

MS-603, Box 112, Folder 3 Transcription  
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs -  
"Religious Liberty Conference." October 1981

Betty Miller:

[00:00] We open our session, our Religious Liberty Conference, with two stimulating speakers. I will introduce each one separately. And following their individual presentations, they will come together in dialogue with each other. And then we'll answer questions. The first speaker is Dr. Jimmy Allen, who is president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and has served in that capacity since 1980. He was formerly pastor of the First Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, and before that Executive Secretary of the Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. As president of the Baptist Radio and Television Commission, he is president of the world's largest producer of religious programming for [01:00] broadcast on public service time. The seven radio programs and four television programs it produces are aired 5,488 times weekly, on 3,347 stations across the country. And knowing Jimmy Allen, I would not be surprised that, since these figures were printed, that the number has probably gone up a few. Dr. Allen assumed the leadership of Radio and Television Commission after 12 years as pastor of the First

Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, which has 9,000 members. And that always amazes me. It's a very great privilege to have Jimmy Allen here. And I know all of us look forward to hearing him and seeing what he has to say on, "The Legitimate Limits of Evangelism and Religious Liberty." Thanks.

**Jimmy Allen:**

Thank you, very much, Betty. Friends of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, I'm delighted to be here and delighted to join with my colleague Marc Tanenbaum, who will be introduced [02:00] to you in just a moment. We have encountered each other enough over the journey, all the way through the years of our work on civil rights and our attempts to delineate the role of citizens of goodwill in a very troubled nation -- and now have sort of joined in an Alphonse-Gaston act on Baptist and Jews, you know. I got to trying to figure out where James Dunn got this idea of our doing that and remembered that an ABC program sometime ago, when I was president of the Southern Baptist Convention, got us together, at the First Baptist Church here in Washington, to talk about these relationships. And out of that we have come to some interesting relationships, of friendship and mutual respect and understanding, and also some very real differences of opinion, as you'll find indicated in our dialogue. They're honest and good differences of opinion and

honest and good relationships. And I'm delighted to have the chance to be with him here in this place.

It was in [03:00] a meeting like this, some years ago, that I really was helped to understand the taproot of religious liberty in the scripture by an insight of Emmanuel Carlson. I had sort of ideas of, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's," and had a smattering of understanding about the other matters of church-state relations, out of the theocracy of Israel and then out of the multiplicity of relationships of governments under which the Christian gospel operated. But it was Emmanuel who helped me understand that the taproot for religious liberty is to be found in the scripture in the Garden of Eden, that it was built not in -- relationships between church and state later evolved -- but in the very essence of the religious experience; that, in the Garden of Eden, when God revealed himself as being unwilling to invade the human will, to make robots out of people by making them have to say, "I love you. I love you. I love you," with no option to say, [04:00] "I hate you. I reject you. I refuse," that, when God himself respected the freedom of human conscience, the freedom to respond honestly and responsibly and to take the consequences of that decision, he built into the very nature of the religious experience the essence of freedom of conscience;

and that, any time religious experience moves with coercion, it is weakened, to the degree that coercion of manipulation comes to be, that religious experience and its vitality is weakened; that, because God set the pattern as he made us, of the kind of response he wanted, that we now ruled as the inheritors of that message. And Baptist Christians have had an insight from the very beginning of our emerging on the religious scene of the importance of that protection of the vitality and the validity of the religious conscience. Therefore we have stood as champions of religious liberty, from the first days of our emergence, the time when the earliest [05:00] Baptist spoke to the king to say it was not his business to deal with the matters of religious conscience, all the way through to this country, where Roger Williams and others fashioned and hammered out much of what has been put together in the arrangements of church-state separation. The whole concept has been that we are interested in true evangelism, that true evangelism is leading people to understand Good News and respond voluntarily to that understanding, to God, as he reveals himself to him, in our understanding, in the messiah, Jesus Christ. In that process, we then have evangelism.

