March 4, 2015
About the Religious Freedom Project

The Religious Freedom Project (RFP) at Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs is the nation’s only university-based program devoted exclusively to the analysis of religious freedom, a basic human right restricted in many parts of the world.

Under the leadership of Director Thomas Farr and Associate Director Timothy Shah, the RFP engages a team of international scholars to examine and debate the meaning and value of religious liberty; its importance for democracy; and its role in social and economic development, international diplomacy, and the struggle against violent religious extremism.

The RFP began in 2011 with the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation. In 2014 that support continued, while the project also began a three-year partnership with Baylor University and its Institute for Studies of Religion under Director Byron Johnson.

For more information about the RFP’s research, teaching, publications, conferences, and workshops, visit our website at http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/rfp.

About the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs

The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, created within the Office of the President in 2006, is dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. Two premises guide the center’s work: that a deep examination of faith and values is critical to address these challenges, and that the open engagement of religious and cultural traditions with one another can promote peace.

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Introduction

On March 4, 2015, the Religious Freedom Project, in partnership with Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion, hosted a lively dinner conversation on “Baptist Contributions to Religious Liberty,” featuring three renowned American evangelical leaders from the Baptist tradition: Pastor Rick Warren, founder of Saddleback Church and best-selling author; Judge Ken Starr, president and chancellor of Baylor University and former solicitor general of the United States; and Dr. Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Drawing upon their decades of experience serving faith and academic communities, the three engaged in a spirited discussion of the Baptist tradition and its influence on the American system of religious liberty. The conversation ranged widely, addressing the participation of Baptists in civil society, their leading roles in local and national government, their influence on US international religious freedom policy, and, perhaps most importantly, the powerful Baptist theological arguments for universal religious liberty.

We are confident that this little publication will enlighten and enrich your understanding of the history and value of religious freedom, and provide a bit of entertainment to boot. We also encourage you to take a look at the edited transcript or video from the full-day conference held earlier in the day on proselytism and development in pluralistic societies. So read on and visit our website for more information: berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/RFP.
THOMAS FARR: Well, my friends, again, welcome on behalf of the Religious Freedom Project (RFP). I’m going to introduce our after-dinner trio in just a minute. I want to just do a couple of things first if you don’t mind.

Many of you know that I came to the issue of religious freedom in a couple of ways, one quite sensible and the other less so. The first was through my Catholic faith. The second was through the Department of State, and that is really an odd passage. [Laughter] Partly because of that experience, however, we in the RFP focus, among other things, on foreign policy. We also have a tradition of trying to recognize government officials who are involved in this issue and other allied issues, so we would like to mention Ambassador Ken Blackwell, who is here with us tonight. He was the United States Ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights under President George H. W. Bush. Ken, we’re delighted to have you with us tonight. [Applause]

I’d also like to acknowledge the presence of a personal hero of mine, and I think he’s a hero to a lot of people in this room. His name is Frank Wolf. Late last year Mr. Wolf left the House of Representatives after 34 years of service to Virginia and to the country, and, I would argue, to the world. Frank Wolf left behind a remarkable record. He was justly called the “conscience of the Congress” because of his fierce, unrelenting, but eloquent defense of freedom of conscience. His convictions on this issue led Mr. Wolf to accomplish many things in his years in Congress. In my mind, foremost among them was the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act. That law mandates that the United States advance religious freedom and oppose religious persecution in its foreign policy. IRFA, as we call it, also created the position of the person tasked with leading US religious freedom policy: our friend, Ambassador David Saperstein.

It would be a tragedy of the first order in my view if Frank Wolf had retired and “gone fishing” at the very moment in modern history when the persecution of Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities seems to be so dramatically increasing around the world, reaching the level of a global crisis in religious freedom. For the first time in 2,000 years, the very presence of Christianity in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East is at risk. We’re not just seeing the persecution of Christian persons, which is terrible, but also a threat to the presence of Christianity itself. And the rise of anti-Semitism in the world, especially in Europe, is deeply troubling.

Well, thanks be to God, Frank Wolf has not gone fishing. He’s not left the fray. Since leaving Congress, he’s already visited Iraq and issued a report on the terrible assault on Christians and others there. His voice is stronger than ever. I’m most gratified to tell you that Frank has just recently assumed the new Wilson Chair in Religious Freedom at our partner institution, Baylor University. [Applause] From that platform, Frank’s voice will be heard in places where he needs urgently to be heard, including in the academy.

Among other things, I’m delighted to say, he will participate in events and initiatives of the Religious Freedom Project here in Washington, DC. Frank’s wife, Carolyn, is here with us tonight. Carolyn, thank you so much for joining us. Frank, thank you for your service to our country and for honoring us with your presence tonight. [Applause]

As many of you know, we love to have these dinners and afterward hold a postprandial discussion. I think that means an after-dinner conversation. [Laughter] We want these things to be entertaining and educational at the same time. We’ve had a number of these events and many of you have attended them. We like to cover all the religious traditions in our work and so we try to reflect them in our dinners. In December, just to give one example, we had a conversation on Islamic and Catholic understandings of religious freedom with Shaykh Hamza Yusuf and Professor Robert George.

Tonight, we have with us three of the most influential leaders in American public life, each, as it happens, with deep ties to the
Baptist tradition of this great nation. Their conversation will go where the spirit leads them, so to speak, but we have framed it as “Baptist Contributions to Religious Liberty.” And for some very good reasons.

I first want to say a word about Judge Ken Starr. He is president and chancellor of Baylor University, which is the oldest Baptist institution of higher learning in the nation and the largest Protestant research institution in the world. He’s a former solicitor general of the United States who has argued three-dozen cases before the Supreme Court. We want you back, Judge, arguing before the Supreme Court. In his five short years at Baylor, I think it’s fair to say that Judge Starr has dramatically increased that great university’s profile and its influence in the United States and internationally. Now, Judge Starr has many talents. One of the best of them is to lead an enlightening and entertaining discussion on religious liberty. Judge Starr, thanks for being here tonight.

Pastor Rick Warren is the founder and senior pastor of Saddleback Church in California, one of the largest churches in the United States and arguably the single most influential church in the world because of its extraordinary outreach. I believe, Rick, I’ve heard you say that Saddleback is in some 190 plus countries around the world. We’ll hear a little more about that tonight. Pastor Rick, as most of you know, is author of The Purpose Driven Life, which has sold over 30 million copies. Not bad. [Laughter] Those of you who have written books are all chuckling. Pastor Rick, you were quite wonderful at our public conference today, as Gene Rivers already mentioned. Thank you for being with us again tonight.

Dr. Russell Moore is president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. He has served as the dean of the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and has authored several books. His most recent is entitled Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel. Dr. Moore is rapidly emerging as one of the most influential Christian leaders in American life. Russell, it’s a real pleasure to have you with us again tonight and welcome you to the fellowship of our discussants.

Now, before I turn the mike over to Judge Starr, I want to say something about the relationship of these three men to my own tradition, which happens to be Roman Catholicism. We had a public conversation here today on religious freedom and proselytism, but I’m not going to urge that any of them cross the Tiber and become papists—although I do want you to know that the invitation is there. [Laughter] You know, we can have a Catholic altar call right here tonight.

The thing is that all three of these men have had an influence in the Vatican. All three of them have met Pope Francis, and I was there on all three occasions when it happened. When Judge Starr met the Pope, it was part of an international conference sponsored by Baylor and Georgetown. I had the honor of introducing him to Pope Francis. I told the Pope that Judge Starr’s presence as president of Baylor represented a Catholic-Baptist alliance on religious freedom. Pope Francis beamed. He really liked that. I have to tell you, I’ve made a lot of hay out of that smile. I have a photo of it in my office. I’ve been telling lots of people about it. Unfortunately, Tim has told me that I’ve got to stop telling people that this was an ex cathedra smile and that Catholics are now obligated to support the Catholic-Baptist Religious Freedom Project. [Laughter] I’ve consulted a couple of canon lawyers, and according to them, there’s no such thing as an ex cathedra smile, so I reluctantly have to abandon that line of argument.

