



American Jewish Committee
A Century of Leadership

Consultation on the Role of Religious Expression in the Public Square

Introduction

Every day, we wake up to news that we are in a period in which religion is playing an increasingly larger role in all aspects of civic life. Whether it is the Catholic Church's instructing voters how to cast their ballots, or "Justice Sunday" called by the religious right to criticize the federal judiciary, religious voices have become louder and more demanding in public policy debates. AJC has taken very clear stances on important issues affecting the separation of Church and State, but there is a shared realization among many of our leaders that gray areas are emerging, that religious communities are moving more directly into the political sphere, and that we need to consider the meaning and impact of a secular-religious divide for our interests and commitments. To that end, on December 6, 2005, the American Jewish Committee convened a consultation in New York on the appropriate role of religion in public policy debate. The first session of that consultation was a presentation by Professor Richard Parker of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government.¹ The consultation was chaired by Lynn Kroll, Chair of Program and Policy, and Professor Parker's discussion was chaired by Alan Jaffe, Domestic Policy Commission Chair.²

Professor Parker's Remarks

Professor Parker began by noting that the course that he teaches on religion, politics, and public policy at Harvard draws about 80-100 students a semester, which is an indication of the rising interest in religion among the university population. What is

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² This reporting of Professor Parker's remarks, and the ensuing question and answer session, was prepared by Roselyn Bell, AJC's Publications Director.

striking to him as he has worked with these students is that there is no unity to the large part of the American populace who define themselves as Christian, as compared to a minority who define themselves as Jewish or Muslim or Hindu. Rather, Americans consider themselves to be a part of a minority, whether they are or not. This aspect of the country's religious self-image is the centerpiece of what he examined in this presentation.

The United States is the most religious of the industrialized democracies. George Gallup, in polls he has taken of American public opinion for 52 years, has always asked, "Do you believe in the existence of God?" The number responding affirmatively has never gone below 92 percent. That positive response is twice the level it is in Europe, and an indication of what is distinctive about America.

In addition, over 80 percent of Americans identify themselves as Christian. Over 60 percent define themselves as Protestant Christians. Over 40 percent say that they worship weekly or more often, and over 60 percent say they worship at least monthly. These figures create a concern within the Jewish community about what is perceived as a large homogeneity of Christians.

Identifying himself within this religious mosaic, Parker said that he is an Episcopalian, the son of an Episcopal minister. His wife is a non-practicing Jew. Both sets of holidays are celebrated in their home, and the children are raised so as to encourage them to choose which faith - or no faith - they will practice as adults. He described himself personally as a "low church" and "Social Gospel" Episcopalian. That means, within the distinctions that Episcopalians make among themselves, he is not Anglo-Catholic and that his father referred to himself as a minister, not a priest. The Social Gospel part meant, in his mother's words, that (as is true for many Mainline Protestants) "the holy trinity was Father, Son, and Franklin Roosevelt."

Religion in America

From the beginning, America's religiosity has been a prominent part of our national story, as exemplified by the Puritan ethic and the Thanksgiving holiday. We are also a nation in which, today, every major religion and most minor religions of the world are represented within our borders. While we have been a country that has exhibited religious intolerance, very little of that intolerance, as compared with Europe, has been directed against the Jews. Rather, the history of religious intolerance in America has been one of Protestant anti-Catholicism and of anti-Mormonism, but not prominently Christian anti-Semitism.

We often think that the starting point for the history of American religious tolerance is the Bill of Rights. In fact, it goes back to European history and, specifically, an English history in which Henry VIII created the Church of England and threw out the Catholic

Church, for reasons that went beyond the need for a male heir. The impact of that separation in England was to create a Protestant church that was the church of the state. The nature of Protestantism, however, created vociferousness – a tradition that has since produced in the U.S. some 1,500 Protestant denominations.

The Evangelicals, for example, are an especially divided community with regard to denominational affiliation. One can't speak simply of "Evangelical attitudes" without first at the least specifying whether one means white, black or Hispanic Evangelicals. Black Christians are overwhelmingly evangelical in their theology, but even more liberal than Jews in their voting patterns. Thus, Evangelicalism in itself does not determine adherents' politics, but can serve as a significant marker.

When asked to identify their religious affiliation, Americans divide along religious lines as follows:

Roughly one quarter of Americans are Roman Catholics;
Roughly one quarter of Americans are white Evangelical Protestants;
Roughly one quarter of Americans are white Mainline Protestants;
Ten percent are African-American Protestants;
Two percent are Jews;
Two percent are Mormons;
One percent are Muslims;
One percent are Orthodox Christians;
Ten percent identifies as agnostic, atheist, or "don't know."