Dr. Ahmed [Hak?] helped me to understand the difference between evangelism and proselytizing. Dr. Hak was a Christian from India

who was a member of the team for the Billy Graham group and came to our city. And as he was dealing with the multiplicity of religious ideas and the varieties of religious experience in India, he hammered out for me an understanding of the difference between evangelism, [06:00] which is the sharing of the experience of God, the Good News of God, as we understand and experience it, with a person, so that that person can respond to God in the light of that truth for his own response, over against proselytizing, which is winning somebody to your point of view, that, if you're in a proselytizing position, you're trying to get somebody to be convinced to agree with you and join your movement or join your point of view. In evangelism, you're speaking a truth of experience with God, witnessing to that, and allowing the spirit of God to draw all men unto himself. And so, with that kind of understanding of evangelism over against proselytizing, there is a realization of some limitations to evangelism and some possibilities for evangelism, that we need to deal with. And then we need to deal with some of the inner actions that come to us, with people who have an experience of religious faith in which they have validity to their journey, and the right to hold that position without being harassed, without being opposed in ways that would manipulate or coerce. [07:00]

I want us to see the atmosphere of anxiety in which we must hammer out our relationships to the limitations of evangelism and its possibilities as it relates to religious liberty. For we live in a day very much like the first-century day, at the point of the atmosphere of anxiety about men who are trying to fashion society and trying to deal with religious ideas and truths. In the day in which the Christian gospel came, as we believe, not as a spinout or a spurt or a branch of Judaism but as a revelation with a taproot in Judaism, in the process of that there was a atmosphere of anxiety in the first century, which was very much like, had very real parallels to what we're into at this time. There was an atmosphere in which governmental leaders were trying to recapture the vitality of the Roman Empire. They were trying to recapture the kind of character that built Rome, to make it great. For there was a slippage of that character, a decay that set in, an [08:00] indifference, a breaking down of family ties, a breaking down of relationships, a breaking down of loyalties, a deterioration in the empire. And in that process, men like Domitian were determined to revive Rome to its former glory. And as they sought to do that, they saw religion as a tool of the state for making that happen. And the whole reviving of emperor worship on the part of Domitian, which became the occasion for the persecution of the followers of The Way in the first century and the occasion for the writing

of the Book of Revelation, came out of the good intentions of a man who was trying to bring his nation back to good health. And so he felt that, by using the religious resources of his nation, by calling people to worship in their mini-gods, to worship the emperor as god, by calling for a religion of the state, he would revive the vitality of loyalty and of dedication and the fiber of Rome would be restored. The anxiety of government leaders trying [09:00] to shore up government and society by using religion as a tool sounds strangely and vaguel-- and interestingly cyclical. It happens time and again in human history. We're moving right now to a time of high anxiety in our nation, in our world, anxiety that deals with the taproots of economic problems and political problems and defense postures and attitudes about our safety and security as a nation, a time when erosion and pluralism have come in ways that interact to each other. The multiplicity of moral and ethical ideas that are now moving among us threaten us, as we see some of the erosion of some of the very values that we have felt were exceedingly important, in building our country. And the shortcut to that on the part of political leaders is to reach out grab the religious resources and bring them into line, so that they become a part of shoring up a nation and restoring that nation. The anxiety atmosphere is very much like the first [10:00] century.

It was also an anxiety time for searchers for spiritual truth. For in the time of the first century, there was a vacuum, as the old gods were dying. And in that process of the bankruptcy of the religions of that day, there was a grave hunger in the hearts of people, that swept across all of the first-century world. And the mystery religions knew new vitality, as they came with their vague ideas and their emotional experiences to capture the imagination of people. There was a sense of deliverance to be expected. There were prophecies calling for messiahs to be born, in all kinds of religious tradition. And there was a desperate kind of attempt to revive religion. And in the process of that, there were many kinds of religions, mini--M-I-N-I --religions, that seemed to spring out. But whenever there is a cauldrom of anxiety, there also oftentimes spring, out of our search, out of our emotional lack of root systems, out of our historical neglect -- there come all kinds of religious expressions. And [11:00] we live in a day in which we find ourselves surrounded by every guru having his own answer about God and somebody being able to get somebody to follow them, if they come with any kind of definite claim about knowing something about eternity and about life. The root systems, both historically -- the root systems in Revelation are so mobile in our society that a great number of little religions are bouncing around. And in the atmosphere of that, we're very much like the