I am going to keep pointing out, however, that Pope Francis’ enthusiasm about our work was a darn good sign as far as we’re concerned, and one that we at the Religious Freedom Project, together with Baylor’s Institute for Studies of Religion, have taken to heart. We’re very proud of the collaboration between these two great faith-based institutions.
When Rick Warren and Russell Moore met the Pope, I was a spectator. They were both speakers at a conference on marriage at the Vatican. The Pope opened the conference, and that’s when he met these two gentlemen. The speeches those two men gave in the Vatican were quite amazing. In an auditorium packed with Catholics—there were others, but there were cardinals, archbishops, bishops, nuns, and priests, and lay Catholics, many of whom had never heard an evangelical sermon—Rick Warren and Russell Moore separately brought down the house. I say that as a loyal son of the Catholic Church. They were quite simply powerful. Tears were shed. People leapt to their feet. It was a privilege to be there to see it.

Now, I’m going to end with a brief story I’ve told before, so forgive me if you’ve heard this. Some of you haven’t. It fits so well I can’t resist. Russell, I hope you’ll forgive me for telling it once more. On the first day of the conference at the Vatican, we were all required to present our passports to the Swiss guards at the gate. You know the Swiss guards; they’re wearing their colorful uniforms, but this time with side arms. I mean this was serious. The gate was locked. This was a sensible security precaution because Pope Francis was opening the conference.

When Baptist Pastor Russell Moore arrived at the gate, he reached into his pocket for his passport. He pulled out another document of similar size that he had picked up, he said, in his hotel room “inadvertently.” It wasn’t his passport. Russell Moore presented to the Swiss guards at the gates of the Vatican a copy of Martin Luther’s 95 Theses. [Laughter] And they let him in!

Judge Starr, how’s that for a segue into a conversation about Baptist contributions to religious liberty? Gentlemen, would you join us up on the stage? [Applause]

KEN STARR: Please join me in thanking Tom Farr, whom I affectionately call Mr. Ambassador. [Applause] Tom, Tim, and the other wonderful leaders of the RFP: thank you. Please take this home [holding an RFP brochure]. This is really good, the work of the Religious Freedom Project. Tom Banchoff, director of the Berkley Center and vice president for global engagement, thank you for the support of Georgetown University for this very important initiative that, to put it simply, has global significance, as well as a significance right next door. There is a lot to talk about.
Let me begin by first saying it’s an honor to be here. It’s a privilege to be here. We at Baylor are so deeply pleased and feel blessed to be a part of this effort with our senior partner, the RFP.

Let me also take the liberty, if I may, to introduce my colleague, vice president and chief of staff of the president, Tommey Lou Davis, who teaches classics. Tommey Lou, would you please stand up? She’s from Little Rock. For Washington Redskins fans, she taught Robert Griffin III, your starting quarterback. [Laughter] It’s been announced: He chose Latin. Is that appropriate for Georgetown? [Laughter]

Let me begin by drawing our minds to the words of the First Amendment. We should all meditate on these words: “Congress,—now more broadly any governmental entity—shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” There’s a comma after religion, and then there’s a semicolon. The first freedoms were viewed as a unity by the founding generation. The words didn’t spring full blown, as it were, from the head of Zeus. They reflected a great and grand tradition.

I’m reminded of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as recounted in the Gospel according to St. Luke. In St. Luke’s recording of Jesus at the synagogue, Jesus presents the scroll and draws from the words of the Prophet Isaiah. He’s there to proclaim the spirit is upon him. The word freedom enters. The word oppression is there. Human beings are being oppressed: “I’ve come in the spirit of the great Prophet Isaiah to pronounce freedom.” (See Luke 4:18-19.)

“Most people will relate to Wisconsin v. Yoder because we are a very individualistic people. We don’t like statism. Most of us don’t. It’s just not in our culture… Liberty tends to be the baseline. And RFRA was a powerful re-articulation. Religious freedom is the baseline, and it fits into our most beautiful traditions.”

Ken Starr

It was John Locke who gave a bouquet to Baptists for fighting for the cause of religious freedom and, really, freedom of the mind, which is so important in the academic world. It’s really freedom of conscience. It is a profound respect for the dignity of each human being that he or she will in fact be ultimately accountable in an eternal way for what he or she is doing and has done.

George Bancroft, the great historian of American history, said that the trophy with respect to religious freedom goes to the Baptists. My two very distinguished colleagues here know this history better than I do. At the time, colonial Americans were beginning to wrestle with revolutionary ideas. We had not moved very far as a culture in terms of wanting independence from England, but what about independence of the mind?

Isaac Backus, a Baptist pastor in Massachusetts, wrote his magnificent pamphlet in Lockean terms but also in biblical terms. Of course, he was building on what Roger Williams had said—who in turn was building on what Thomas Helwys in England had said—when he bravely wrote a pamphlet and sent it to His Majesty James I in 1612. As we say in Texas, His Majesty didn’t cotton to that. [Laughter] It was a very liberal document, very Lockean before John Locke wrote. Helwys was cast into darkness, so to speak. James I imprisoned him, and there he languished and died.

On a happier note, during the revolution, there was a conversation underway about the meaning of independence and political freedom. No lesser light than Mr. Madison...
was instructed by a Baptist pastor, John Leland, who actually hailed from New England. Leland was traveling up and down the colonies and spent a lot of time in Virginia. He's identified in American history as a Virginian Baptist pastor. We do know that Mr. Madison was outraged when he saw Baptist pastors imprisoned in the Culpeper city jail simply because of what they were teaching and preaching. Thomas Jefferson held Pastor Leland, theology aside, in the highest regard for his intellectual gifts and his learning. Leland also was a pretty good politician. He could have been a pretty serious competitor against Mr. Madison in Orange County—not California, but Virginia—for membership in the Constitutional Convention.

There's all that history. Then how did the First Amendment come to be? Mr. Madison stood for election in the House of Representatives from central Virginia, and he won. He had overwhelming Baptist support, led by John Leland but others as well. He had made a pledge, a solemn pledge, that when he got to the First Congress in New York, he would move to have a Bill of Rights, including the protection of our first freedoms. And religious freedom must be pretty special to come before the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, the freedom of the people to assemble peaceably, and the freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances. Those are the words of the First Amendment.

Baptists are very mindful of that history. It continues to be part of their DNA. That's what we want to talk about this evening. Thank you for being here. Forgive that overly long context, but Tom gave me permission to set the stage briefly. I hope I set the stage, even if not briefly. Rick, tell us about Saddleback and religious freedom issues as you're encountering them in your pastoral work.

RICK WARREN: Let me first just thank you for coming tonight. Thank you for your support of the Religious Freedom Project. This matters. There are a lot of dinners I can go to that don't matter. This one matters. As the Judge just said, this is the first freedom. It's the first phrase of the first sentence of the first paragraph of the First Amendment. It's the fundamental freedom that makes America different, because no other nation was founded on freedom of religion—to live it, to practice it, to propagate it. If I don't have the freedom to believe what I want to believe and live my beliefs, I don't need freedom of the press. If I don't have the freedom to believe what I believe—the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion—I don't need freedom of speech. If I don't have the freedom of religion, I don't need freedom of assembly. This one sets all the others in motion.

Thank you for your support and attendance. Thank you for your support in finance. Those of you who helped support this partnership between Baylor and Georgetown, thank you for all that you do in this.

You mentioned all of my heroes—Backus, Leland, Smith, Helwys, and others. There's a book that's out of print called Patriot Preachers. It contains sermons of the revolution. There are a few Anglicans and a few others in there, but it's mostly Baptists. When you read their words, you know why we had a revolution. There's no doubt who is firing this call to freedom—not just freedom from England, but as you said, freedom of conscience, freedom of religion. I claim that heritage.

At Saddleback, it plays out in many, many different ways. One of the things we do is what we call civil forums. They are not religious entities, but they are forums that say
that the church has a right to be at the table to speak on this issue. The very first one we did was on the Holocaust. I brought in 11 survivors of the Holocaust who were all in their nineties. I said, “All I want you to do is sit on my stage and tell your story.” They sat there and told it to 4,000 or 5,000 Jews and Christians combined. We all wept together and said, “Never again.” That was the very first civil forum we did.

We’ve done them on reconciliation. We’ve done them on genocide, like in Rwanda. We’ve done them on religious liberty. We’ve done them on everything from poverty to disease to literacy and things like that, just to make this statement: Don’t try to pigeonhole us into the freedom of worship.

