that that is where our Christian brothers and sisters stand in the main.

A number of things are needed. As I said, number one is honesty. We need not think we are going to change each other. I haven't come here to convert you. And I assure you, you are not going to convert me. I have come here to tell you that I am with you. I am for you, whether you want me to be or not. And further, I am here to tell you that I didn't come here to receive an offering. I don't think I am going to get an honorarium. It hasn't been mentioned yet. I came here at my own expense because I want to be here, and I hope that I can say what I am going to say now and have it come across with the spirit in which I mean it.

Neither of us has an overabundance of friends outside the United States. You and I happen to be well insulated in this country, with love and friendship and resources. But when we leave these borders, like it or not, you and I are in a very distinct minority, and our friendship, our need for loyalty to one another, has never been so accentuated as it is right now.

As we heard one of the rabbis say this evening regarding the faith required in the purchase of Israel bonds, I believe down the long haul there must be a willingness to express faith, and a willingness to exert patience, to determine if in fact this phenomenon is for real

and if it is permanent. If it is permanent and if some seventy million conservative Christians in this country can be marshaled together in a strong, unswerving block of support for Israel, for Jewish people everywhere and against anti-Semitism, it will have been worth everything the Jewish community expended.

If in fact it is for real, it will have been worth everything that we in the Christian community expend to achieve it because, I repeat, we need each other desperately, regardless of the advantages and the disadvantages in our relationships. I want to tell you I believe what is happening today is for real. We're here to extend the right hand of friendship, as we've been doing for a number of years, with no expectation of anything in return, only the willingness to continue the dialogue, to continue the efforts.

Recently, this past year as a matter of fact, I was asked by Congressman Lantos from California to appear before a subcommittee in the House, as the Jerusalem bill was being discussed. I was asked if I would bring an address to that group, and I did. I don't usually spend a number of hours preparing anything because I speak twenty-five times a week, traveling 8,000 miles a week, and I don't have time for a script. I get a few thoughts in my head and then fire away. I notice that's the way it has been done here tonight. As Flip Wilson would say, "The Devil made me do it." But I do want to read you something I did spend a few hours on, because it really expresses not only my commitment to the move of the embassy to Jerusalem, but also my heartbeat, and the heartbeat of the conservative Christian public in this country, a growing heartbeat toward Israel. So I just would like to read as I conclude my twenty minutes.

"One of the issues we have addressed from the outset of Moral Majority in 1979, and from the beginning of my ministry nearly twenty-eight years ago, is support for the nation of Israel, born in our lifetimes, and for the Jewish people everywhere who deserve a homeland where they may be, forever free from the scourge that nearly eliminated them from the face of the earth during World War II.

"The question before this Joint Hearing today, however, is not the support of Israel, though it is in a sense, but rather whether a sovereign nation has the right to declare its capital where it wishes and have that capital recognized by other sovereign nations. As all of you are aware, the United States recently granted full diplomatic recognition to the Vatican, a religious entity that despite its recognition still does not recognize Israel as a nation, much less Jerusalem as its capital. The political identification of the Vatican flows from its religious status. Jerusalem, on the other hand, is not revered by one religion but by three, and even by those who hold to a secular

faith. It has always been and is the historic capital of Israel. Even in our dispute with the British, the English government did not deny us the right to place our capital in Philadelphia or New York or Washington or anywhere else we pleased. This has been the historic right of all nations, whatever their political status, religious belief, or concept of freedom—to establish its capital wherever it wishes.

"The argument might be advanced, as it often is, that Jerusalem is a controversial city, and that some accommodation should be made for the dissension that so often surrounds it. What about the land held by the Soviet Union in violation of signed treaties at the end of World War II? Has the Soviet Union's violation of these and other treaties been sufficient for us to tell the Russians we will withdraw diplomatic recognition from them? Of course it has not. Have these treaty violations been enough for any President or State Department to suggest we should punish the Soviets by moving our embassy to Novosibirsk or Siberia instead of Moscow? They have not. This is a double standard, Mr. Chairman, which no other nation save Israel is expected to endure.