anxiety levels of the first century, when the followers of The Way came with their radical understanding of what God had done in Jesus Christ and their claims that were so sure, so certain and the powerful ways in which they claimed. It caused a great moving toward that movement of that day. And it was a time when -- which the anxiety that created a spiritual atmosphere of search was very much like the last part of the twentieth century.

There was also an anxiety on the part of religious leaders, especially those who were in established religions, [12:00] doing their best to bring conformity to their ideas on the part of their followers, a sense of the fact that the consensus was gone and that they had to reestablish it, they had to do something about that. And so, in various religious expressions, the leaders began to reach out, to try to use the powers of the state to bring greater and greater degrees of pressure for conformity in their particular religious ideas. In that time of anxiety by religious leaders, the shortcut, when you can't get it by consensus, is to get it by political power, by the violence or the threat of violence. And so, in a society in which that erosion takes place, religious leaders taking the short view begin to reach out to see if they can cause conformity of external behavior by using the powers of the

state, because they cannot get conformity to those religious ideas by the persuasive powers of the spirit. And so, in that atmosphere, we have a similar anxiety in our day to what the first century knew.

Now with that anxiety present in the first [13:00] century and now, we need to see that the evangelistic enterprise is rooted in the conviction of the importance of truth. Religious liberty does imply or require indifference to truth. One of the things we have to deal with in our relationships with each other, especially where there are vast differences of viewpoints, is that the respect that we have for each other's particular religious traditions does not mean a diminution of understanding of the importance of the truth, that the very fact that we believe a truth means that it's important enough for us to live for it, to die for it, means that we must have that kind of understanding that we are free to believe, free to propagate, free to practice, as well as free to understand and respect and appreciate those who do not agree with our perspectives on the truth. Harvey Cox said it rather succinctly in his book *Secular City*, when he said that secularism had been able to do what fire and sword had been unable to do, that it had [14:00] relativized religious truths, it had privatized religious experience, and convinced the saint that the faith might not quite be worth

dying for. In this atmosphere of religious liberty and our concerns for religious liberty, let's make sure that we do not do it at the price of thinking that the truth we believe is unimportant, that it is not worth living for and dying for. AND there is one of the beautiful places where Baptist Christians and Jewish believers have so much in common. Because we are accustomed to being able to stand under persecution. We accompany each others to the jails of the Soviet Union under the pressures of persecution. Because we believe the truth is important enough to live for and die for. Religious liberty does not mean indifference to truth. It actually means a greater appreciation for its sharpness and its demand and also a greater appreciation for the voluntary nature of its advocacy and of its adherence, that the [15:00] response must be voluntary but that it is our ironclad in its call. That it is the kind of response we would live for and die is the essence of what real evangelism is. That we believe it, that we believe it enough to share it is a part of what the mandate of evangelism is. Voluntarism, then, is the essence of that response. But the truth is important for each of us.

Kierkegaard-- I believe it was, the melancholy Dane, who talked in terms of the truths that count and the truths that don't count. There are a lot of truths that don't count -- and is that

point that we can find our ways dealing with each other very easily. Because there are some truths that are not taproot truths. For instance, he says it's...What is it, 93 million miles to the sun? Is that right? How many miles is it to the sun? Anybody know? Fifty-three or 93?

**M:**

[Nine?]