The Constitution does not guarantee freedom of worship. It guarantees the freedom of religion. There’s a huge difference in that. There are people who would like to just say, “You have the freedom of religion, or freedom of worship.” If that’s true, then my only freedom is during the hour a week I go to mass or to service. That’s the only thing I’m free to do. The Constitution doesn’t guarantee that. The Constitution says we have freedom of religion.

This whole myth of the separation of church and state now means the exact opposite of what Jefferson meant. Thomas Jefferson wrote two very important letters on religious liberty. One of them is very famous. It’s to the Danbury Baptists, in which he uses the phrase, “separation of church and state.” It’s not in the Constitution. It’s in the letter to the Baptists. The other letter—which I used to own and is now going to be put in the Museum of the Bible here in Washington, DC—is to the African Methodist Episcopalians of Connecticut. In it, there’s a phrase where he says, “There is no other part of the Constitution dearer to me than that which gives the liberty of the conscience and the freedom of religion, and it should be”—I’m paraphrasing now—“untouched.”

It’s interesting to me that when Jefferson wrote about freedom of religion and separation of church and the state, he wrote that letter on a Friday. On the following Sunday, he went to church. Now, Jefferson was in no sense an orthodox Christian, but he did go to church every week. He went to a church that had been planted in the United States Capitol and met there for six years. There was a church in our Capitol for six years. Clearly, the guy who’s writing this about separation of church and state has no problem with going to a church that meets in a government building. The idea of separation is totally foreign.

I could give you many examples. Maybe later I’ll tell you about how I took on the IRS on behalf of all clergy in 2002. It cost me about a quarter of a million dollars, but we won. We got the Warren bill passed in Congress, which was unanimously passed by the House and unanimously passed by the Senate and signed by President Bush. The bottom line is I felt it was a liberty issue. I said, “You picked the wrong guy.” We went to court. It took me two and a half years. It was right in the middle of my writing The Purpose Driven Life, the biggest distraction of my life. This is an issue we have to care about because it sets up every other freedom we have.

KEN STARR: Thank you. Russell, reflect, if you would, from your perspective as well as that of the Southern Baptist Convention.

RUSSELL MOORE: Well, you mentioned the history of the Baptists. We have a history of being irritants who will not take “no” for an answer—troublemakers. That’s one of
the reasons that we landed in jail so often in England and in the revolutionary era. One of the many issues was purchasing a license to preach. The issue that came up was the government, especially the state of Virginia, saying, “It’s not that much money.” If you go back and you look at the debates, you have government officials and church officials saying to these troublemaking Baptists, “You could stay out of jail if you would just pay this small amount of money.” Of course for them, the issue wasn’t how much money; it was who had the authority to ask for it. I think that is still a relevant issue that we face constantly.

When we look back at these issues, I really think that as we’re moving into the twenty-first century, revolutionary era America is as good a guide to how we are to engage on these issues going forward as anything else that I can see. I think for a long time we have had a sense of religious identity politics in America, where politicians could gain the trust of people by using religious language or by speaking in religious terms.

The revolutionary era Baptists weren’t interested in a mascot, and they weren’t interested in trusting politicians. They said, “We’re not interested in just taking your word for it. We want to see religious liberty for everybody,” even listing off people that no one would have assumed in the revolutionary era would be talked about as having and possessing religious liberty. For instance, the Baptist preachers would talk about Muslims.

RICK WARREN: They called them Muhammadans.

RUSSELL MOORE: Yes, that’s right. Or Turks.

KEN STARR: And they even talked about those with no faith.

RUSSELL MOORE: And those with no faith. That’s exactly right.

KEN STARR: Atheists as well. Everybody is protected.

RUSSELL MOORE: I think that the alliance with Jefferson that you mentioned...
is a good model. Rick mentioned a few minutes ago that Thomas Jefferson was not qualified to teach Sunday school in any Baptist Church in America. Someone who would go through and cut out the best parts of the New Testament is not someone that I want teaching my children. The Baptists and Jefferson had different motives, but they both were coming to the same place in protecting religious liberty, and they were able to make those alliances.

We have to be willing to do that, to say, “Who are the leaders of goodwill who are going to be looking out for religious liberty and doing so as they did?” We need to be the people who are proactively fighting for liberty for everyone else, so that we can have the arguments that we need to have about the things that matter. This isn’t relativism; it’s saying we don’t want a government umpire to come in and decide these issues of conscience.

KEN STARR: Thank you. Rick, go right ahead.

RICK WARREN: This is not just an American issue. It’s obviously all around the world. David Saperstein and I were talking about it just now. It’s his new role of being the ambassador for religious liberty around the world. I’ve actually had two state dinners in Beijing in the People’s Hall. I’ve had several members of the Politburo at my house for a barbecue. We didn’t tell the press. I didn’t tell my church. It’s a long story how this happened. I have debated these guys on religious liberty, including the director of religious affairs, who’s pretty much in charge of persecution in China. He has visited Saddleback Church, had a barbecue in my backyard, and I’ve debated him.

What I told him is, “You know what? You want the economic success of the West without the moral and theological Judeo-Christian ethical underpinnings of it. You want freedom of markets, but you don’t want freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of information, and all the other freedoms.” I said, “Capitalism by itself will just be greed unless you have an ethical basis underneath it. If you impose capitalism onto your country without the freedom of religion and let people express their faith, what you’re going to get is Russia. You’re just trading one group of thugs for another. You trade communists for oligarchs. You’re not really any better off either way. You have to allow religious liberty.”

I was actually pressing the Baptist case that Russell was just talking about, about having to register to preach. In China, of course, you know the real issue is they want every church to register. Of course, there are about 20 million Christian believers in the above-ground, registered churches, and about 80 million in the below-ground churches.

Two things are going to be true about China by 2030. Number one, the largest Christian nation in the world will be China. There will be more believers in China than in America or anywhere else. And number two, the largest English-speaking country in the world will be China. They are slowly starting to realize that people of faith make good citizens.

“And religious freedom must be pretty special to come before the freedom of speech, the freedom of the press, the freedom of the people to assemble peaceably, and the freedom to petition the government for redress of grievances. Those are the words of the First Amendment. Baptists are very mindful of that history. It continues to be part of their DNA.”

Ken Starr
The thing about religious liberty is I want it for everybody. It creates wonderful bedfellows, as you say, because we have to watch each other’s back. Oftentimes, you find people from the far right and the far left both agreeing on this issue because they say, “I want to protect my rights to speak, and I want to protect your rights to speak.” In a free marketplace of ideas, may the best idea win. That’s a good thing. But this issue of registering the preachers and registering churches is going on in China right now.

**KEN STARR:** What was the Politburo’s response?

**RICK WARREN:** Their response is always the same. It’s fear. The fact is that Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds in China. I don’t know about Islam because I haven’t studied it there. I mean, some of you guys who spoke today would know about that. I do know, however, that the world is not getting more secular. I actually said this when Tony Blair asked me to be on a panel at Davos. I started by saying, “Now, I want to shock all of you European bankers that the future of the world is not secularism. I hate to tell you that. It’s not. It’s religious pluralism.”

The world is getting more religious, not less. There are 600 million Buddhists in the world. There are 800 million Hindus in the world. There are 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. There are 2.3 billion Christians. The number of people without faith is actually quite small outside of Europe and Manhattan. [Laughter]

**KEN STARR:** I think you can throw in parts of Los Angeles.

**RICK WARREN:** Yeah. And several academic settings too. [Laughter]

**KEN STARR:** The present company excluded. [Laughter]

**RICK WARREN:** Generally, most of the world has some kind of faith. You may not like it, but you’re going to have to learn how to deal with it. The best way is to provide freedom, freedom for everybody.

**KEN STARR:** I met with the deputy director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) in Beijing. They’re sort of talking to you, but not really. Everybody is all lined up. You’ve seen the routine. So many countries do this. We sit around and have a conversation. Anyway, the deputy director said through a translator, “We believe Christianity is very important. It’s very helpful.” If I followed his logic, it was, “But of course, there has to be regulation.” Sound familiar? He continued. “I want to introduce Dr. Wang”—a very sweet woman stood up—“and she’s in charge of Christianity.” [Laughter] Someone’s got to be in charge.