"We treat no other nation the way we treat Israel. President Reagan has just finished a trip to the People's Republic of China, a nation that is officially atheistic and hostile to everything we stand for and believe in, yet our embassy is in their proclaimed capital.

"Nicaragua recently had a revolution, and we are hardly favorable toward the regime that holds power by force and denies the elections they promised, yet our embassy is in Managua. Israel has treated Jerusalem, particularly regarding access to the holy places of the three religions, better than any others have or would.

"As a pastor, I am particularly appreciative of how the Israeli government, particularly the city administration of Jerusalem, led by Mayor Teddy Kollek, have meticulously maintained access for Jews, Christians, and Moslems. Even Israel's harshest critics cannot criticize her on this issue. Compare Israel's treatment of the holy places to Jordan's, when that nation maintained control over East Jerusalem. Jordan signed an agreement with Israel that it would let any Jew visit the Western Wall; it never lived up to that agreement. Jordan forbade any church to build a steeple higher than the Islamic minaret.

"Compare this with Israel's record, not only in Jerusalem but also its open bridges policy over the Jordan River, which allows Moslems and anyone else to cross into Israel and visit the holy places in Jerusalem, even if the country from which the person comes is at war with Israel. Israel is not obligated under international law, Mr.

Chairman, to provide access to citizens of countries at war with Israel, but she does it. Even the Vatican recognizes this policy.

"Listen to what Israel's Declaration of Independence states. 'The State of Israel will be based upon the principle of liberty, justice, and peace, as conceived by the prophets of Israel; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens without distinction of religion, race, or sex; will guarantee freedom of religions, conscience, educations, and cultures; and will safeguard the holy places of all religions.'

"Is there any nation in the Middle East that has made such a pledge or has carried it out as faithfully as Israel? I think not. Jerusalem is not only the capital of the nation of Israel, it is also the capital of the three great religions. Jerusalem is holy to Christians because of what Christ did there. Why did Jesus come to Jerusalem? Because he recognized it as the capital of his country. It is the same with Islam. Mohammed lived and worked all his life in Arabia, but Moslems believe that when he went to heaven he came first to Jerusalem because he recognized Jerusalem as the center of Judaism and Christianity and saw the validity of the claims of their prophets. Of course, to the Jews Jerusalem is the capital because it was declared so, thousands of years before Jesus and Mohammed, by God Himself.

"What, then, is the main stumbling block keeping the United States from doing what is morally correct, religiously justified, and politically correct? It seems to be the fear of what might happen given the threats of some who have an interest in keeping Israel destabilized and her borders unfixed. Should we really be fearful of such threats? I think not.

"President Harry Truman was advised by the State Department in 1948 not to recognize the newly independent nation. He was told that Arab nations would riot, that American embassies would be attacked and forced to close, and that America would be boycotted by the Arab states. Mr. Truman ignored the advice and did what was right. He recognized Israel, and the threats failed to produce the dire consequences that were predicted. I might mention that the United States does not recognize Berlin as the capital of East Germany but still maintains its embassy in Berlin. We sometimes treat our adversaries better than our friends.

"Israel is the only nation on earth denied the right to place its capital where it wishes. It is not right. It is not fair. Tel Aviv is no more the capital of Israel than Alexandria is the capital of Egypt. Tel Aviv is a modern creation and Jerusalem is an ancient heritage. Tel Aviv is the brainchild of man. Jerusalem is the heartthrob of God.

Moving our embassy from exile in Tel Aviv to its rightful home in Jerusalem would tell the world that our commitment to this single democracy in the Middle East is irrevocable, that regardless of economic or political conditions we stand behind Israel's right to exist free from outside predators, and that no surplus or shortage of oil, or any other reason, will allow us to sacrifice our friend on the altar of expediency.