This "pie chart" helps us to understand better the Jewish experience in America.

Looking Back at History

In the seventeenth century, the creation of the Church of England and the spread of dissenting Protestant views that were neither Catholic nor Anglican contributed to the great English Civil War, to the overthrow of the Stuart monarchy, to the creation of the Cromwell revolution and the Puritan parliament, and then the restoration of monarchy and the possibility that England would become the first modern democracy. Thus, when the Founding Fathers wrote the Bill of Rights they were not doing so simply as Enlightenment philosophers influenced by Voltaire, but as Englishmen who knew the history of the English Civil War of only a few decades earlier. They knew that in the aftermath of the Cromwell era, acts of religious tolerance had been put into place that left the Anglican Church as the official church of the state, kept some limited bans on Roman Catholic activity, but reached a compromise with various dissenting Protestant groups that allowed them to grow alongside the Church of England, not entirely equally, but enough to permit a kind of religious pluralism to take root in England.

Thus, what we call American "exceptionalism" may not be all that exceptional. It has, in fact, a very specific English historical root.

Within the U.S. history of Protestant majoritarianism, there was a very progressive tradition as well as a conservative tradition. This progressive tradition manifested itself among Quakers and Unitarians as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, and they played important roles in the shaping of America. We have come to understand from historians like Gordon Wood and Sean Wilentz that the American Revolution in itself did not create a democratic culture. It was only in the years after the revolution that a democratic culture began to emerge from habits of mind that made us egalitarian, democratic and republican after having lived under a monarchical system. The country, though overwhelmingly Protestant, was divided among various Protestant communities: New England was dominated by the Puritans who became the Congregationalists; the South was dominated, at its upper levels, by the Anglicans who became the Episcopalians; the mid-Atlantic states were populated by Presbyterians, Quakers, and, because of the German and Swedish migration, Lutherans. The first American census, conducted in 1790, asked about religious identity. Some 92 percent of those surveyed identified themselves as Christian. Over 90 percent traced their origins to England or the British Isles. There were only about 25,000 Roman Catholics in a population of about 4 million; and there were only about 2,000 or 2,500 Jews.

What thereafter drove America forward in democratic cultural terms was not just Enlightenment ideals but a series of changes that Protestant Christianity underwent during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Protestantism was wrestling with certain issues that involved the ability to read. Literacy was valued among Protestants, going back to Luther's rebellion against the Catholic Church, in which he insisted on each person's right to approach God individually and not have his or her access intermediated by the Church or clergy. To do so, the individual had to be able to read the Bible for himself. Through literacy came increasing tolerance for diversity and insistence on equality—even though America did not do so well on the race issue with regard to diversity and tolerance.

The importance of America's regional diversity was twofold: First, it laid the groundwork for how American religion would evolve over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Mainline Protestant denominations came to predominance among the population north of the Mason-Dixon Line, while south of the same line, Protestant Evangelical denominations, particularly the Baptists, came to the fore. Importantly, this was true among both blacks and whites. Slaves were introduced to Christianity because of the desire of the slave-owners to evangelize, but most of the slave-owners didn't want to teach their slaves to read because then they would stumble across that Exodus story in the Bible. Every major slave rebellion relied on the preaching of the Exodus story to the slaves.

That set up an interesting tension within American Protestantism over the issue of slavery. One can trace this tension from the first bans that the Quakers and Methodists placed on members owning slaves, to the creation of the American Colonization Society to repatriate blacks to Africa in 1816 as a solution to the slave problem, to the beginnings of the Abolition movement, which led to the geographic split of the three largest Protestant denominations in America: the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Presbyterians in the 1840s, two decades before the Civil War. They split along sectional lines over the issues of slavery and Abolition, and connected to it, the issue of biblical literalism (which we still hear about today). These two issues - literalism and slavery - were connected because in the Bible one can find support for slavery, whether in St. Paul or in the Torah. Out of the European Enlightenment came a new way of reading the text, not as the literal word of God, but as the word of God mediated by those who wrote it and edited it and passed it down. This new way of reading the text was essentialist rather than literalist. Thus "Love thy neighbor as thyself" meant that slavery must be abolished. On the other hand, a more literal reading of the Bible would yield a belief that slavery was all right.

This division plays itself out again in post-Civil War debates about the meaning of science, came to the fore again in the Scopes trial, and is playing itself out today in the debate over creationism and intelligent design. This controversy arises out of the debate about Protestant literalism and the reading of the text. The Roman Catholics stayed out of this fight because the Church did not have a good record on science, as Galileo reminds us, and the Church was preoccupied with other problems in Europe. Protestantism, and even Puritanism, were deeply committed to the proofs of reason in defense of faith and science in defense of faith. Isaac Newton, for example, was a devout and mystical Puritan who saw no contradiction between doing science and doing mystical Puritanism.