Russell, reflect on this. We’ve already gone global, so jump in.

**RUSSELL MOORE:** Well, I think if you look at it from the point of view of a totalitarian or authoritarian government,
that makes perfect sense, because if you have
a citizenry of people who do believe there is
some greater allegiance than the state, the
only power that the state has over a group
of people is the power to tax and, ultimately,
the power to kill them. If you have a group
of people who believe there’s something after
that—that there is resurrection from the
dead, that there’s an accountability before a
judgment seat that is higher than whatever
the highest level of the state is—then it is
necessary to make sure that you either stop
that or you regulate it to the point that it’s a
domesticated version of that religion.

There is something for tyrants to fear when they
see religion, especially as a Christian, I would
say, when they see Christianity with the message
that our Lord gave us, “Render unto Caesar that
which belongs to Caesar and unto God that
which belongs to God.” This implicitly states
there are some things outside of Caesar’s domain.

KEN STARR: That’s scary.

RUSSELL MOORE: It is scary to those who
wish to control the mind.

KEN STARR: Now, Tom mentioned that you
both brought the house down in Rome. So he
has suggested that we get your reflections on
that experience. You knew you would bring
the house down, because that’s what you do
for a living.

RUSSELL MOORE: I was just there to nail
something to the door. [Laughter]

KEN STARR: You know, Russell, that was
rather tacky.

RUSSELL MOORE: I know it was.

KEN STARR: That’s the lamest excuse I have
ever heard: “Oh, this isn’t my passport. It’s
Luther’s 95 Theses.” Do you think anybody’s
going to believe that? [Laughter] Alright. Well,
let’s hear your reflections. This is enormous,
to have these two giants in the evangelical
world participating in this conference.

RICK WARREN: In the first place, we
have far more in common than we have
differences. As the West moves more and
more against some of the values we hold, we
need a common alliance with people, and the
first alliance is on religious liberty. There are
other moral issues we can cooperate on too,
which we do.

It was funny to me that there was a group
of cardinals standing around afterward, and
one of the questions asked was, “So what was
one of the big lessons of the conference?”
One of the cardinals said, “Oh, why are the
best speakers the Jews and the evangelicals?”
[Laughter] And I said to him, “Because you
have the Mass, and you don’t have to do a
long homily.” I said, “David and I, we have
to make our living telling stories. We’re going
to sink or swim on the sermon.” Gene Rivers
has got to sink or swim on the sermons. We
have to be interesting because we don’t have
the Mass.

But I think there is a commonality that we
need to celebrate, and it’s honestly why
I’m here. This is my second time here at
Georgetown, and I’m happy to be back. I
believe in this project that you guys have, and
I’m honored to be a part of it.

KEN STARR: Russell, go back to that day
you brought down the house.

RUSSELL MOORE: My father’s family was
Southern Baptist. My mother’s family was
Roman Catholic. So I grew up with both
sides of the family. I tell people I’m a product
of evangelicals and Catholics together, and I
mean that literally. And so I saw in that room
something that really has been going on for
quite a while: evangelicals and Catholics
working together.

But one of the things that I think is really
important—and I say this to my Catholic
friends and allies here—is that sometimes the
easiest thing to do is to find the Protestant
evangelicals who are the most eager to work
outside of their communities. That’s actually
not going to be helpful in the long term. You
need to form alliances with the Protestant
evangelicals who are genuinely Protestant,
who are genuinely evangelical, and who are
the most suspicious of working outside of
their communities, who can form a point of commonality but who aren’t pretending as though there aren’t genuine differences. Sometimes it’s easy to form cobelligerent partnerships simply because the people on either side don’t believe anything.

I was in a meeting one time of evangelicals who had been participating with a group of Catholics talking about theological issues. The Catholics who were sent were all really theologically liberal, like mainline Episcopalians. And the evangelicals said, “Send us some real Roman Catholics and then we can talk.” And I think the same thing has to happen when it comes to the evangelical-Catholic partnership. Don’t assume that just because an evangelical is wary of working with you on something or because an evangelical really holds the strong convictions about evangelical identity that there is no point of working together. We also shouldn’t assume that in order to work together on specific projects, we have to be together on everything or to assume that the places where we’re not together are meaningless. So I think that’s important in the future, and I think we saw that at that meeting.

We had Jewish representatives who were speaking from a Jewish perspective, and Latter-day Saints representatives who were speaking from a Latter-day Saints perspective, and evangelicals from an evangelical perspective. I think this is healthy, because many of these meetings really turn into a sort of civil, religious mush where we all come together and pretend as though this is all that really matters and not the particularities of what we believe. This, I think, was a much healthier exercise. We’re talking honestly about where we’re coming from, where we have points in common, and where different perspectives bring insight into how to approach and to go forward.

**RICK WARREN:** You don’t have to agree on everything in order to love each other. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been married 40 years, because my wife and I disagree on a lot of stuff, but we’re massively in love with each other. [Laughter] A good example of Catholic and evangelical cooperation in my own case is just in the last couple of years. Most of you know that a year-and-a-half ago, my youngest son, who struggled with mental illness, took his life. It was the worst day of my life, and it was the day that I had prayed would never happen, and it was the day that I feared would.

I probably got 35,000 letters of condolences from people when Matthew took his life. The ones that meant the most to me were not from kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, or rock stars. It was from people who wrote and said, “Your son led me to faith in Christ.” And I remember writing in my journal that day, “In God’s garden of grace, even broken trees bear fruit.” And then I wrote, “And we’re all broken. We’re all broken.”

And I had developed a friendship with the Bishop of Orange. I’ve known the Catholic bishops there for 35 years. I knew Tod Brown, and I knew Norman McFarland. And when Kevin Vann became the bishop of that diocese, I went to the installation. And we just hit it off. We became good friends. It was really funny. The first time I met him, we shook hands. He said, “Where’s Kay?” And I said, “What am I, chopped liver?” And he said, “No. But I read her book *Dangerous Surrender,* and I used it in a homily last week. And the part on Mary, that was good stuff.” So we hit it off. We became prayer partners, the Bishop of Orange and myself.

And when Matthew died, Kevin called me up and he said, “What can we do about this?” So we put on the first Mental Illness and the Church conference, cosponsored by University of California at Irvine, Saddleback Church, and the Diocese of Orange. The bishop and I started and ended the day with the Norbertine monks, who came in to do vespers. It was beautiful. They’ve got an abbey right up the street from Saddleback. And it was wonderful. So we planned it, and the Catholics came and joined us in that.

And this last week, I went and met with them on this issue: There’s a bill on assisted suicide now in California. And obviously
I’m not just pro-life. I’m “whole-life,” from one end to the other. So they’re going to take the lead on that, and Saddleback is going to support them. It’s a matter of we don’t all have to equally do the same thing. So that’s a good one; I’ll join you on that. And you’ve got a good one; we’ll join you on that. And that has just built a great friendship.

KEN STARR: It’s honest collaboration, recognizing differences. Let’s shift to the international threats. They’re obvious. They blare at us in the headlines on CNN. David Saperstein, thank you for taking on this responsibility of being a light in the darkness and doing what you were already doing. Would you join me in saying thank you again to—as we say outside the country—His Excellency? [Applause] And I wouldn’t ask Russell or Rick to give the ambassador advice, but rather just your reflections on the international threats.

RUSSELL MOORE: One of the interesting things to me is the way that what’s happening internationally is changing the American church for the better. I see an awareness right now going on particularly among evangelicals. There is a global understanding of the connectedness of the world to the rest of the Body of Christ because of the horrors that we see happening every single day, every single week. In a way, that is the New Testament, this sense of seeing that we’re all part of one body. When one part of the body hurts, the rest of the body hurts.

So I think what’s happening is perhaps the Lord is using this time. And of course we see throughout history that whenever the Church is persecuted, the Church is never persecuted out of existence. Instead the Church becomes stronger, and so the rest of the Body of Christ is in solidarity with the persecuted church. So every single week there’s prayer in evangelical congregations in North America for Saeed Abedini, who is imprisoned in Iran for his faith. There’s prayer for those brothers and sisters in Christ who are being beheaded by ISIS or who are in peril of being beheaded. And then that also brings about an awareness of other religious minorities who are being persecuted around the world, and Christians are concerned in an engagement for them as well.