**Jimmy Allen:**

Ninety-three. OK. It's 93 million miles to the sun. Some of you knew that. Does it make it any hotter that you know it or any colder that you don't know it? You see, that's a truth that's absolutely essential. If we were farther away from the sun, [16:00] our earth would be ice. If we were closer to it, we would be burned to a crisp. We must be that distance from the sun. But you can live all your life not knowing that and never be any hotter or any colder, you see. Because it's a truth but it's a truth that doesn't really count in the day-by-day existence of your life. All men die. That's truth. Everybody knows that. Say it and anybody will shrug his shoulders and say, "That's so." That's a truth that doesn't count. The doctor gets through with his medical examination and says, "Jimmy Allen, six weeks from now you are going to die." Now, that's when it

becomes a truth that counts, you see. You can believe it philosophically all you want but, when it personalizes to your own experience, it becomes a truth that counts.

Now, there are some truths that we hold, under the revelation of God, which we believe that's a truth that counts. For evangelism to have its [17:00] taproot in activity, it must be the sharing of what we understand to be the truth that counts. And we would not be true to our understanding of the faith if we did not share the truth that counts with all the energy and urgency we know how to share it. To do so is not to invade somebody else's privacy or to manipulate their response. To do so is to be free to live up to what you believe to be the truth that counts. And so evangelism then means that we live in an atmosphere with the truth that counts of what we perceive to be a divinely provided privilege, that, in the relationships we have with God, the insights that we have, we have a stewardship and trusteeship to share, that God himself is pleased to share with us in the process of sharing the good news of what we understand him to be up to, with the people who are around us in humanity. God's voice then becomes the perception of the person of faith, who then speaks [18:00] his perception. God's -- shares with us. He doesn't write it in the heavens in language that all can understand, doesn't shout out, no matter how Hollywood scenarios

come about voices coming from outer space to do things. God has chosen to come to live among us to share himself, so that we are the messengers of the truth that counts. It's a divinely provided privilege.

And in our understanding, it becomes a divinely required responsibility. For you are responsible for the truth that counts. You're responsible for sharing that. With whatever way you understand to share it, you are responsible, I am responsible to share that. It's a divinely required responsibility. And it's a divinely empowered enterprise. There is enough evidence in my journey of seeing people whose lives have been actually transformed and rearranged, in what we understand, in the matter of personal evangelism, to watch them develop a concern for the society [19:00] and community around them, to be giving themselves to the task that they are called to do, to see the new energy that they have in that process, to make me understand that this sharing of evangelism is a divinely empowered enterprise, as well as a required responsibility.

Now, this religious response, this truth reveal-- as we understand it, comes to have its taproot in voluntariness. To the degree coercion enters into it, it deteriorates it. Whether that coercion is the coercion of the state, whether it's the

social pressure of a community, or whether it's the emotional manipulation of a particular charismatic personality, anytime that is a manipulation or a coercion, anytime there is not authenticity and openness about our communication, anytime we try to trick people into saying the right words, we are not evangelizing. We are proselytizing. And it's at that point that -- you will hear Rabbi Tanenbaum speak in a moment -- [20:00] that we create chaos and do not live up to the best of our own understanding of the faith, we do not answer the call of evangelism adequately. Therefore the key to that limitation of liberty and evangelism is the rejection of coercion, at any kind of forum, and the promotion of the respect of the right to believe, the right to faith on the part of those who differ. It means there must be a healthy kind of humility running through our evangelistic witness, a realization that God is far greater than any human mind can comprehend. That's what he told Moses on the mountain, "No man can see my face and live." He is greater than any human mind can comprehend. Therefore it behooves me to come with humility with the understanding of the revelation that I have, to understand that, while I know what I have understood to be true and I believe that is the adequate way to know God, there are many things about God I can learn from any man in the journey. [21:00] And it's at that point that we come with a sense of humility to speak the truth in [love?], with certainty

and assurance but with a humble willingness to learn from every fellow pilgrim about what the perception he has received of God really is. And so the key to this relationship of religious liberty and evangelism is a healthy relationship between differing religious perspective -- not an abandoning of your position but a testing it out in the marketplace of ideas.