Protestant literalism also played an important part in changes in the role of women in America. The American Protestant tradition invented the Sunday school in the early nineteenth century as a place where children were brought to be taught to read, the goal being that they could read the Bible. There were two developments that grew out of this: Horace Mann, a reforming Unitarian, realized that this Sunday school model had to be transferred to a public school model - which became public education in America. A second feature of the Sunday school movement was that women were encouraged to teach. Women in America had a higher literacy level than anywhere else in the world at the start of the nineteenth century, although their literacy levels were 20 percent to 25 percent below that of men. Still, 200 years ago half the white female population was capable of reading. Women began to form associations that grew to be national, through the Sunday School movement and later through the Bible and missionary movements. Women, while still prohibited from voting in civil elections, began to acquire experience in democratic institutions and democratic participation in governance within the church.

Peace emerged as an issue that engaged these churches as early as the 1820s because of the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and the rise of republicanism in Europe. Of course, religion also played a role when Americans went to war. If you sing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," you will understand that those who participated in the Civil War on the Union side thought they were going on a religious crusade - as did the soldiers on the Southern side.

After the Civil War, with the growth of a large immigrant population of non-Protestants, Protestant churches were called upon to create a new set of relationships. These involved not just negotiating relations with other Protestant denominations, which they didn't do all that well, but assimilating Catholics and Jews, who had not been present in significant numbers in 1790 and the early part of the nineteenth century.

With rapid industrialization and urbanization came the foundation of the Social Gospel Movement, which laid the groundwork for the Progressive Era that spanned the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The Social Gospel Movement grew out of a trend away from the belief that one's reward would come in heaven toward a belief in the perfectibility of human beings on earth, and thus, the capacity of creating the Promised Land here in America. It included the embrace of rationalism, technology, and science. Because it was created in the framework of a democracy, this movement brought with it a new understanding of the role of the state - not as the limited instrument that the Founding Fathers wanted to keep at arms' length, but an activist, modern state that regulated, protected, and intervened. The exemplars of this tradition were Theodore Roosevelt, the activist Episcopalian, and Woodrow Wilson, the activist Presbyterian, at the start of the twentieth century.

In the 1920s something happened that presaged the contemporary strengthening of the Christian right over the last twenty years. Clyde Wilcox, in *Onward Christian Soldiers*, shows that there have been three periods of Christian right activism in the U.S. in the twentieth century, and each was in reaction to advances made by Christian progressive forces, which began as religious but became multi-denominational or secular. In this way, the Scopes trial was interesting because William Jennings Bryan, the lawyer who took the anti-Darwinist position, was in 1896 the avatar of progressivism and a populist candidate who spoke for the disenfranchised. The mediating term between Bryan the populist candidate and Bryan of the Scopes trial was social Darwinism. What hurt his base was the transformation of Darwinian theory into social Darwinism, which stressed the doctrine of the survival of the fittest - the apotheosis of the conservative capitalist view that the "cream flows to the top" and if you don't make it, you are an inferior form of human being.

What happened in the 1960s that led to today's Christian right upsurge was not simply the abortion issue or prayer in the public schools, but rather more centrally, Martin

Luther King, Jr. and Lyndon Johnson. The 1960s finished the work that the 1860s had not completed. Slavery was made unconstitutional as a consequence of the Civil War, but segregation was quickly made legal. It was not until the 1960s that the overthrow of segregation as a legal system made possible the kind of legal equality across races and groups that is being worked out today. Leading the civil rights movement was Martin Luther King, Jr., but as his biographer Taylor Branch points out, without the term "Reverend" in front of his name, he couldn't have done what he did. The song defining that movement was "Amazing Grace." Surprisingly, it was not a Negro spiritual, but rather was written by a white English sailing captain who was, in fact, a slaver who came to a transformation through religion.

Today the white South has moved from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. In the past it was Democratic chiefly because Abraham Lincoln was Republican. Today it is Republican because Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King were Democrats.

The Contemporary Religious Landscape in America

What we are wrestling with is not new in the American experience and is not a Christian majoritarian view: Catholics, Mainline Protestants, and black Evangelicals are all distrustful of white Evangelicals. If you look at the Pew Center Studies, Jews and Methodists tie at the top for most favorably viewed, at over 80 percent, while Evangelicals are at the 60 percent level and Muslims are just below them - and, strangely, Buddhists are below them. What is remarkable about American culture is that it has not been a Christian majoritarian culture, but a particular kind of Protestant Christian culture, divided from its English antecedents, which celebrated the separation of church and state - not to protect the state but to protect the church.

