

Draft

National Interreligious Award
American Jewish Committee
Atlanta, Ga.
Friday, October 28, 1977 (noon)

I am honored and humbled to be the recipient of this award today. I suppose I am the first Christian evangelist in history to receive such an award from so distinguished a Jewish organization. I thank you from the depth of my heart.

I consider this an indication of your deep convictions, love of a pluralistic America, and great tolerance. You know that I stand before you as an evangelical Christian who is committed to the beliefs of the New Testament. You do not expect me to be anything other than what I am.

Let us not hide our differences under a basket. Let's follow the counsel of Martin Buber at this point: Don't try to score points or defeat your ^{partner in dialogue,} ~~opponent~~. (Understand him; respect his uniqueness; establish a warm relationship.

I had a long and frank talk with the chief Rabbi in Israel a few years ago. I asked him if he believed in the coming of Messiah, and he assured me that he did. I told him that I, too, believed in the coming of Messiah but that when Messiah comes we will all recognize that He is Jesus who was on earth once before.

The chief Rabbi smiled over his cup of coffee and said,
 "Of course that's our difference." It is in the spirit of
 dialogue that I relate to you my own experience.

When I was 17 I was living on a small farm south of
 Charlotte, North Carolina. I was reared in a very orthodox
 Presbyterian church. I rebelled against the hard work on the
 farm and the strict religious teachings of the church. But
 one day something happened to me that is so fresh in my mind
 that I can recall every detail. I met Jesus Christ face to
 face, a Jew who was born in Bethlehem and reared in Nazareth.
 I became convinced that in His death on the Cross He died for
 my sins. I felt my own need of personal repentance. I accepted
 Him as my Lord and Saviour. I have walked with Him for 43 years
 since then, and during the past 40 years I have proclaimed His
 message on every continent of the globe.

My ^{central} intellectual ^{issue} ~~hangup~~ about Jesus came from His assertion:
 "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the
 Father but by Me." On the surface that seems the most intolerant
 of statements. Think of any man on the stage of human history
 claiming to be the supreme embodiment of all psychological,
 scientific and religious truth! He was either an egomaniac, a
 liar, or He was what He claimed to be. By faith I accepted Him
 for what He claimed to be, the Son of the Living God. That

simple decision changed my life. I am here today because of that commitment made 43 years ago.

I have grown in understanding since that hour of personal commitment. But it was that decision that has made me intolerant of the social and personal evils of this generation. As a Southerner I began to wrestle almost immediately in my conscience with the question of race. As soon as I began to study the Bible in earnest I discovered the debt I owed to Israel ^{to Judaism and to} and ^{the} Jewish people.

I realize that the record of the relations between Christians and Jews makes unpleasant and at times terrifying reading. The institutional church has sinned through much of its history and ^(especially for the anti-Semitism practiced against the Jewish people.) has much to answer for at the Judgment, ^{also} I look with sadness and deep regret at those episodes in history when Christians tried to "force" the conversion of Jews. To force men to believe is, ^{I am convinced, against the will of God.} ~~the wrong way to evangelize.~~ Alquin said to Charlemagne: "How can you force a man to believe what he does not believe? Faith is an affair of the will, not of compulsion." Tertullian wrote: "It is a fundamental human right, a privilege of nature, that every man should worship according to his own convictions." Others spoke in the same vein but their voices were barely heard above the ^{thunder} ~~hubbub~~ of the terrible intolerance and persecution in the Dark Ages of Christian and Jewish relationships.

A 19th Century French scholar once said: "I shall not try to write the history of intolerance. That would be to write the history of the world." He was correct!

However, there is one thing that all Christians and Jews must understand. It is equally difficult to define a Christian currently or in history as it is to define a Jew. One of the great questions throughout the world is, "Who is a Jew?" Equally, the great question is, "Who is a Christian?" Millions who profess Christianity could not possibly be true Christians in the biblical sense. For example, if a professing Christian is not dominated by love for his neighbor, then he cannot possibly be called a Christian. Thus many of the persecutions of history were caused by false Christians, who dragged the Name of their Master into the mire of bigotry, ^{anti-Semitism,} and prejudice.