You see, one of the reasons why the early Christians were able to survive and prevail, in a lot of dimensions of what they did, was that they moved into the marketplace of ideas with a sheer abandon of a faith that the truth would ultimately conquer. They were willing to stand and speak the truth in the midst of the jeering of the philosophers at Athens, in the midst of the cry of the crowds in other Asia Minor cities, in the midst of the persecution of the Romans and the twisted lies about what they were doing, [22:00] because they believed, really believed, that their me-- Their master had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the light." And because they believed that truth would ultimately triumph, they were willing to live by it and die for it and they didn't have to twist other people's arms and force them to parrot it. And I think that's the test, where we are in this whole spiritual-awakening search, whether we really believe the truth enough to trust it in the marketplace of ideas, whether we have to silence the voices that we do not agree with



or whether we can welcome the dialogue and believe that, in the process of that, our truths will be honed to their highest cutting edge by the diligent critique of those who do not agree with us. And that means that it's only the person who has found a sense of security in the revelation in which he believes who can be the evangelist [23:00] for our society, that's caught up in the opportunities of pluralism and the challenge of spiritual anxiety.

I believe this is the most exciting day for men of faith, in the history of humanity, that we now have not only the opportunities to communicate in immediate ways, through the mechanics of our society, but that God is up to something in the hearts and lives and souls of men. And we will do that task well not when we take shortcuts and try to seize the forces of the state to fulfill our will and not when we take cheap shots at the people who do not agree with us. We will do it best when we live up to our best understanding of what the truth is. That's evangelism.

**Betty Miller:**

The second speaker [24:00] in this opening presentation is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum. He is national Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee and has been a pioneering leader and thinker in interreligious relations and social

justice movements during the past 30 years. And I think any of us who have been involved in working with public issues are very aware of his voice in the public scene. In fact, *Newsweek* magazine described him as, "The American Jewish community's foremost apostle to the gentiles." And a poll of America's newspaper religious editors in 1978 voted Rabbi Tanenbaum as one of the ten most respected and influential religious leaders in America. President Carter invited Rabbi Tanenbaum as the American Jewish leader among 10 national religious spokesmen, to discuss the state of nation at Camp David summit meetings in 1979. He was the only rabbi of [25:00] Vatican Council II and is the founder and co-secretary of the Joint Vatican International Jewish Consultative Committee -- as well as of a similar liaison body with the World Council of Churches. He's lectured at major universities, seminaries, religious and educational bodies in the United States. Rabbi Tanenbaum, it's a pleasure to have you here today.

**Marc Tanenbaum:**

Thank you, Mrs. Miller. I've been spending so much time in the past several years with my dear, cherished, and revered colleague and friend the Reverend Dr. Jimmy Allen, that I find myself now, when I'm invited to speak at synagogues and temples, beginning my conversation with the Jewish congregation saying,

"Shalom, y'all." (laughter) And I understand the compliment was recently returned, where there was a [26:00] meeting in the late Harry Golden's community in Charlotte, North Carolina, where a group of Baptist women invited the local rabbi to speak, and apparently they had a warm and loving relationship, and the Baptist lady who chaired the session was so filled with feeling in inviting the rabbi to address her group of ladies that she got up and said, "And now I want to introduce to you our Baptist rabbi." (laughter)

It's really a very great privilege to be with you here today and to share in these deliberations regarding the concerns over evangelism and religious liberty on the American scene, particularly today. It's a special privilege for me, because Baptists and Jews have bonds of deep and powerful spiritual similarities, [27:00] that bind us together in ways that perhaps not equally true of relationships between other faith communities. There are no two peoples in America who have struggled, suffered, have been persecuted more to uphold freedom of conscience and religious liberty than have Baptists and Jews. And there are few people in this society who stake their existence on the truth and the centrality of God's message in the Bible as do Jews and Baptists. Nor are there many other people in this society who have suffered the affliction of

stereotypes and caricatures as much as have evangelical Christians generally and Baptists and Jews, in American society.