Jews and the great majority of Christians can find common cause in the separation of church and state. Roman Catholicism is deeply committed to separation of church and state the moment that it begins to sense that the state looks Protestant. Each community speaks out of a certain self-interest. Thus when it comes to prayer at football games, this fight will occur in only about twelve out of the fifty states - and none of them will be in the Northeast.

The trends which we need to understand are the changes in the overall religious landscape of America. The white Evangelical community is not growing as a percentage of the overall American population. They have remained for forty-five to fifty years at about a quarter of the population. When one hears that 40 percent of Americans are "born-again," that includes African American and Hispanic Evangelicals as well as whites, and "born-again" is a term that has to be unpacked to understand who is included.

On the issue much discussed in the media recently of whether to wish people "Happy Holidays" or "Merry Christmas," America has been moving since the middle of the past century into a world of "soft tolerance." That has meant giving up anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism, and coming to understand that it was all right to be different. But we have never taken the next step, which is to understand what makes us different. What is it that the other believes that is distinctive? America needs to move in the direction, not of greater secularism in the public square, but rather of progressing from soft tolerance to strong tolerance.

From his classes, Professor Parker has observed that students don't grow up in religions or, in most cases, in denominations, but in congregations. What keeps faith strong in America is not theology. Only 40 percent of Americans can correctly name five of the Ten Commandments. It is not knowledge that keeps faith strong. Rather, we are a migrant culture, where wave after wave of immigrants have brought their language, dress, food, and their faith to these shores. What has held communities together has been faith. In the foreseeable future it is unlikely that the role of faith as a source of community will go away - nor should it. Part of the emphasis on saying "Merry Christmas" is a response to commercialism - the other "great god" of America. Several years ago, Harvey Cox wrote an *Atlantic Monthly* article entitled "The Market as God" in which he takes Emile Durkheim's definition of religion as being characterized by omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. And what but the market plays that role in America!

There are great opportunities for cross-denominational conversation and cooperation in this country, and an ability to move from soft tolerance to thick or deep tolerance. While there are reasons to fear how certain aspects of certain religious views play themselves out in America, we should not fear that any of those views are majoritarian. We are all minoritarians in this country and should be proud of it.

Question and Answer:

Shrub KEMPNER, Jr., said that while he appreciated the speaker's concluding optimism that we are moving toward a norm of strong tolerance in this country, many of us are concerned that the opposite might be true. He asked the speaker to comment on that perception.

Professor Parker said he was acutely aware that perspective was vitally important, and that the Jewish experience of persecution in the Christian West had been so different from that of most Christians - although Christians have been quite capable of persecuting one another as well. Yet it was striking to him that the communities that had been most likely to be anti-Semitic forty years ago seemed today to be the most philo-Semitic - specifically the pre-millenarian stream within the Evangelical Protestant community. As a Mainline Protestant, he has a number of concerns with that, but is

hard-put to identify doctrinal communities that have beliefs that should worry the Jewish community. There are groups such as the skinheads that are problematic but not from a doctrinal perspective. Roman Catholicism has largely stripped itself of its anti-Semitism, and Mainline Protestantism has been so concerned with humanism for 120 years that they don't do anti-Semitism. What you see are responses of various Christian denominations to the ways the Republican Party has played the white Evangelical community. As a Mainline Protestant, he winces every time George Bush gets up and uses the term "Christian" because he feels that the President does not speak for him. But overall, he doesn't see reasons within the organized Christian community for the Jewish community to be concerned.

Edith EVERETT asked for a working definition of the word Evangelical.

Professor Parker responded that "evangelical" derives from a Greek word that means "preaching the good news," and that all Christians theologically are called upon to preach the good news. But there are significant differences as to how seriously the various denominations take this call. Roman Catholics are the least likely to evangelize. Within the Protestant community, the Mainline Protestants are far less likely to evangelize in the form that the Evangelicals do, and within the Evangelical group there is a continuum from the fundamentalist Evangelicals to the Pentecostals.

Ms. EVERETT commented on the earlier observations about the critical role played by Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr. She noted that Johnson himself had a complete metamorphosis on the subject of civil rights from when he was in Congress to when he was president - and so redemption is always possible.

Rick BERKMAN said that he was intrigued by the observation that America was not a majoritarian religious community, but a collection of minorities. He felt that this view needed to be spread through the religious and political communities, so that debates were not framed as the secularists vs. the religious or the Jews vs. the millenarians. He asked how this could be done, outside the academic frameworks.