I am an evangelical Christian who believes that God can be experienced in daily life and that we are known not only by the creeds we repeat but by the love we ^{live out in our relations with} ~~have for~~ our fellow men ^{and women.}

Evangelical Christians especially have an affinity for the Jews because the Bible they love is essentially a Jewish book written under the influence of God's Spirit. One theologian has said: "Remove the New Testament books written by the Jews and only two remain, Luke and Acts. Remove every Jewish

concept, every Jewish influence from the New Testament and only a question here and there from a pagan source is left, scarcely enough for one short paragraph."

As for the Old Testament, no Christian can read it consistently without subscribing to ^{a recent} ~~Pope Leo XIII's~~ ^{statement} "Spiritually we are all Semites."

It is to the lasting glory of Judaism and Christianity that they have their deepest roots in the Old and New Testament Scriptures, written so largely by Jews. No greater words have been penned than those of the Mosaic code and the Sermon on the Mount. As never before the world needs to accept the ethical principles, and follow the moral standards, outlined in the law of Moses and the Sermons of Jesus. Through their ^{application,} ~~use,~~ social injustice and moral evil can be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. Dr. Abraham ^{and other scholars} ~~Katsh~~, past president of Dropsie University, ^{have} ~~has~~ demonstrated the close relationship between the Hebrew scriptures and the foundations of American democracy. If the Holy Scriptures were proclaimed fearlessly and lived faithfully, our world could be changed for the better. There are theological differences that we may never agree on, but there are certain things we can work together for now -- that may make a better America.

I. We can work and pray together for the "peace of Jerusalem"

The Middle East is the most dangerous and the most thrilling spot in the world. The Bible teaches that history began there and will end there -- when ^{the} Messiah comes to create a new social order and the "new humanity."

The capital of the world then will be Jerusalem. Then will the prophecy be fulfilled spoken by Isaiah the prophet in the 19th chapter and the 25th verse: "Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel mine inheritance." In that future day God will recognize and bless Syria, Egypt and Israel. They will live together in permanent peace! This and other Scriptures definitely recognize the right of Israel to exist as a state -- just as Syria and Egypt. I don't pretend to be particularly capable of suggesting an immediate answer to the present situation -- but I do believe the Biblical prophesies that there will be permanent peace in Jerusalem someday. Till that glorious day, then, we are commanded to work and pray for the peace not only of the world but especially of Jerusalem.

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2. Christians and Jews must continue to work together for better race relations in America: black and white, Jew and Gentile, majority and minorities

No nation in history has attempted so valiantly to solve its racial problems as has the ^{MOSAIC} ~~melting pot~~ that is America.

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(after "the peace not only of the world but especially of Jerusalem.

And as we work and pray for the peace and well-being of all the people of the Middle East - Jews, Christians, and Muslims - I do want to share with you my conviction that the vast majority of Evangelical Christians in this country and abroad support the State of Israel and will stand staunchly by her side in the face of any threats to the security and safety of the Jewish State. The Prophet Zachariah, who proclaimed (Chapter 2:12) that "the Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the Holy Land, and shall choose Jerusalem again," warned in chapter 14 that there will be a severe retribution against those who raise their hands in violence or terrorism against Jerusalem. His message was uttered about the year 520 B. C., but remains today a powerful and relevant call to the conscience of all the peoples who are now engaged in the negotiations for peace between Israel, ~~(the Palestinians)~~ the Arab nations, as well as the Soviet Union, and the United States:

"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

We now have the most extensive civil rights laws on our statute books in world history. We have gone beyond any nation in history! Swiss children from German-speaking cantons or neighborhoods are not being bussed into French-speaking districts. The British are not labelling urban non-white concentrations as segregated and bussing these people across the city. I know of no plan to bus French-Canadian students into English-speaking suburbs of Toronto or Montreal. But America is courageously tackling the problem. Contrary to the wails of some pessimists, progress has been made in race relations during the sixties. Young black families, according to the latest census, are moving even closer to parity with whites in income level and opportunity.