I found a sense of moral obligation when President Jimmy Carter began running for the first time for the presidency, the first [28:00] evangelical Christian, born-again Christian running for the presidency in more than 100 years, and [clear?] to the Civil War. I found myself appalled at the way in which a great many Americans, especially those living outside of the South, dismissed President Jimmy Carter as he was running -- and the conventional caricatures that are dominant in American society and our cultural and literary legacies: cracker, redneck, Bible-thumper. Who could entrust the authority of this government into the hands of a man who's an evangelical Christian, as he was? There may be all kinds of judgments about his presidency. But the predisposition to dismiss a whole faith community and one of its singular representatives in that prejudicial way became so appalling that I took it upon myself to do some broadcasts [29:00] and write some columns, that James Reston later on wrote a piece about on evangelicals and Jews, in which we sought to make clear that Jews will not stand by, we who have suffered such affliction at the hand of such mindless and ignorant responses to our people, stand by while the community of Baptist fellow Americans suffer the same kind of indignity. So it is

both those historic experiences, as well as the affirmations of how our whole identity is shaped on God's covenant with his people, that gives me a particular sense of joy and pleasure in being with you today.

I share, together with Dr. Allen, as well as my longtime dear friend and colleague Dr. James Dunn... Both Jimmy Allen and James Dunn, Troy Valentine, Robert Campbell, among others here in this room, when moments become dark, sometimes depressing, in this nation, [30:00] when you begin feeling that the forces of reason are beginning to yield way to kind of irrationalism and fanaticism and when people begin sweeping away the evangelical emergence in America as some kind of dark, imminent threat, it is the person, the presence, the message, the life commitment of these men and women -- who give me some sense of confidence that there are possibilities of building a different kind of future in this society, in which evangelical Christians and Jews can not only learn to respect one another but to love one another and help each other to be faithful to our respective callings.

I want to take a few moments to try to locate this issue of religious liberty and evangelism -- which is today symbolic, symptomatic, in many ways, of that period of anxiety that Dr. Jimmy Allen spoke of so well and incisively. [31:00] I have

a sense of urgency about the importance of trying to recall what America is about, to stand against the mythologies that are being created by some religious and political forces, whose purposes are to use those mythologies as a means of imposing a particular ideology, both religious and political, on the rest of the society, ideologies which in many ways become a kind of creeping fascism, if allowed to go on unchallenged. And one of the extraordinary things that strikes me, in all of my conversations with many people in those movements, some of them quite responsible, others seeking to exploit the anxieties which are widespread in this society... When Jimmy Allen and I were together with President Carter at Camp David, [32:00] all the president wanted to talk about for hours was the moral malaise of America. Why was this country in such a state of moral depression? Why was this society filled with so much moral corruption, such a breakdown in confidence? It is against that background of that reaction to Watergate and Vietnam and the revelations of so much moral corruption on so many levels of society that the Moral Majority and the Religious Roundtable and other forces have come into being. They have read, with perfect pitch, the anxieties of the American people and they have sought to respond to that with a program which frequently, while there are elements in it with which I would concur... In my conversations with Jerry Falwell and Ed McAteer and others,

there are common grounds, as we seek to unpack some of the misperceptions we have of one another. But there's no question in my mind that there are aspects of those traditions which need to be [33:00] opened up to the truth of the American historic experience, which I'm afraid increasingly has become distorted, especially with regard to the issue of religious liberty, pluralism, and freedom of conscience.

So I want to take a few moments to say something about the historic background. And if you would indulge me, I want to read from an essay that I had written on this theme of religious liberty and the origins of American society. Because it is essential to understand the historic facts, not as they come from Jewish writers but essentially from church historians, as well as secular historians, about how precious and central the tradition of religious liberty is to the very nature of American democratic society. It's essential to understand that in order to stand against some of the mythologies which are being created about an evangelical America, we have got to save America by restoring it to some period of its evangelical origins, when there was a kind of universal monolithic church in the society, [34:00] which ostensibly was a period of time of high moral and religious standing. In point of fact, as historians reveal, there is almost no foundation in fact, in terms of what the

moral climate was in America in the seventeenth, eighteenth century -- a time of very coarse and wild morals, a time of great alcoholism in the society, a breakdown of family, a time of very little religious identification. What were the facts of the origins of religious liberty in this country? It'd be helpful to keep in mind that the very founding of the American republic took its primary impetus from a determined search by our Puritan forebears for religious liberty. In many ways, American history has been one long adventure in the pursuit of a more adequate and viable set of relationships between church and state, between religion and society than had existed anywhere else or anytime before the American experiment was launched.