Professor Parker responded that, perhaps as an occupational liability, he was a great believer in education. He observed that some of the information he had presented seemed new to this audience, and so this kind of knowledge should be disseminated around the country. What we need is a better understanding of the landscape and history of religion in America, and what the elements of continuity and discontinuity are. He also felt that it was necessary to "unpack" the claim of the white Evangelicals to speak for all Christians, and there Jews, non-Evangelical Christians, and Muslims have a role to play in reminding Americans that the Evangelicals are themselves a minority religious community. The message should be that we are in fact a Judeo-Christian culture, not just a Christian culture, and one in which mutual tolerance is the bedrock of the survival of all.

Mr. BERKMAN responded that he was gun-shy of the term "Judeo-Christian," and Professor Parker acknowledged that the term was problematic. The questioner noted how AJC, through its history of inter-religious dialogue, has gotten to know the beliefs of other faith groups, and that this process should be extended to other groups.

Lynn KROLL said that the speaker had helped us understand how the public square is shaped - and that it is not a cross or a six-point star. She asked for his comments on how AJC as both a secular and a Jewish organization ought to participate in the conversation in the public square - being neither a seminary nor a religious body.

Professor Parker replied that by being present in the debate and realizing that there is a multiplicity of voices, AJC could help other Jews understand that they are not alone in the American religious landscape. For example, in a poll taken a few years ago among the Jewish community of San Francisco, one third of the Jews polled said they didn't think a Jew could get elected to public office; this was at a time when Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein were both U.S. senators from California. There is a part of all communities that fears more than it understands. Therefore, within the American Jewish community, an important role for AJC is to help the Jewish community understand the religious landscape in America. A second role is for AJC, not as a religious community but as one deeply engaged in the public square, to welcome the discussion of the appropriate places for religion in the public square. He drew a distinction between the government and the public square, and within government, various occupations, some of which may have greater latitude to explore religion publicly. Judges and members of the military, in particular, and civil servants as well should keep religion out of their conversation. Elected public officials cannot shove the God question out of the public square.

The question is how to navigate it. The Roman Catholic Church, the largest single denomination, is acutely aware of having to walk the line carefully. Father Bryan Hehir, a former dean of the Harvard Divinity School and a Catholic priest, who helped draft the bishops' statements on the economy and nuclear disarmament, emphasizes that in speaking to Roman Catholics, clergy should clarify the biblical foundations, the Church teachings, and the Catholic Church's view, but seek out trans-religious and nonreligious forms that justify their positions on social policy issues. You can't ask churches or synagogues not to speak to their members in religious terms - to help them shape their moral imaginations - but you can help them understand the difference between religion and ethics in the public square. Ideally, religion should come to the public square with its ethics intact, and have an ethical debate among various traditions without bringing religion into the debate. We can't outlaw religion from the debate in the public square, but ideally, religion should be translated into ethics, which can then seek common ground with other ethical traditions.

Bob GOODKIND asked for clarification about what the speaker thought elected public officials should be doing with regard to the debate in the public square.

Professor Parker said the "should" is conditioned by the world as it is. We should not expect that elected officials, for reasons of electoral opportunism as well as sincere faith, will not bring expressions of their own faith to the debate in the public square. Where you will see vehement arguments is not just between Christians and Jews, but between Evangelicals like Reverend Jerry Falwell and Mainline Christians like himself, as to what is Christian about a particular set of ethical beliefs. He draws different ethical conclusions than does Reverend Falwell from reading the same texts. On the other hand, government employees like judges, civil servants, and members of the military should be prohibited from engaging in "God talk." If we get more of this talk moved from talking about religion vs. religion to talking about competing ethical systems that have different religious foundations, then we can remove some of the anger from the discussion. There is a lot of anger that is endemic to the complexity of American religious culture, but in his view America is ready to move from soft to strong tolerance. It will require real work on everyone's part - but we can leverage what the Christian right has brought to the table into something better.

Mont LEVY asked whether Archbishop Burke of St. Louis and others had crossed a line in withholding communion from candidates who take positions contrary to the Church's position, and whether the IRS tax deduction was a good way to get at this. He also asked whether from an historical perspective the Evangelical right has greater power now than it did in the past, and if so, what does that mean? Was this likely to continue, or was it one of those pendulum swings that occur?

Professor Parker said that on the matter of withholding communion from candidates, he was a strict separationist. John Kerry as a Catholic has to decide what he has to do, and fellow Catholics have to decide what they have to do. On many issues, polls will show that Catholics don't agree with their bishops. And the rest of us can offer respectful commentary saying, "We are concerned. We find this a troubling model for all of us." But then we should stop - and not get into the business of Catholic-baiting.