"Do we think that we can promote reasonable behavior among those who have sworn to wipe Israel from the map, by allowing threats to determine American policy, even the location of our embassy? From whom should we expect reasonable behavior? From Libya? From Syria? From Iraq or Iran, the latter of which, we are told, was responsible for the killings of our marines in Lebanon? From the reasonable and rational PLO who massacred innocent women and children and civilians of all types, and who certainly are not going to kill fewer Israelis because we've kept our embassy in Tel Aviv? Israel is not asking for a favor, Mr. Chairman, it is asserting a right—the right to be treated as other nations, the right to have its capital recognized by all nations."

This is the heartbeat we have toward Jerusalem, toward Israel, toward the Jewish people, and we're pleased to be here tonight to express it to you.

The Future of Jewish-Christian Relations

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

Director of International Relations

The American Jewish Committee

A week ago Friday, I had the privilege of being part of a small group of American Jewish leaders, men and women, who had an audience with Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Palace in Vatican City.

I mention that because, first of all, in itself it was deeply moving and, I believe, in some ways an historic occasion. Once you have an opportunity to read the text of the official declarations that were exchanged between our leadership and the Pope regarding the present relationship between some 800 million Roman Catholics throughout the world whom he represents and the Jewish people, you will appreciate the significance of that development.

After the audience was over and we came out into the Hall of St. Peter's Basilica and said *Shalom Aleichem* to all the Swiss guards, one of the Bishops on the Vatican staff came over to me and said, "That was a wonderful audience. What do you do for an encore?" And I said, "I'm going to Miami Beach to share a platform with Reverend Jerry Falwell at the Rabbinical Assembly Convention. And he turned to me and he said, "Oh!"

Reverend Falwell indicated the new life that he has been going through in recent years in terms of the invitations that he has been receiving from synagogues and temples to come and make the kind of magnificent address that he has made this evening. I want him to know that he has great commiseration on my part because I am working the other side of the street.

I want to thank him tonight because had he not been invited by the Rabbinical Assembly, I would not have had a chance to meet so many Jews and rabbis all on one occasion.

I want to respond to Reverend Falwell's address in the spirit with which he has defined the terms for our conversation this evening. It is a spirit of integrity and honesty. I believe the greatest compliment that two people who really respect each other can pay to one another is to speak out of their hearts, heart to heart, with all the honesty they are capable of, whatever the pain, as part of the process of purification and of coming to a deeper mutual appreciation.

I began my outreach to Evangelical Christians in 1965 because, as I began traveling through the South, through Dallas, Houston, Phoenix, Atlanta, and Greensboro, I began to realize something

that the Reverend Falwell was suggesting here this evening. The ignorance, the illiteracy, the caricatures, the stereotypes that Jews, and not only Jews, but the vast majority of American Christians, Roman Catholic, mainline Protestants and others, have had about Evangelical Christians and Christianity literally began to verge on obscenity. The quality of the people I began to meet, the genuineness of their heart, their desire to know Jews and Israel and Judaism became very important for me personally as well as professionally.

And so I began in late 1965 to establish a relationship with Dr. Billy Graham, then with the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Jimmy Allen, and many others in that great church, and with Dr. Arnold Olson, the President of the Evangelical Free Church. I began to realize that the gap between our perceptions and realities is staggering, really quite incredible in the twentieth century, in an age of such massive instantaneous communication. We can bounce messages off satellites around the world, and we walk across the street from each other and do not know who we really are and what we are about.

One of the most heartening aspects of my nearly three decades of service in the area of seeking to overcome misunderstanding and promote mutual appreciation, mutual knowledge between Christians and Jews of all denominational groups, has been a recognition that there is in every religious community the potentiality of growth and development. That can take place provided there is an intention to want to overcome one's parochialism and isolationism. I think that the growth and relationship between millions of Evangelical Christians and the Jewish people has been one of the most significant developments in the transformation of the history of the United States since the end of World War II. I personally am grateful, first, that the Rabbinical Assembly has had the intelligence and the wisdom in its leadership to extend this invitation to Reverend Falwell, especially in light of events that have taken place during the last election. Presupposed in this invitation is a determination to uphold the fundamental principles of American democracy, the first of which is freedom of expression, and the second both a Jewish and a deeply democratic commitment to seeking knowledge and truth through open discussion and debate. We had something to do with that in the tradition of *kinat sophrim marbeh hokhmah*. "The competition of the scribes increases wisdom." I think this evening is a helpful move in the development of such a process of unlearning that which needs to be unlearned, and learning that which has to do with the real world in which we live today.