So I think what’s happening is there are certain sectors of the church in America that have been very insular and self-focused, and we’ve had for a long time a sort of “discount-rate prosperity gospel” that really saw the gospel as a means to a better American life. That is falling away. Because when we see our brothers and sisters in Christ on their knees who will not at the point of a sword renounce their faith, that is a living image from the Book of Acts that reminds us of who we are.

KEN STARR: At the Georgetown conference in Rome in December of 2013, the last speaker was Louis Raphael Sako, the patriarch of the Chaldeans in Iraq. His closing remark was, “If they kill all of us, will you care then?” So he saw this coming, but Congressman Wolf had not yet hit the consciousness of the American people at that time. And thank you for going to Iraq yet again in this capacity, Mr. Wolf.

I’m also moved to say, with Robert Louis Wilken here in the audience, that if one reads his magnificent book The First Thousand Years, one will say it’s happened before. The growth of the church was most explosive when blood was being shed. Thank you for writing that book, Robert. Rick, pick up on that if you would.
RICK WARREN: Well, the Greek word for witness is the word *martyria*. It’s the word we get martyr from. People will take your faith seriously when you’re willing to pay a price for it, and people are paying a price for it every day now around the world. I’ve seen this. We have this thing at Saddleback called the PEACE Plan. We launched it 12 years ago. The P stands for promote reconciliation to planning churches of reconciliation in war-torn areas. E is equip ethical leaders, which deals with the issue of corruption. A is assist the poor. C is care for the sick. And E is educate the next generation. This is what I call the five global giants: poverty, disease, illiteracy, corruption, and conflict.

I’ve sent out 24,869 of my members to 197 countries, so I know I have my ear to the ground to hear what’s going on. I think when you talk about what needs to be done right now with persecution, America needs strong leadership. The other day, I put on Facebook a simple phrase. This is all I said: “ISIS is evil. You don’t negotiate with evil. You don’t ignore evil. Good people stop evil.” It was re-tweeted and rebroadcast 2.5 million times. That hit a nerve, something as simple as saying, “Let’s just call it what it is.”

Do you remember before President Obama’s first term when I did the McCain and Obama event? It wasn’t a debate because I actually asked them the same questions. The same question was, “Does evil exist? And if it does, what do you do about it?” And they both gave different answers on that. I think the Bible teaches quite clearly—and I think good people, even those who aren’t Bible people, realize—that evil has to be stopped. Somebody had to stop the Nazis. It wasn’t just enough to pray about it. Somebody had to stop it. I don’t know how we stopped it, but somebody had to stop it.

A year ago in August, after all of the churches started being burned in the Arab Spring in Egypt, King Abdullah of Jordan called me on the phone and asked me to convene a conference in Amman on persecution against Christians in Arab nations. Now follow this. You have a Muslim king inviting a Californian evangelical to convene the leaders of 22 Arab nations who are primarily Orthodox or Catholic. I was pretty much the only guy there without a beard and not in a robe. I felt very out of place. Even he saw what was going on and was saying, “What can we do to stand together to help these Copts and Yazidis and all the different kinds of Christians of the 22 Arab countries? What are we going to do about this?”

I will tell you this. I actually personally confronted, before he started the civil war, Bashar al-Assad on this. In my neighborhood, I have these three neighbors: One is a Mormon, one is a Jew, and one is a Muslim. The guy who’s a Muslim, his father founded the Syrian Air Force. So we went to Syria, and I met with Assad. They’re saying, “Oh, we have freedom of religion.” I said, “No, no. It’s not freedom of religion unless you have freedom to convert, to change your religion.” Freedom of religion to a lot of countries means if you’re born a Christian, you can stay a Christian. If you’re born a Jew, you can stay a Jew. And if you’re born a Muslim, you can stay a Muslim. True freedom means I should have the freedom to change my mind.

KEN STARR: And by the way, this is Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

RICK WARREN: It’s also good Baptist theology. One of the things we believe in

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“*I believe in religious freedom for everybody because I believe God created every human being in his image and likeness. And if I don’t defend the religious freedom of you and every human being in every society, I am not being faithful to God. And it really does come down to that.*”

Thomas Farr
is what’s called soul competence, and that is I cannot say I’m a believer unless I have the freedom to not believe. Coercion is not conversion. They are not the same thing. They’re not true. True conversion is not coercion. And I don’t believe in coercion. I believe in persuasion, and I believe you should have a right to try to persuade me of your view.

By the way, we talked about this earlier today. Proselytizing has become a negative word only used against Christians. But the truth is that everybody proselytizes, because it simply means helping people change their mind. Every environmentalist proselytizes me to their viewpoint. Every LGBT person proselytizes me to their viewpoint. Whether you’re a liberal or you’re a conservative, you’re proselytizing me to your viewpoint. Parents proselytize their children in saying this is the way you should think. And teachers proselytize their students. Everybody persuades everybody. So why is it that it’s okay for everybody else to do it except believers? And why is it a bad word?

Now, I don’t happen to like that word because it sounds like coercion, so I never use it. And as I pointed out earlier today, it’s not even in the English Bible. The word proselytize is from the Greek word in the Hebrew Septuagint translation of the Old Testament.

And so what we’ve got to do is broaden the idea that it’s okay to persuade. It’s not okay to coerce. It’s okay to make a case. Our society has come up with a couple of ideas. One of them is that if you don’t agree with me, you don’t love me. That’s nonsense. I love a lot of people I disagree with. And the other one is if you don’t agree with me, you’re afraid of me. You’re phobic. That’s nonsense. I’m not afraid of anybody. I don’t hate anybody. It’s not hate speech just because you disagree with somebody. Religious freedom says there’s a value. I learned a lot today from people I disagree with, and I hope that other people learn from me even if they disagree with me. That’s how we get better.

KEN STARR: You’ve got to finish with Bashar al-Assad, and then I want your reflections.

KEN STARR: That’s a huge divide now.

RICK WARREN: Yes. That’s what we were talking about this morning, the freedom to change.

KEN STARR: Because that’s at the core. And I muttered Article 18. But when you go back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there it is. You don’t have to simply say this is what I believe. There it is. You’re going to say the declaration is a declaration, just as our
Declaration of Independence is a declaration. But it is very aspirational, and that freedom of religion includes the freedom to change.

DAVID SAPERSTEIN: It’s also in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which is more than a declaration. It did cover civil and political rights. It is more than just an aspirational document.

KEN STARR: That’s right. It is law. It is international law. Russell, your reflections on this?

RUSSELL MOORE: I think the point here is well made, that what religious freedom means domestically and internationally is not a silencing of argument. It’s the freeing of an argument so we’re able to persuade one another. And one of the biggest threats that I find domestically when it comes to the issue of religious freedom is that there are many people who now are seeking to impede religious freedom, not necessarily because they’re objecting to believers ideologically, but because they don’t understand what their religious motivations would be. So because they don’t understand it, they assume there must be some other hidden motivation. And so this must really be about politics. It must really be about economics. It can’t possibly be about that.

So one of the most important things that anyone can do in advocating for religious freedom is explaining to our neighbors what it means to be religiously motivated, what it means for me as an evangelical Christian to believe that my conscience is going to stand in judgment before the judgment seat of Christ, what it means for me as a Christian to believe that I don’t have coercive power over anyone else’s heart. If I did have the power to coerce, all I could do is create fake Christians. I couldn’t create genuine Christians. Only the Holy Spirit can do that.

And we need to have that sort of conversation, where we’re actually hearing from one another in a pluralistic society about how these motivations really do matter. I think until we get to that point, many of our neighbors are going to assume that this is just a pretext for something else.

KEN STARR: Thank you for that. The microphone is coming around. If you would be kind enough to briefly identify yourself.

GENE RIVERS: Hi. I’m Gene Rivers of the Seymour Institute for Black Church and Policy Studies. This has been a brilliant presentation. I’d like to try to complicate it a bit with this question: It is alleged that there are some young boys out in Virginia that have been recruiting for ISIS which is happening unbeknownst to most of us in a number of our inner cities?

Now Russell and Rick, how does the church, thinking globally now, not miss the domestication of the global phenomenon, as we note the recruitment of Americans for ISIS which is happening unbeknownst to most of us in a number of our inner cities?