If all this is happening in America, why do racial tensions continue to mount in some areas? It is because hearts have not been changed. This is why Jesus long ago said, "Ye must be born again." There must be a change in attitudes. We must recognize that skin color does not matter to God, who looks upon the heart. Love alone will serve to make good laws work. The one weapon no one can resist is a genuine, sincere, unaffected love for people regardless of race, color or religion. Two months ago I met with the Jewish leadership of Hungary. Even though we were total strangers, within an hour of discussion we were expressing affection for each other. Before we left, tears were in all of our eyes as we recalled the terrible events of

the latter months of the Second World War when more than 400,000 Jews were exterminated in Hungary. We talked together of our common faith in God. Those who love God have a moral responsibility to work at the business of racial *and* friendship and racial justice on and off the job and in every waking hour. The American Jewish Committee, the nation's pioneer human rights organization, has a long history in fostering positive inter-group relations, and I know you will continue in this noble effort.

3. We can join in honoring and supporting and undergirding our nation.

No country in the world has treated its minorities better than America. Every American Christian and every American Jew should ~~wave~~ ^{thrill to} the Stars and Stripes, ^{bless our Constitution,} and thank God that here on these shores he has found a land of freedom and opportunity second to none.

4. We should hammer out together a common agreement for teaching moral law to our youth in public schools

I believe the Ten Commandments should be read every day in every classroom. Our children need to know there is a moral law! I am alarmed by the zeal of some clergymen -- Catholic, Protestant and Jewish -- to secularize America. I warn you that total

secularization will lead to a rising tide of both anti-Semitism and anti-Christianity. Many have been surprised that the new anti-Semitism in America has come from the new radicalism in America. I am not surprised. Much of the new radicalism is secularistic, ^(and even dehumanizing) ~~humanistic and even~~ atheistic. ↓
It is intolerant towards any kind of faith in God. I will stand and fight to the last for the separation of Church and State. I am convinced that this push towards secularization must be halted and reversed if democracy and freedom are to survive in this country. Let's face it -- in some areas of life we should be intolerant. By that I mean we should be intolerant of evil. Moses refused to tolerate the idolatry into which Israel had fallen in his absence when God gave him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Nathan the prophet showed his intolerance of the sins of adultery and murder when he pointed to King David and said, "Thou art the man." Israel's ancient prophets were intolerant as they denounced the personal and social sins of both Israel and the pagan nations round about them.

All of this is a far cry from contemporary postures in which the quest for toleration has sometimes resulted in meaningless broadmindedness, ethical relativism, and ambiguous sentimentalism. Certainly breadth of understanding and charity are called for. However, our Judeo-Christian heritage is

persistent in its demand for a biblical intolerance in ~~certain areas.~~ *toward moral evil.*

Too often tolerance has included compromise of conviction, a yielding to expediency on primary matters. In moral issues *permissiveness and self-indulgence* ~~over-tolerance~~ has often made us morally soft, and devoid of conviction. We have become accustomed to unbelievable crime, the drug culture, pornography, obscenity, ghettos, racism, poverty, pollution, and the deep spiritual cry of our young people in the midst of their rebellion.

Need I remind you that science is narrow-minded and intolerant *of error in its pursuit of truth;*
 There is little room for unchecked broadmindedness in the laboratory. Just so, there are some moral, social and religious convictions all of us hold in common and separately that cannot be compromised. If we understand and allow for this then we can make common cause in many things as believers in God and citizens of America.

5. We can work together for world peace, freedom and justice

But it should be the right kind of peace. Is there peace in some countries where many Jews are persecuted and Christians are severely restricted?

There is peace and security in a prison. There is peace and security in a concentration camp. But is this the kind of peace we want? Freedom and justice are equally important, and whether we like to admit it or not, freedom is rapidly disappearing in our world. Dictatorships are springing up on every continent. Even small nations are arming to the teeth. Jeremiah the prophet warned that the day would come when people would be saying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace."