I want to acknowledge again, as I did once before to Jerry Falwell

when he did me the honor of visiting with me in 1980, that the Jewish community—whatever differences we may have on other issues that I want to talk about in a moment—does not take for granted the fact that there are millions of Evangelical Christians across the entire ideological spectrum, from Fundamentalists to mainline, even to some of the more liberal elements of the Evangelical community, who have maintained stalwart support in the advocacy of the security and well-being of the State of Israel and our brothers and sisters there. We have had some Jewish leaders on their own speak intemperately, sometimes more in anger than in wisdom about Evangelical-Jewish relations.

Let me share with you some impressions of the reality that Reverend Falwell speaks of tonight. I was invited to speak before the World Council of Churches in Vancouver at its Assembly, as the official Jewish representative, and I was there with a Muslim and a Hindu and Africans and Christians of the Western World. Sitting through that Assembly, I could not believe at times what was going on. The place was honeycombed with PLO people; it was also honeycombed with KGB agents following the Russian Orthodox Church delegates around. There are some good things that the World Council of Churches does in social justice, for refugees, on humanitarian issues, and they are to be honored for that constructive work. But, sitting through that Assembly, I could not believe that this was 1984 when that Assembly leapt to adopt resolutions condemning the United States for anything that we did to stand against Communist expansionism and totalitarianism and to uphold democratic countries. It couldn't bring itself to adopt a single resolution critical of the Soviet Union for its invasion of Afghanistan, or the oppression of human rights in Poland, or Cuban Angola. That is not the kind of world we want to see constructed for the future, for ourselves, for this great country, for our children.

And so, on many levels, in terms of the firm, profoundly Biblical grounded support of Israel, of the stands that he and Billy Graham and the others have been taking against anti-Semitism, for the support that they have given us in the advocacy of the human rights of Soviet Jews and other oppressed Jewish communities, we thank God for their stalwart support and solidarity with us.

But that is not why we are here this evening. If that had been the only level of relationship and the nature of the issues that have been between us, there would not have been this great concern about somehow wanting to establish dialogue with Reverend Falwell and Fundamentalist Christian and Moral Majority people and others. In that spirit of honesty, we need to deal with "the other realities" as well.

During the course of this last election, the American Jewish Committee took polls in the Jewish community every month to know how Jews feel about issues. If you had taken a poll in March and April last year, President Ronald Reagan would have received at least 50 to 55 percent, perhaps even 60 percent, of the Jewish vote. The Jewish community, and I think all of us would acknowledge this, was absolutely appalled that a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, the most powerful nation in the world, running on the Democratic ticket, could have at his side a Louis Farakhan, preaching the most vicious kind of Nazi-like anti-Semitism and that that could go on without any significant response. And in reaction to that I think the whole mood of the Jewish community was, indeed, "we know where we are with Ronald Reagan, we know where we are in terms of a strong defense of America, we know where we are in his strong support for Israel, strong support for Soviet Jewry and many other causes." That mood of the Jewish community was in fact preparing to give him the highest proportion of the Jewish vote of any Republican President in history.

And then a number of things began to take place. And this is what we have got to face in candor. We need urgently to see what our mutual perceptions of these issues are and how we can deal with them. If these are issues that are so fundamental and incapable of change and modification, or reinterpretation, then we have a different set of problems to deal with. Or we have problems of time lag, cultural lag, and perhaps even linguistic problems that can be dealt with in a constructive spirit to resolve them.

I want to mention four of them quickly. I want simply to identify them and then perhaps we can have a discussion about them.