I have one last point. A number of years ago, the Wall Street Journal ran a piece...
documenting the Saudi financing of Wahhabi chaplaincies in Rikers Island. Because the church is not as much of the church as we need to be, how do we begin to engage this? We’re going global, but now the global struggle has hit Virginia. It’s been emerging out of Brooklyn, and the FBI has been very prudent in that they’ve underreported the extent of the proselytization of young males who feel hopeless in a variety of cities.

Rick and Russell, what can be done in this country to begin the dialogue among Christians that King Abdullah asked for? Because this ISIS thing is here. It hasn’t hit the front pages of the New York Times, or the Wall Street Journal, or USA Today, so we assume that it’s not here. How do we begin to engage this now? Because what’s going to happen is as soon as this surfaces and involves a young male out of the south side of a US city like Chicago or Brooklyn, all of us in this room are going to be tempted to frame this thing a very different way.

RUSSELL MOORE: That is true.

GENE RIVERS: It’s going to get real ugly. A lot of language isn’t going to have faith in it, and it’s going to be a very ugly turn.

RUSSELL MOORE: Yes. A good point.

GENE RIVERS: So theologically, in the context of talking about religious freedom in a global context, a half hour from now in Newark, New Jersey, some young boy is reading some Sayyid Qutb and Wahhabi theology. How do we engage that? That global threat to religious liberty is now domesticated and is being cultivated. How do the faith communities exercise leadership in this context?

KEN STARR: Very good question.

RUSSELL MOORE: I think the first step is repentance, because what we have seen in American life, and especially in American evangelical life, are churches that are gathered together of groups of people who would be together even if Jesus were still dead. And I think that’s not the picture that we see in the New Testament, of communities that are reconciled to one another. The problems with that is that we often have white American evangelicals who assume, sometimes implicitly without even articulating this, that normal Christianity is the white, middle-class American doing ministry to the spokes around the wheel, which are Africans, Asians, Latinos, and so forth.

In reality, the white, middle-class American Christianity is a tiny sliver of the Body of Christ on earth, much less in heaven. Most of the church doesn’t speak English. Most of the church is not white. And so that means an active repentance of congregations saying, “How do we start to begin the process of showing to the outside world what the Kingdom of God looks like within our own walls?” And so I think that’s the first step.

And you mentioned Ferguson. One of the things that happened immediately after the events in Ferguson is that you have often in the same community white Christians and black Christians seeing the conversation completely differently. Why is that the case? Because they’re not in the same congregations together where they’re shaping their consciences and where you have people who are hurting for one another as part of the same body. That’s what has to change, I think, in American life. And until it does, there are going to be all sorts of radical ideologies that are going to come in and say, “That’s not really a revealed truth claim. That’s just a bid for power.” And until we can crucify that with the Gospel that we have been given, we’re going to run up against that.

RICK WARREN: I think emphasizing purpose and intentionally diversifying are two of the things we have to do in the church. People are looking for something to give their lives to. It doesn’t even have to do with economics, because a lot of those guys, when they’ve checked out who went and joined ISIS, were rich. They came out of rich families. So it’s not just the poor guy with nothing to do or no job—that doesn’t hold water. That may be one reason, but it’s not the only reason.
People are looking for something to give their lives to. And as Russell brilliantly explained, we’ve made church too comfortable. Churches try to make life comfortable. It’s all about you being happier and more balanced and all that. I don’t think churches demand enough from their people. And I have found that by requiring more, people want to give their lives to something greater than themselves.

I wrote a book on it. People want to give their lives to a great purpose. I saw this last week, when we baptized the 42,000th convert at Saddleback Church. These are adults, not babies. We’ve baptized 42,000 adult converts since I’ve been there. What in the world is going on there? We’re giving them something they can’t get anywhere else: the Kingdom of God. And there’s no greater cause than that. So you hold up a greater purpose.

A lot of evangelical churches will say, “Here, come to our church and we’ll give you entertainment. We’ll give you a nice life. We’ll give you a happy sermon and all that.” I like to say to people, “I give you battle, blood, sweat, and tears. We’re in an eternal battle, and what are you willing to give your life for?” That’s how you get 25,000 people to go overseas and pay their own way, by challenging them to a greater purpose.

The second thing is to intentionally diversify our congregations. To me, Gene, the wake-up day—and I remember this—was the O.J. Simpson verdict. I had blacks and whites on staff, and we were all huddled around the table when that verdict came through. The reaction between the two parts of my staff were night and day. I thought, okay, I’ve missed something here because this is not about his guilt or innocence. There’s something more going on here that I need to understand.

When I started at Saddleback, I started with one member—my wife—in 1980. I preached the first sermon. She said it was too long. [Laughter] It’s been downhill ever since. And so I’ve watched it grow. In the first couple of years, we were a white, suburban, yuppie church. It was plain vanilla.

Today, Saddleback speaks 67 languages. We are what we call an “all-nation congregation.” In fact, we changed the letters in our name: S-a-d-d-l-e-b-a-c-k. Each stands for a value. In the 1980s and 1990s, that value was an atmosphere of acceptance. We wanted to welcome people regardless of your hurt, your hang up, or your habit. And we’ve changed that A from “atmosphere of acceptance” to “all-nation congregation.” We wanted our church to look like heaven is going to look, because not everybody is going to look the same in heaven, so we might as well look like it now. And if you don’t like diversity in ethnicity and race and color, then you’re not going to like heaven. And so we intentionally did that.

How did we do that? Whoever you want to track, you put on the stage. I have a Vietnamese pastor. I’ve got three black pastors. I’ve got a Korean pastor. I’ve got an Arab pastor. And as a result, for instance, we have small groups. I have 23 Mandarin Chinese groups in our church and they study the Bible in Mandarin Chinese. That is intentional. And by building a congregation like that, they’re not afraid to go overseas.

KEN STARR: Wonderful points. Thank you. Someone was being recognized over here.

GERRY MITCHELL: I just have a couple of observations. First, I think I’m speaking for everybody here in saying, thank you for being here tonight. You all have done a great job. As a Georgetown man and a native of the District of Columbia, I hate to see you leave. I’d like to keep you here.

The second thing is you ought to understand that when you come here and sit in this room, you’re in the colony of Maryland. It was founded in 1634, and it was the only colony founded on the basis of freedom of religion. And it happens that it was founded by catholic groups which, as you know, the catholic with a small “c” means universal. So a lot of what you’ve said tonight resonates with us, and may God bless you. It’s been great hearing you. I’m so glad I came and accepted Tom’s invitation. So it’s been terrific.
RUSSELL MOORE: Thank you.

RICK WARREN: Thank you.

KEN STARR: We would also add Rhode Island and Roger Williams. But it’s a great tribute to Maryland and the founding values of Maryland.

MICHAEL MAIBACH: Tom Farr, thank you for doing this for us. I hope you don’t mind if I mention this: Today is the one-hundred-fiftieth anniversary of Lincoln’s second inaugural address.

KEN STARR: Yes. The Wall Street Journal ran that beautiful excerpt today.

MICHAEL MAIBACH: What a godly man. It’s really a sermon. He says, “Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God… with malice towards none and with charity for all.” I think you know this, but it’s really worth rereading 150 years later. What a great Christian leader we got. After Buchanan and Polk and others were not effective, this man was. So praise the Lord for this leader. Let’s hope we have a leader one day who will have this kind of insight and wisdom for the country.

RICK WARREN: I was once speaking at the Aspen Ideas Institute. Right before I got up to speak, Arthur Schlesinger got up, and he was really berating President George W. Bush. He was berating him because of his religiosity. He said, “Bush is the most religious president we’ve ever had.” And when I was next up, I said, “Well, with all due respect to Dr. Schlesinger, I appreciate his wisdom, but the most spiritual president we’ve ever had was Lincoln. Just go read the second inaugural address for one example. I’m sorry, I have to disagree with you on that. It wasn’t George W. Bush. It was Abraham Lincoln.” And no president could get away with saying what Lincoln said today. I mean, he would be crucified if he said those kinds of words today or even some of the things Franklin D. Roosevelt said.