As to the Evangelicals, he said that he tries to show his students that what has happened in the last thirty years is that religion has become the normative frame for the expression of a complex culture that was based on slavery. The last vestige of the legitimacy of that culture was taken away from it in the 1960s by the civil rights movement, and so when a society goes into crisis, it often turns to religion. In a parallel way, in the Middle East the failure of Arab nationalism to create viable Arab states in the wake of colonialism has fanned the fires of radical Islam, whereas Islam did not play a role earlier with Nasser or the Baathists. Cultures that fail in their states' ability to defend cultural norms give religion an opportunity to fill the void - and they often do so with the most extreme forms of the religion. Religion offers a form of guidance and

control as well as stories about a people's origins and behavior that come from outside the state. They offer an alternative worldview.

As for the Evangelicals, he did not think they are now at the height of their political power. In the 1950s there was an alliance between the Evangelicals and Southern Democrats on a host of issues-anti-Communist votes and the HUAC was about an alliance of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans. The crisis for the Democratic Party is to figure out how to build a national party without the white South. But the portion of the U.S. population that identifies itself as Evangelical is not growing, it is just getting more attention from the media.

Robert RIFKIND stated that while it might be "looking a gift horse in the mouth" and not fanning the fires of philo-Semitism, what concerns the Jewish community today, despite the rise of soft tolerance or strong tolerance, is four-fold: 1) Evangelical Zionism is not our Zionism. Those who believe that not one square inch of the Holy Land may be surrendered because it is God's will may get very angry with us when the State of Israel decides to surrender some land - and they already have. The "love-in" between the Zionist Evangelicals and ourselves may come to an abrupt and nasty halt. 2) Insofar as evangelizing seeks to turn Jews around and show them the error of their ways, it is likely to fail - and that will also lead to frustration and anger when Jews don't convert. 3) The matter of vocabulary: Martin Luther King, Jr., didn't persuade us that segregation had to come to an end because Jesus said so but because segregation was wrong. Jews would not have marched with him under a banner of Jesus, but only under a banner that human inequality was unacceptable. Increasingly, we hear a vocabulary that is Christological in the public square. That vocabulary marginalizes Jews - and Jews speak of this as a "Christian country" - and that raises serious questions in our mind. It raises questions in the minds of Christian children as well, who may ask who are the Jews and are they a part of America. This vocabulary is part of a worldview that sees issues through a religious and specifically Christian conception of the world. The issue about Darwinism in the public schools is not a values issue, but a question of how you see the world. A world that will not tolerate Darwin is one in which we are increasingly marginalized. 4) Increasingly federal funds are going to faith-based initiatives. Almost inevitably that means competition at the public trough for funds, and that leads to a competition that is new to American religious life. It could lead to some ugly turns, such as inquiries about what you are teaching with those funds.

Professor Parker said, "It is always good to worry, but it isn't always good to be alarmed." On Evangelical Zionism: A portion of the Christian right has moved to a new form of philo-Semitism because of its reading of the Book of Revelations and the Book of Daniel. His branch of Christianity - like the Catholic Church - is a bit embarrassed by the Book of Revelations and doesn't emphasize it in its Gospel reading selections. However this gets the Evangelical right away from anti-Semitism is good enough in itself for him. He does not foresee this process turning against the Jewish community

over giving back territory in Gaza and the West Bank. The question of Jerusalem might be more complex, as it is in the Jewish community, but giving up Gaza and the West Bank will not have an impact on the Evangelical pre-millennial understanding.

On the issue of "Jews won't convert," he said there was a time when this issue was much larger - as shown in James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword*. In Mark Silk's *Spiritual Politics*, Silk traces how the language of Judeo-Christian culture emerged in the 1930s from the cooperation between Jewish and liberal Protestant leaders in the fight against European fascism.

As for Christological language marginalizing Jews, he suggested that while he can't stop Jews from feeling marginalized, he would reframe it for them: Jews are watching others fight about issues that matter to them, but aren't meant to marginalize Jews. For example, liberal Christians in the last thirty years have been largely preoccupied with issues about women and gays. The consequence of liberal Christianity living out through the civil rights and antiwar movements their own theology meant that they had to reexamine their own behavior and put their house in order vis-à-vis ordination of women and gays. We are now at a stage where the women's issue is settled and the gay issue has been talked to the point of exhaustion, and so the focus is changing to the issue of global poverty.

On the Darwinist-creationist debate, again this is an internal Christian debate among various denominations, and he recommended not getting pulled in by the polls that say only 25 percent to 30 percent of Americans believe that the world evolved in an evolutionary fashion. It doesn't mean that all the rest are creationists. Most are trying to hold onto their faith that God had a hand in the creation of the world without rejecting science. The stupidity of pollsters leads to asking the question in a way that does not allow for expression of the continuum of belief.