[35:00]

Because so much of the character of American society is staked out on the ways in which we cope with and resolve church-state issues, it is increasingly understandable why debate over these issues continuously evokes such high emotion on the part of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, secular humanists, and others. But precisely because religious liberty was central in the motivation for the founding of America and also because freedom of conscience is the parent liberty from which derives all of our other liberties, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right to privacy... Indeed, Leo Pfeffer, in his study on Freedom



and Separation: America's Contribution to Civilization, writes the following: "In the American system, religious freedom is the progenitor of practically all other freedoms. Consider freedom of speech. Today it is generally thought of in terms of political speech, the right to attack the government and condemn its policies. Historically, however, freedom of political speech came late on the scene. It came after freedom of religious speech had been won. The struggle for freedom of speech in [36:00] England from which we inherited our tradition was initially a struggle for freedom to speak religiously." The obligation, in light of this, is all the greater to negotiate our respective communal differences, wherever they occur, with discipline, restraint in speech and action, with the same respect for the conscience of the other that one seeks for oneself, and with the avoidance of the imputation of bad faith or prejudice, which in itself can become an act of prejudice. In short, American democracy is a relatively brief interlude in the history of human freedom. And the experience with genuine religious liberty for all Americans, on the level of authentic equality, in our pluralistic society is an ever briefer chapter. As we have learned from the frightening Watergate nightmare, constitutional democracy, with all its superior virtues, is still a fragile human invention. Democratic life can and will survive only through the tender loving care and the creative

sympathies, reconciling [37:00] skills, constructive negotiations of leaders of the state and, most especially, religious leaders, of the stature of Jimmy Allen, James Dunn, and many others who are here today. The resolution of differences on the level of rhetorical street brawls, which I'm afraid has begun to occur in the debate over the Moral Majority and Religious Roundtable and many other issues, name calling, verbal violence in speech and print, will only shock the delicate and intricate system called American pluralism and, if continued indefinitely, could well hammer it to its knees, a victim of group conflict, false pride, and recklessness.

A critical need for these qualities of living, mutual respect and accommodation in the face of differences, as well as the wreckage that results to social and political systems and to human lives when such interreligious caring and diplomacy are absent are seen all around us and we ignore them at our peril, Ireland today, Cyprus, Lebanon, Iran, [38:00] now with the destruction every day of children, because of so-called ideological differences, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the problems between Israel and the Palestinians, Uganda, Chile, South Africa. The list is tragically long and depressing and seems to grow longer every day. And virtually each one of the communal conflicts that now pockmark every single continent of

our inhabited globe, religious sectarian claims are inextricably mixed with economic, social, and political claims. But it is the religious dynamic, with its invariable assertion of absolute truth, ultimate and exclusive rights, and, in some pre-ecumenical cases, monopolies of salvation, that excludes everyone who does not belong to your own particular church or synagogue -- and Jews are not exempt from that claim -- that impart to what might be otherwise conventional group conflicts, that normally would yield to rational negotiation and compromise of differences -- [39:00] add to that an overlay of heightened emotionalism and ideological fanaticism, whose outcome predictably becomes the daily massacres and bomb-throwings in the streets of Beirut, the destruction of children in Tehran, the pubs and neighborhoods of Northern Ireland, and the supermarkets and tourist buses of Jerusalem. And when you add to that lethal chemistry of religion in politics the insane proliferation of arms or nuclear weaponry that is contaminating every corner of the world community, then you know for a certainty that all of us have a God-bidden responsibility to help find a better way for ourselves and for the rest of the human family of resolving differences, especially when there are real and painful grievances.