KEN STARR: In a conversation that Rick had with Tony Blair at Saddleback, the former prime minister recounted how he wanted to end a speech with, “And God bless the people of the United Kingdom.” The senior civil servant said, “Prime Minister, this is not America.” [Laughter] So we can still do that in the United States of America. Thank you for that tribute to a great man, to Mr. Lincoln.

JOSEPH LOCONTE: Thank you, gentlemen. I’m Joseph Loconte with the King’s College in New York City. This is a terrific discussion.

KEN STARR: And previously of Pepperdine.

JOSEPH LOCONTE: A visiting professor of Pepperdine.

KEN STARR: When are you coming to Baylor?

JOSEPH LOCONTE: I’ll take that invitation.

KEN STARR: Good. It was just extended. [Laughter]

JOSEPH LOCONTE: I’ll book the flight. I want to ask a provocative question because it’s just kind of in my Italian-American nature to ask provocative questions. I had been for a while in Washington—15 years in the public policy world, political journalism, writing and thinking about these religious freedom issues, and now I’m at King’s College. And

“The Baptists and Jefferson had different motives, but they both were coming to the same place in protecting religious liberty, and they were able to make those alliances. We have to be willing to do that, to say, ‘Who are the leaders of goodwill who are going to be looking out for religious liberty and doing so as they did?’”

Russell Moore
outside of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown, outside of, say, the Becker Fund, outside of maybe the Hudson Institute with Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, it is hard for me to think of organizations and think tanks that are really devoted to this issue in a serious way. It’s hard to think of philanthropists in the Christian world who care about this issue in an international sense.

And that troubles me deeply as a Christian. If we’re honest, you can only name a few organizations that are committed to religious freedom for people of all faith or of no faith on the international front. I don’t see the money. I don’t see the interest at the church level. It troubles me. I wonder if I’m right. Does that trouble you, gentlemen? If it does, what do we do about it?

KEN STARR: Russ, you want to tackle that one?

RUSSELL MOORE: It does trouble me, but I think it is changing in a good direction as I mentioned a few minutes ago. I think for a long time, particularly in American Christian life, there was an understanding that we could take these things for granted. Number one, we have a First Amendment here. We have democracy spreading around the world and think that globalization will take care of many of these religious freedom skirmishes. We clearly see that’s not the case now. It’s becoming personal to people across the board.

And we see domestic conflicts over religious liberty that we never could have imagined before. In the past several presidential election cycles, the question of religious liberty never came up in any of the debates because we assumed that across the board, we all agreed on the First Amendment. Now, sadly, religious liberty is increasingly becoming a partisan wedge issue. So I think there is an awakening to the fact that this cannot be taken for granted.

I think the other problem has to do with money, with people who are willing to fund religious freedom efforts around the world and domestically, because this takes the patience of a long-term vision. Religious liberty is foundational. If you don’t have religious liberty, you’re not going to have economic liberty.
You're not going to have political liberty. But economic liberty is easier to fund because there is a short-term payoff. If I’m involved in advancing economic liberty, then we can trade with this country within the next decade. Religious liberty is a much longer-term project before anyone sees any sort of tangible benefit to it. So I think encouraging philanthropists to really see this as a worthy endeavor is going to be one of our challenges.

KEN STARR: Rick, any comments?

RICK WARREN: The Becket Fund, of course, is right here. It’s a great, fantastic group. I’d add Alliance Defending Freedom. I like what they’re doing with training young scholars in the legal sides of religious liberty issues.

KEN STARR: The Blackstone Fellows program is a remarkable program.

RICK WARREN: Yeah, that’s a great program. And I think they’re doing a good job with that. Personally, I was going to convene a national congress at Saddleback on religious liberty a year ago, the month my son died. It got cancelled. But I intend to do it. In fact, I had already gotten Tim Dolan. He agreed to be the co-chairman with me. So Cardinal Dolan and I, we’re going to co-host this national congress on religious liberty. It was right about the time that Hobby Lobby was really starting, and I was really involved behind the scenes helping the Green family on that. And then when my son died, it just got cancelled. But it’s going to be back on.

KEN STARR: Good.

RICK WARREN: If you’d like to help me with it, write to me. Because I believe that it’s time to convene a national congress on religious liberty and get everybody at the table. I actually chose the date because the bishops were doing their conference in San Diego, which was an hour away. I thought after it’s all over, we can invite them all up to be a part of the religious freedom conference. It was a thing in my own life that caused it to be cancelled. I have every intention to put that back together.

KEN STARR: Well, it was a terrible tragedy. Some of us actually had our bags packed and we were ready to head there. I’m so thankful that you will try to put it on again. Now a question from the voice of the Trinity Forum.

CHERIE HARDER: Thank you, Mr. Starr. I’m Cherie Harder with the Trinity Forum. I had a question about the rising generation of university students. I’m going to date myself here, but when I arrived at college as a freshman, it was the fall of 1987, and everywhere there were shantytowns on campus, to demonstrate against apartheid in South Africa. The big thing that really galvanized the imagination of college students at that time was agitating against apartheid in South Africa. They were right, and they had a real impact in affecting international policy, in part by pressuring the United States government to increase sanctions.

At this time, there is a genocide going on against Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East. Our government’s foreign policy response has been woefully lame. And yet, to my knowledge, there has not been a single demonstration at any Christian college in protest. There are protests going on almost every day at Gordon, Wheaton, and other colleges on same-sex marriage, but nothing at all pertaining to our government’s passivity in responding to genocide. So how can we convince a new generation of the importance and the urgency of the threat to religious freedom?

RUSSELL MOORE: I think the first way we have to do that is by reframing who we are, in order to have a sense of solidarity with other Christians around the world. And I think that right now, the biggest challenge for American Christians is that we tend to think of ourselves as Americans first rather than as part of the Body of Christ first and in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world. That has to change.

Secondly though, I think there has to be a change in terms of the government of the United States. I was at a meeting yesterday put on by the State Department talking about
international religious freedom issues. We spent an hour talking about every imaginable thing in terms of global human rights, except for the attempted genocide of Christians, until the very end. It was parenthetically added because of a question.

I think the reason for that is there are some in the government who assume that Christianity is the dominant power in the world because they perceive Christianity to be dominant politically in America. And so they impute that to the rest of the world when, in fact, we’re dealing with beleaguered religious minorities who, as Judge Starr was mentioning a few minutes ago, will be eradicated in some countries. So I think both of those two issues have to be addressed.

What we’re trying to do is to spend a lot of time at the church level talking about the persecuted Church, talking about identifying with persecuted Christians around the world, and that has to start long before college. This has to start in children’s Sunday school. I had a pastor friend who did this with children. He started talking about persecution, and parents became very unnerved by this, saying it was disturbing to tell children about Christians who were being persecuted around the world. Well, yes, but it’s no more disturbing than the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the advance of the Church in the Book of Acts. The story that we have is not a sentimental story. So we have to do that by cultivating consciences from the very beginning of the discipleship process.

KEN STARR: Rick.

RICK WARREN: I think the battle has to be told in stories. Whoever tells the best stories wins. And we’re not doing very well. We’re being out-marketed by other people. We’re being out-marketed by other forces, other groups, and it’s all a matter of stories. If we tell the best stories, then it will capture the attention of people.

KEN STARR: We have another question.

MICHAEL BARNETT: I’m Michael Barnett from George Washington University. It’s been a privilege and honor to hear all three of you tonight. There’s a rumor out there that the Religious Freedom Project is really not about religious freedom. It’s about Christianity. And much of what I’ve heard tonight has been about the question of Christianity, Christian survival, and the persecution of Christians. Except for maybe the question of anti-Semitism, there hasn’t really been a voice that has talked about forms of religious persecution against groups other than Christians. So convince me, if you will, that the notion of religious liberty is not simply about Christianity, that it is really about a more fundamental principle.

RICK WARREN: First, I think everybody sees things from their own perspective. You know what’s interesting in America? Everybody thinks they’re a victim. You name any group, they think they’re being persecuted or they’re being victimized. I don’t know a group that doesn’t. And so we always think that way.

In the first place, I think you’re right. It sounds like we’re only talking about Christians because we happen to be three Baptists right here on stage. But my tenet—and I said it from the very beginning—is if I don’t protect it for everybody, I don’t protect it for myself. It’s the old Niemöller quote: “First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I

“Don’t try to pigeonhole [religious people] into the freedom of worship. The Constitution does not guarantee freedom of worship. It guarantees the freedom of religion. There’s a huge difference in that.”