On faith-based initiatives, the legislation actually goes back to the war on poverty during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Since the 1960s, congregations have been able to apply for federal funding for housing or anti-poverty programs. The rule was that one set up a 501(c)(3) and kept the God-talk out of those programs. The change came with Attorney General John Ashcroft's inserting the charitable choice amendment into the Welfare Reform Act of 1995. Bush has tried to push forward an expanded version of charitable choice, but has been stopped. Various cases are working their way through the courts including one in which Kentucky Baptist Homes, which receives federal funds, fired a closeted lesbian woman who counsels teenage boys. He found it appalling that such an agency could receive charitable choice funds.

Carol GOWN asked the speaker to expand on the three groups of Evangelicals he had named - white Evangelicals, black Evangelicals and Hispanic Evangelicals - and how they relate to one another and are distinguished from each other.

Andrew BAKER asked about the impact of the positive evolution of Christianity in America toward a more heterogeneous society upon the evolution of Christian groups in Europe in terms of the role of the church.

Jack LEVIN asked what distinguished Evangelicals from Mainline Protestants; he asked for definitions of "strong tolerance," "philo-Semitism," and "premillenarian." He asked, if there was little anti-Semitism in this country, why the trend toward supporting the Palestinians against the Israelis and ignoring the terrorism while condemning the defense against terrorism by Israelis?

Professor Parker explained that the term "evangelical," in the sense of preaching the good news, applied to all branches of Christianity, but different denominations carry it out with differing degrees of intensity. At the start of the nineteenth century virtually all Protestant denominations could have been called Evangelical, including some, like the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, who are today Mainline, in the sense that they supported missionary work around the world. The difference arose in the post-Civil War era when the South moved away from the rest of the country. The difference today is that white Evangelicals, black Evangelicals, and Hispanic Evangelicals share common theological and ecclesial tenets, in terms of the absolute importance of the individual's choice of Jesus as his savior, usually as an adult and usually through full-body immersion in the ritual of baptism. The Mainliners are more like the Catholic Church in that one is baptized at birth, and the tendency to evangelize is through good works rather than preaching the word. The difference between the white and black Evangelicals is related to the white-black experience in the South and throughout America. Blacks, before and after the Civil War, mainly Baptists and Methodists, set up parallel churches because the white Baptist and Methodist churches excluded them. The black churches, because of poverty and discrimination, became more than churches. They became communities of care - including schools, job centers, networking centers, as the Catholic churches were for Irish immigrants in the Northeast. The consequence of the history of racism was that black Evangelicals vote Democratic, while white Evangelicals vote Republican. Hispanics in this and other matters fall in between. A further distinction exists between Evangelicals, fundamentalists, and Pentecostals - and these differences include schisms and wars that have gone on for over hundreds of years.

On the role of Europe, England and Germany played pivotal roles in shaping America's historical Protestant religious identity, but are today much less influential. The theological influences, such as the German tendency to read the Bible nonliterally (parallel to the influence of German Reform Judaism on American Judaism), largely stopped after Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich's generation. One area where this is not true is with the global debt reduction movement associated with the Jubilee year.

The stronger tolerance idea: Tolerance can grow stronger and suppler through a deeper understanding of who we are and who the other is. If we don't know what we believe, which many of us don't because we grow up in congregations and not in denominations, then we devalue ourselves and others through a shallow "I'm o.k., you're o.k." approach. It would be better for all of us to take our traditions more seriously as to how they shape our identity, and thus be more open to how other traditions have shaped the identity of others. The term "millenarian" refers to whether we are living in Christ's time and consequently, the significance of the Second Coming, but it was too complex to explain on one foot.

As to the support for Palestinians, he referred to the Pew data. He did not think that it showed there was a dramatic rise in support for the Palestinians. There was in his church, the Episcopalian Church, and among the Presbyterians, a debate on divestment- but it was too complex a debate to explain here.

Peter ROSENBLATT noted that he had worked for Lyndon Johnson and felt he was far more a politician than a religious figure. Johnson was a member of the Christian Church, which was Evangelical. Jimmy Carter was also an Evangelical and also came from the South. Both represented different strains of Evangelical thought than one sees today represented in Congress and the Executive branch. It is not conservatism, but a species of radicalism - and he wondered how we got there. If Mainline Protestant attitudes vis-à-vis Israel persist as they are, we might see far greater division between Judaism and Mainline Protestantism than we have ever seen between Judaism and Evangelicalism.

Steven BAYME, commenting on the prediction that Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank would not arouse Evangelical ire, noted that withdrawals from the West Bank would be quite different from the disengagement from Gaza, because Gaza was not within the biblical borders, whereas the West Bank represented the biblical heartland. The backlash both within the Evangelical community and the Jewish community would be far stronger than what imagined.