There was a theme which began to emerge early on, even as far back as 1980, which began to take on the concrete form of an ideological formulation, a fundamental conception that began to emerge out of certain quarters of this alliance between Fundamentalist preachers and ultra-conservative politicians, an example of which is the following: An acknowledged born-again Christian, who I take it would identify himself with the religious political ideological stance that Reverend Falwell has come to embody for a great many millions of Americans, is an official of the United States Department of Education. He used American governmental funds to mail a speech to public school teachers and superintendents throughout the whole Middle West, charging that "Godlessness is now controlling every aspect of our society." He then asks how can these things be happening in America, "this land of freedom, *this Christian nation*. What has happened to our Christian system of values?" This government-

funded speech then added, "In the last few years Christians have woken to the desperate need of a truly Christian educational system for their young people. I am excited to see the growth of the Christian textbooks in the curriculum ministries."

As a graduate of a Jewish parochial school, I see absolutely nothing discontinuous, there is no dissidence for me in a Christian school system. But the notion that the American public school system which has been the meeting ground for the Americanization of generation upon generation of Americans—the ground of the pluralistic experiment of America—when that is seen as an avenue for that kind of proselytization of an exclusivistic ideology, it means that we have serious problems to contend with.

Beyond that, the U.S. Department of Education has also proposed regulations to restrict funds for the Magnet Schools assistance program for teaching "secular humanism." Similar restriction involving the prohibition of secular humanism has already been passed for education for the Economic Security Act. Nowhere is the term "secular humanism" defined. And I tell you that as I read through the literature, Thomas Jefferson, by that definition, or absence of definition, could have been defined certainly as a humanist, if not a secular humanist. Benjamin Franklin even had strong humanistic qualities about him.

The point is that there is a basic conception which is emerging, a kind of simplistic black-and-white formulation. There is a widespread notion that America is in great moral difficulty. Indeed it is, and I want to talk about that in a moment. But the only way to save America, according to this ideology, is to make it into what it was in "the good old days," namely, into an "Evangelical Empire," as Professor Martin Marty calls it in his book, "The Protestant Empire." I simply want to say that there is a great need for us to discuss together our differing perceptions of the history of America.

My reading of all of the major church historians, including Martin Marty, Sydney Ahlstrom, Winthrop Hudson, Robert Lee, and Robert Handy, of whatever denominational tradition, reveals that the only time that America was in any way a "Christian nation," was during the period of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Founded after 1629, that Colony yoked together church and state. You could not run for public office unless you were vouchsafed for by the minister, by the preacher, who had to say you were in good standing and in communion with the church. The Massachusetts Bay Colony lasted 75 years, and then its alliance of church and state collapsed.

Yes, there were established churches in nine of the thirteen colonies, but the whole struggle of America over 200 years was to dis-

establish church from state, to bring about the possibility of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The great irony for me at this moment, in much of this discussion, is that we owe it to the Southern Baptists, the Evangelical Baptist preachers, the circuit-riding Methodist preachers, the dissident Presbyterians who fought a life and death battle in this country, especially in the State of Virginia, to disestablish the Anglican Church in order to assure freedom of conscience, not only for themselves, for their own preachers, but for everyone living in the State of Virginia. For them to hear that America is "a Christian nation," for Roger Williams to be told this would have been unbelievable. They would have understood if someone said that America is predominantly a Christian society, for American *society* is made up of at least 145 million people who call themselves Christians. There is a fundamental difference between "a Christian society" and "a Christian State." The State must remain neutral and secular. It is the common order. It is the saeculum within which all of us have our being, our independence on the basis of mutual respect and first class citizenship.

My second concern, and I think this has been a concern widespread in the Jewish community, has to do with the notion that America is in very grave moral trouble. I think that Reverend Falwell especially, and many people associated with him, have had perfect pitch about the moral decline in much of our society. I have just read the cover story of *Newsweek* magazine on pornography in America. My wife is a criminologist. We had dinner the other night with Rudy Guliani, a gifted United States attorney who has just brought the heads of five Mafia families to court. He told us of the problems, of the corruption, and the exploitation, pornography, prostitution, the massive amount of drugs eating at the soul of the society. We have got real problems to deal with. And raising those problems in a serious, responsible way that can lead to serious, responsible solutions is all of our responsibility, not only the responsibility of Reverend Falwell, and of those around him, and I am sure that he will acknowledge that.