Rick Warren
was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was nobody left to speak for me.” And so I think our church, for instance, has a track record of protecting everybody.

These 25,000 people in my congregation are just as concerned about others around the world. When the tsunami hit, I stood up on a Sunday morning and said we’ve got to help these people. And on the basis of a 30-second announcement, our church gave $1.6 million to help the tsunami victims. Nine months later, I did the same thing for Katrina. They gave $1.8 million for victims of Katrina. No strings attached. The people to whom they were sending relief money certainly weren’t Christians. They were Buddhists. They were Buddhists, and we were helping them out.

And so I think your point is well taken, Michael. I think we just have to be intentional if it’s going to be a broad-tent issue, and for it to succeed, it has to be a broad-tent issue. It can’t just be seen as we only want to protect our rights. I want to protect your rights. I want everybody to have the freedom to believe and make conscious decisions and have that soul competence that I talked about. I am responsible to God for my decisions. You’re not responsible for my decisions. I am.

RUSSELL MOORE: On any given day, most of my work is about religious freedom for non-Christians. For instance, using Christian principles, I articulated to our people why we should not use city zoning codes to zone a mosque out of existence. There are theological reasons why we would not do that. First of all, these are our neighbors created in the image of God. They have a God-given conscience. We need to be advocating for them. We also support our neighbors, not because we have an understanding of relativism. We’re not saying that we’re all just worshipping in different ways. We have a truth claim, but that truth claim doesn’t come through coercion. And that also is ultimately a matter of self-interest.

If Caesar has the power to regulate a mosque out of existence or if Caesar has the power not to accommodate a Muslim prisoner’s rights to free exercise, then Caesar now has power over the soul. That is not good for American Christians any more than it is for American Muslims, so we have to be engaged in one another’s lives. What that means is that you’re going to have to see Christians speaking to Christians on the basis of Christian scriptures as to why we ought to be concerned about religious liberty for everybody.

RICK WARREN: You know, a couple of years ago, I spoke here in Washington, DC, on the Fourth of July to Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), which comprises 10,000 Muslims. I think I’m the only Christian pastor ever to be invited to speak to ISNA. That same year, I spoke to 5,000 people at the Reform Judaism convention in San Diego. I don’t know anybody who has spoken to Jews and Muslims in the same year. I happen to be a Christian. I believe what I believe. I’m not a Jew, and I’m not a Muslim, but I certainly believe in religious freedom for both.

THOMAS FARR: We have another question from Kristina Arriaga.
KRISTINA ARRIAGA: I’m Cuban, but I’ll make it short. [Laughter] My name is Kristina Arriaga. I’m the executive director of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. We represent all religious traditions from A to Z. We love getting Zoroastrian clients. Before we could only say A to N. Now it’s A to Z. [Laughter]

My question has to do with women, and I’ll make it very quick. As you know, we represented Hobby Lobby before the Supreme Court. And as you know, the Green family, the owners of Hobby Lobby, are wonderful employers. They pay more than twice the minimum wage. They provide 16 out of the 20 FDA-mandated drugs and devices. They only objected to four because the government itself said that these prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg, which is a form of abortion.

I spoke to mainline church pastors, and they were really upset at the so-called “women-hating group of Christians” that we have represented. There is no war on women. I find it very difficult, even as a Hispanic woman, to explain to angry women that there is no war between reproductive rights and religious liberty—that in fact, religious liberty allows for anyone to do whatever they want. That is between them and God.

THOMAS FARR: Before you answer, Elder Hardy had a question too. So let’s take his, and this will be the last question.

RALPH HARDY: I’m a Latter-day Saint, and I remember one of the powerful voices when I was young was the voice of Billy Graham. You saw him on television. You heard him in stadiums. He had a broad message, not just to evangelicals. Today we all see that the things we believe in and that we advocate for are marginalized in the media. We are behind. And my question to you is: How can we again seize the high ground where our voice counts and where we have that exponential power of being able to work through the media, including social media, so that the power of the pastor, the rabbi, and others can grow exponentially? Right now it seems that we’re becoming less and less a factor in the media environment, which is rapidly becoming more and more secularized and where we are openly criticized all the time.

KEN STARR: Those two questions are very closely related. Thank you.

RUSSELL MOORE: When it comes to Billy Graham, he was marginalized in terms of the media and the culture at first as well. I remember the dismissal of Billy Graham that would come from Reinhold Niebuhr, for instance. But how did Graham persist? I think he persisted and his influence grew for two reasons. One, he spoke with authority. He really believed what he was saying. And he had what he believed—and what I believe—was a supernatural message to deliver, so that even people who didn’t agree with him understood that this was coming from a place of firm conviction and of authority. And then secondly, he wanted to persuade. He did not simply want to speak to his base and to rally his own troops, but he wanted to persuade the people who disagreed with him.

We live in a culture right now where it is very easy simply to speak to our respective fundraising lists in ways that are going to get approval from them, rather than actually speaking to the people who disagree with us in a way that will persuade. Whenever I’m asked in evangelical circles, “Where is the next Billy Graham?” my answer is usually to say the next Billy Graham might be passed out drunk right now in a frat house. Because what God typically does in history is not to take people that one would assume will be the next religious leader, but to take men like Saul of Tarsus, who was a terrorist out to destroy the Church, or to take an atheist philosopher such as C.S. Lewis, and turn him into the great apologist of the twentieth century. God took an imprisoned political hatchet man such as Chuck Colson and turned him into the greatest advocate for evangelical prison ministry in the twentieth century.
And so there are people who right now may be the most hostile critics that we have who may one day not only be with us but also may be leading us. I think if we keep that in mind as we’re having the strong debates that we ought to have and the strong dialogues that we ought to have, I think that will change the way that we view the people around us.

RICK WARREN: I don’t think I have anything to add. That was brilliant. I thought that was just perfect.

KEN STARR: I would like to add to the *Hobby Lobby* point and echo Rick’s comment about story. When Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993—as you and others here who were so actively involved in the *Hobby Lobby* litigation know very well—Congress specifically approved of two stories. One was about the Old Order Amish who might not be very attractive culturally, but the other was the story of the Seventh-day Adventist Adell Sherbert. She lost her job, and she wanted unemployment compensation. When you tell that story, that’s what Congress was trying to protect. And when that happens, someone is going to get pretty upset. It’s a matter of who’s going to get upset. Congress can repeal the law; it has chosen not to. The United States Senate sought to make, as we all know, some major modifications to the law. But that is the law of the land.

Then I found it very winsome, depending on the audience, to quote President Clinton, “Have it in your pocket,” and to mention his signing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and smiling on *Sherbert v. Verner*. Most people will relate to *Wisconsin v. Yoder* because we are a very individualistic people. We don’t like statism. Most of us don’t. It’s just not in our culture. Let’s turn it all over to the government. We’re just not that European yet. *[Laughter]* Liberty tends to be the baseline. And RFRA was a powerful re-articulation. Religious freedom is the baseline, and it fits into our most beautiful traditions.

I still like quoting Stephen Carter’s *The Culture of Disbelief*. That’s a really old book now, but what gives it currency is to say that President William Jefferson Clinton carried it to Martha’s Vineyard because that was his reading for vacation. And he spoke of the culture of disbelief. And I think some of the questions coming to you are coming out of that culture of disbelief. I think Stephen Carter’s message, if we go back to his book and his basic thesis, essentially is one of pluralism. You can argue this better than I can. But the idea of the pluralistic society, that’s what’s under attack right now.

RICK WARREN: That’s right.

KEN STARR: Pluralism is under attack.

RICK WARREN: Oh, without a doubt.

THOMAS FARR: Ladies and gentlemen, Judge Ken Starr, Russell Moore, and Rick Warren. Join me in thanking them. [Applause] It was an intellectual and theological feast.

Michael [Barnett], before you leave, could I just give you my answer to your question and tell you my reason for the Religious Freedom Project? We do a lot of stuff, but it’s really very, very simple. I believe in religious freedom for everybody because I believe God created every human being in his image and likeness. And if I don’t defend the religious freedom of you and every human being in every society, I am not being faithful to God. And it really does come down to that. Thank you and good night.