And I do not believe peace is enhanced by legitimizing in the world community terrorist groups such as the ones who killed Jewish children at Maalot, and Christian pilgrims at Tel Aviv airport.

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6. I think that Jews and Christians ought to work together for a national spiritual and moral awakening in America

As I go from campus to campus in this country I find that our youth are asking spiritual questions and wanting spiritual answers. Newsweek magazine said some time ago that at Harvard University many young Jews have actually abandoned radical politics to search for some kind of deeper spiritual satisfaction. Dr. Armand Nicholi has been a senior psychiatrist at Harvard for over 12 years, and he was quoted as saying that he "has been struck by the extraordinary number of young Jews who complained that their parents didn't transmit spiritual values to them

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More than that, the unholy resort to violence and terrorism by the PLO has resulted in the massacre of the lives of 40,000 Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, and has led to deep insecurity on the part of several millions of Christians and other minorities in the Middle East and elsewhere. The Christian world therefore has as much a stake as the Jewish world in calling upon the PLO to give up its stated goal to destroy the State of Israel and to abandon the wanton use of terrorism and the destruction of human life. Human life created in the sacred image of God can never be ^{used as} a means to realize any groups' ideology or political program. The surest way of winning lasting justice and peace for the Palestinian people, as well as for all of God's children in the Middle East and throughout the world, is to help create an atmosphere of mutual respect and reconciliation, and that condition demands an end to killing, an end to the shedding of blood.

whereas somehow their grandparents had transmitted such values to their parents." I could say precisely the same thing about the Christians in America.

We need a spiritual awakening that will not only dynamically influence the social and political life of this country but answer the deepest needs of our youth.

It is a demonstrated fact that the revivals in ancient Israel and the revivals in the history of the Christian Church have contributed much to the well-being of the nations. Time after time these revivals brought about a change in the moral and spiritual climate. Old grudges were wiped out, wrongs were rectified, sins were confessed and forgiven, a new concern for one's neighbor ensued and moral strength was infused into the youth of revived nations.

I have often wondered what would happen in America if the zeal for righteousness that at times characterized ancient Israel, and which is reflected among some Jewish sons and daughters today, was mingled with the revival zeal displayed by early American Christians. I believe that God is calling us to this kind of an awakening.

When Jehoshaphat ascended the throne of Judah in the 9th Century before Christ, his country, like ours, had experienced long, costly struggles and was surrounded by threatening foes. Earnestly young Jehoshaphat sought God's help for his people. There began an era of peace almost unparalleled in the history of Judah and Israel, an era later brought to an end only by Jehoshaphat's own misdeeds. As recorded in II Chronicles 17:9-10: "They taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people, and the fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat."

World leaders warn about the possibilities of a terrifying Third World War. But when Jehoshaphat led the nation back to God and back to the Scriptures, the Bible says "The fear of the Lord fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat."

Suppose the Word of Jehovah God were to rule America completely. Would not the ^{Reverence and} fear of God fall upon the other nations of the world? I believe that a nation steeped in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures offers more national security than the costliest array of armaments, the strongest military alliances,

the wisest statesmanship and the most painstaking diplomacy. America wholly dedicated to God, entirely obedient to His Word, could enjoy the same promise of peace and blessing Judah enjoyed in the days of Jehoshaphat.

Spiritual renewal in America will come only if we follow Solomon's admonition in II Chronicles 7:14: "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

This quest for renewal demands from all of us the sacrificial commitment of self to God and to righteousness. We cannot stay as we are. We must not slide deeper in the direction we are going morally! We must change! We must move forward!

In the ancient synagogues of Israel upon the completion of the reading of any of the Books of Moses, it was the custom for the congregation to exclaim, "Be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen one another!"

In like manner, when we see each other under the enemies' attack, let us encourage and strengthen one another.

I would say to both Christian and Jew today, "Be strong!
Be strong! And let us strengthen one another!"

BG/sw
9/26/77