What he found provocative in the presentation was the concept of "deep tolerance." The tolerance that has existed in America since World War II has been basically a social contract between Jews and Christians not to criticize one another's faiths. That contract is now unraveling with the growing proliferation of faiths, and also by the empowerment of religious spokespersons to express their ideology, even if it flies in the face of what others believe. Thus, in 1980 Bailey Smith broke the social contract by saying "God doesn't listen to the prayer of a Jew." He never apologized for his theology, but he apologized for breaking the social contract. By contrast, after 9/11, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson claimed that the sins of New York City brought about the disaster. There was a similar break in the social contract, but no apology was forthcoming; they were merely stating their convictions. Therefore, Bayme suggested while he was

attracted to the concept of deep tolerance, there is a major roadblock: the more that religious leaders speak their minds, oblivious to the feelings of others, the more social tensions will increase.

Carol NELKIN commented on the speaker's statement that judges should not speak their minds on religious issues in the public square. She asked whether that extended to Supreme Court confirmation hearings. The opinions of Judge Samuel Alito on religion might have more long-lasting effects upon us all than the opinions of some politicians.

Professor Parker agreed with the statement that the present political thrust was "radicalism not conservatism." He quoted John Kenneth Galbraith as saying after the last presidential election, "I never thought I'd long for the Reagan administration." Something has changed, and this is not the conservatism of Dwight D. Eisenhower or Thomas Dewey or Wendell Wilkie. Eisenhower had a heart attack after he had to sign a budget bill that included a \$50 million deficit, which is small compared to recent numbers. This is big-government conservatism, an expansionist conservatism, an imperial conservatism. Bush signed into law the biggest expansion of Medicare since Medicare's creation. Professor Parker characterized it as a form of radicalism on the right.

A lot of the religious framing recently in politics has served as a proxy for a community that was regionally and culturally isolated throughout American history by the fact of slavery and later by the fact of segregation. The civil rights legislation of the 1960s tore away the ability of the state to defend that culture, and so the culture had to look elsewhere for a frame of reference it could use in public dialogue to legitimate its values, and it chose religion. The idea of the Moral Majority was not created by Jerry Falwell, but rather by Richard Vigurie and Paul Weyrich, who came up with the idea and then went church-shopping and found Falwell as the vessel to bring the white South into the Republican camp. It is a political story as much as a religious story.

To us as a Jewish audience, he stressed the importance of seeing the variability of the landscape that is not Jewish around us. It is important to understand that there is not just a monolithic world of the "goyim," but rather we live in a world of people who live in faith traditions that consider themselves minorities, even if they often are not. A good book on the Evangelical movement is entitled *Embattled but Thriving*, and this is a good description of the mentality being expressed. The fact that Robertson and Falwell are so often quoted is a function of the media and not due to their inherent strength. The Moral Majority went bankrupt in the late 1980s, and the Christian Coalition effectively did likewise in 2000. Christian Coalition staffers admitted that they "were never in 50 states." The media culture exaggerates their importance and simplifies the story because it loves conflict.

There is a real cultural struggle going on in the U.S., but Robertson and Falwell are not the leaders of it. They rode the wave of cultural change in the 1970s and 1980s, but the changes were set in motion by the events of the 1960s, particularly desegregation. The leader of the religious right today is not Robertson or Falwell, but James Dobson. The Evangelical Protestants who are the core of the Robertson-Falwell base reached out repeatedly to conservative Jews and conservative Catholics, some of whom were ready to come together. Why? Because of America's history of religious diversity and pluralism. We are faced with a kind of radicalism today, but we can deal with it because it is at its center not a religious crisis. Jews will not be disadvantaged by this situation, if they are willing to reach out and encourage a deeper tolerance, which AJC has historically supported, and that we dampen our own fears.

The story of Mainline Protestants and the support of Israel was too complex an issue to be dealt with here. He said that it goes back to the 1970s, when the two groups were closely allied working for ecumenical tolerance, and there is a story of wounds on both sides. He does not think that the breach is unbridgeable, despite the differences and the feelings. This is not the beginnings of a new Nazi Christianity in America.

About Alito, he said that he would prefer that religion not be the subject of interrogation at Senate judicial nominee hearings. In Alito's case, there is a track record from his work in the Reagan administration which should make it unnecessary to inquire about his religion specifically. He thinks that judges should not have to campaign for office.

Alan Jaffe thanked the speaker for a brilliant presentation and invited him to come back to spend another hour on the subject of the Mainline Protestants and support of Israel.