But I have to say that there is something amiss about the way in which the issue of the troubled moral soul of America and its social conditions are being defined. When you begin saying that we need to restore America to being "a Christian nation," not society, a Christian nation-state so that we can return to the condition in which we were at our origins, I have to say to you that that kind of mythologizing is nothing less than the revisionism of American history. And the more I hear of it, and I see it and read it every-

where, I have to tell you that we are being victimized, even paralyzed by a very great lie. And we had better face it.

To say a complex thing simply: If you read William Warren Sweet's *History of Revivalism*, Robert Handy's *History of the Churches of United States and Canada*, or Timothy Smith, a Baptist scholar-historian, and a very great one, of what America was like in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it has absolutely no relationship to what some Fundamentalist preachers are saying about the soul of America.

All of them will agree that by the end of the eighteenth century America was virtually an unchurched country. No more than ten percent of the population was affiliated with churches, not to speak of synagogues, of which there were virtually none. But beyond that, this country was illiterate religiously. Beyond that for the immigrants who came to this country and who went to the frontiers to work in those difficult, trying, uncouth conditions, this was virtually an uncivilized society. Do you know what the biggest problem of America was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Pervasive drunkenness. A social anthropologist has written a book called *The Alcoholic Republic*. This country was sodden in drunkenness. Mills, stills, God knows what, everywhere, including Puritan New England. That low moral condition, the low brutal vices, provided a condition for lynching and for a kind of "high noon" morality. America was seized by a breakdown of morality.

Why do I raise that fine point without going into great detail? It is because this is a reflection of the tendency to mythologize America, to say that America had only a "great golden past." We have declined from that past, which is to say we are all moral pygmies. They were all moral giants in the past, we have declined, and we have got to confess our sins. And we believe in repentance. But if one defines that problem in that ahistorical way, it can only lead to moral paralysis. I would suggest again that we need to study that history together.

Finally, I want to conclude with this last concern I have. How does one deal with the problem of language? Apocalyptic language. I don't want to be judgmental about this. Everyone has a right to their own conceptions, their own ideologies, their own language. But something has happened when a religious rhetoric of an apocalyptic character goes over into the political process. And I think that a great many Americans, and certainly a great many Jews, are deeply troubled. There is a cosmology which sees the world as a cosmic struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness. That's a fundamentalist way of talking about the classic millenarian doctrine that ultimately there is a struggle between the forces of

Christ and the anti-Christ, and the anti-Christ is Satan. One has a right to believe that, to believe in the truth of that. But when one looks at what that apocalyptic rhetoric meant in terms of its reality, literally from the Middle Ages down to contemporary times, it became a political engine in society that saw life as a struggle between the forces of Christ and Satan, and you were religiously obligated, not only to defeat Satan, but to destroy Satan. Satan had to be removed from the earth before the millennium could take place. And I have now sat with enough Congressmen and Senators who were defeated in some of the political campaigns, who were described not only in terms of their voting records, and how they may have been deficient in one way or another, but as "anti-Christian" and therefore "anti-American." They were attacked as being in league with Satan and as having to be wiped out politically. Some of them have been. They were literally finished as the result of this kind of fanatical campaign. That is nothing less than a destruction of the political process.

These are issues that people of good will can discuss, however emotionally charged they may be. That process has begun this evening, and it will continue. I would not want to see 1984 repeat itself, where Jews vote because they feel fear on both sides, fear in the sense of political homelessness, nowhere to go. We have not labored in this country, we have not enriched this country, we have not sunk roots in this country, to wind up at the end of the twentieth century feeling marginal to this society. And we need people like Reverend Jerry Falwell and Dr. Billy Graham and many others to engage us in this dialogue, not only for our sake, but for the future of the democratic health of this religiously pluralist society. It is that democratic pluralism which has made America the greatest bastion of civil and political liberties in the world today.