Our heritage of religious liberty is complex and ambiguous. While economic and political factors played a significant role in the motivations that led to the great Puritan exodus of 1629 from England to America, there can be no doubt that the chief motive for the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was religious. [40:00] Puritanism was essentially and primarily a religious movement. And attempts to prove it, as some historians have been trying to do, to try to prove it to have been a mask for politics or moneymaking are false, as well as unhistorical. In the broader sense, Puritanism was a passion for righteousness, the desire to know and to do God's will. Led by the country squire John Winthrop and others, the group believed that the only safeguard against the forces of evil, represented in their thinking by King Charles I and his arbitrary and oppressive rule and the Church of England and its insistence on conformity, lay in establishing a society consisting of a confederation of congregations, buttressed by a sympathetic government. They alone, they thought, would cleanse the churches of unworthy ministers and immoral communicants. They would remodel worship upon the biblical model and dethrone bishops. And since this seemed impossible of accomplishment in England, they proposed to bring it about in the distant America, by founding there a wilderness Zion. Scott Mather wrote, in his marginalia, "We come hither [41:00] because we would have our

posterity settled under the pure and full dispensation of the gospel, defended by rulers that should be of ourselves." These Puritans had a definite mission, to establish a community based on the Hebrew commonwealth of the Bible, rather than a mere colony. New England, to them, was a New Canaan, which the Almighty had set apart for an experiment in Christian living. They felt, as John Winthrop remarked on the way over, that they were a city upon a hill with the eyes of all the people upon them, an example to prove that it was possible to lead a New Testament life and yet make a decent living at the same time.

One of their first acts upon reaching the site of their new homes was to form themselves into a church, by entering into a solemn covenant with God. For the covenant, the congregations claimed direct authority from the Bible and direct precedent in the history of Israel. William Brattle wrote, "The covenant of grace is the very same now that it was under the Mosaic dispensation. The administration differs but the covenant is the same." Urian Oakes, at his [42:00] election sermon of 1673, emphasized God's covenant with the children of Israel and how they were led into the Land of Promise. The covenant gave to each congregation an independence which would have been impossible had it been constituted by any superior human authority. Thus the Congregational Church in New England

happened to be organized on a democratic basis, not because the Puritans were in love with democracy but because leaders such as John Cotton and Thomas Hooker insisted that the first church of Boston and the first church of Hartford copy the exact organization of the first church of Corinth and the first church of Philippi, about which they knew very little, since the apostles and evangelists did not say very much about them, in fact.

Congregationalism, because of its emphasis upon localism, would had been hopelessly weak had it not had the full support of civil authorities. And since the failure of the Puritans to gain such support in England was one of the major reasons for their migration, it was natural now that in their new commonwealth they would take measures to tie the government with the church. The relationship of church and state is set forth in [43:00] some detail in the Platform of Church Discipline, which I quote. "It is the duty of the magistrate," the civil magistrate, "to take care of matters of religion. The end of the magistrate's office is not only the 'quiet and peaceable life' of the subject in matters of righteousness and honesty but also in matters of godliness -- yea, of all godliness. Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehosaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah are much commended by the Holy Ghost for the setting forth of their authority in

matters of religion. On the contrary, such kings as have been failing this way are frequently taxed and reprov'd by the Lord." It was the duty of the magistrate in the early Massachusetts Bay Colony to "restrain and punish idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions that destroy the foundation, open contempt of the word preached, profanation of the Lord's Day, disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God, and the like..." According to this church discipline, church governments stand, "in no [44:00] opposition to civil government of commonwealths - - the contrary is the most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpful unto the other in their distinct and due administrations."

There are many of those today who talk about recreating evangelical Christian America as the solution to America's problems, appeal to this history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and to that relationship of the civil and church authorities, that no civil authority could take office without being validated by the preacher of the church. What these advocates of the recreation of an evangelical Christian America fail to tell us in the recounting of American history is that all of this experience of the Massachusetts Bay Colony lasted no more than

50 to 60 years and collapsed because of its incapacity to deal with [45:00] differences of point of view and dissent.

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