

Robert Bellah
2-22-82

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CAPPS: We have been taping some discussions with some of the visitors, the speakers, who have been here for this class on Monday night, and we are showing the video presentations on Wednesday mornings at nine o'clock in 2517 Phelps, that's at nine o'clock on Wednesday morning in 2517 Phelps. Last week we showed the interview that I had with Cal Thomas of the Moral Majority. This next week, or day after tomorrow, we will be showing the interview with David Soul, Stanley Sheinbaum, and Tracey Sussman, of People for the American Way. And then next week, on the third of March, we will be showing the interview with William Billings, the executive director of the National Christian Action Coalition. That's at nine o'clock, Phelps 2517. Now, there are, I know there are some of you who cannot make a nine o'clock Wednesday class session, but if I had a show of hands on that, if, OK, we'll try to find a time in the afternoon, and we'll do this, we'll announce this the way we have announced everything. There will be a notice in the political science department, a notice in the religious studies department, since the class is co-sponsored by those two departments, and also a notice on my door, South Hall 4724. The question was, how long do the tapes run? The one we showed last week runs about thirty minutes, this week about fifty minutes, and the William Billings one is about thirty minutes. If you'd like to see the Cal Thomas tape again, we can arrange the time. You'd like to see Cal Thomas. OK.

Now I have an announcement about final exams. There have been quite a few requests for an alternative time for

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final examinations. I made up my mind when I got involved in this course that I was not going to spend two weeks giving the final exam, you know, kind of around the clock, on call. But we are going to provide two occasions for the final exam, the regular exam time is Thursday evening, the eighteenth of March, at seven o'clock, and that will not be in this room. We will be finding smaller classrooms and we will give you a list of those. That's the regular assigned final examination time. The other time will be the Monday night, Monday night the fifteenth of March, and the same pattern will hold. We will not have the exams in this room, but we will find some other rooms on the campus and announce those well ahead of time. And I'd like to know by next week, if I can, how many of you prefer to take it on the fifteenth and how many will take it on the eighteenth. We are doing this partly for our own sake, because we need to read everything before grades are to be recorded on the Wednesday of the following week.

This is the kind of class that has evolved as we've done it. I am very happy to announce that we have a special speaker next week, the governor of the State of California. The problem is that he is not free on Monday evening, so we are scheduling a special session of the class for eleven o'clock next Monday morning. And this will be in Rob Gym. It will only last an hour. It will be approximately thirty minute lecture by Governor Brown, and about thirty minutes for question and answers. There will be other people who will be wanting to attend that, so the way we are handling

that is that we will have tickets printed, and those of you who are taking this course for credit, if you can demonstrate that, will have opportunity for tickets on Wednesday, and tickets for everyone else will be distributed on Thursday. And these again will be available in the Religious Studies department office. I hope the secretaries are not here tonight. In the Political Science department office, and also during office hours at my office, and also Bob O'Brien's office. Governor Brown has not yet given us a title for his address, but he understands the nature of our subject and promised that he would say something about religion. Probably also something about politics. That is not the only time we meet next week. We also will be meeting Monday night in this room. The reason for that is that I am a tenured member of the faculty, and I, you know, I think I moderate fairly well, but I also used to know how to lecture. And I haven't lectured very much in this class. I don't think I need to lecture for any ego satisfaction of my own but there are a number of you who are interested in what the questions might be on the final exam, and how I understand the material, and I think we can use that time wisely. We may not go the full two and a half hours, but there will be, in two sessions, next Monday, eleven o'clock in Rob Gym with the governor, and the regular time, seven o'clock, here with your instructor.

I have some announcements to make, which I am simply going to read. This is the best way for me to make announcements, because I move my lips when I read even

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when I am not reading aloud. And this one says, the first meeting of the UCSB chapter of Americans for Common Sense will be held Tuesday, March 2, at seven p.m. in South 3510. That's the first meeting of the UCSB chapter of Americans for Common Sense. Tuesday, March 2, seven p.m., South 3510. The general focus of the group will be discussed, along with membership participation in the organization. All students and faculty are welcome. And I also have an announcement about the couple of meetings, a two-day symposium occurring later on this week, this is under the title of the CIA in U.S. foreign policy, and it is being sponsored by the Third World Coalition, the Associated Student Program Board, the Student Lobby, the Center for Black Studies, the Coalition to Stop the Draft, the Black Studies Department, the Department for Chicano Studies, Department of History, UCSB Arts and Lectures. The first event in that two-day symposium is a film, entitled "On Company Business," which will be shown at eight o'clock Thursday evening of this week, in Lotté Lehmen Hall, which is an excellent film, winner of several international awards. And on Friday of this week, there will be a lecture, again on the same program of the CIA and U.S. Foreign Policy, a lecture, views from the inside, with Ralph McGehee, who is a former CIA officer, awarded a career intelligence medal, and John Stockwell, former operations chief, Angola task force. There will be a panel of local faculty experts to discuss these presentations. A second meeting will be in Campbell Hall on Friday evening, this week, Friday, February 26, at

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seven-thirty. One of the students in the class was involved in an automobile accident on February 1, right after class was over, Suzanne Blum, and she has asked if I would ask if anyone here witnessed the accident. I'd like for Suzanne to stand, or make herself known, so Suzanne will be standing over there by the wastebasket, as it turns out, there's no significance to that, during the break, and if anyone has witnessed the accident, would you make yourself known to Suzanne. Is there anything else now that, Steve Barr has an announcement.

BARR:(?) As you may or may not know, campaign 82 has already started, and candidates for the assembly and the state senate have already started their campaigns by, at least on the Democratic side, by, in lieu of paying filing fees, they have to get 1,500 names on petitions.

GAP IN TAPE: No sound

CAPPS: We are ready now to move into the substance of this course, but are there any, did I forget any organizational details, because we only meet once a week, is there, would anyone raise a question about procedure from here on?
? We do have several more meetings. We end on the eighteenth of March with Senator McGovern's return trip. And he has told us that he will be talking this time about the nuclear arms race. That will be the final meeting on the eighth of March. Yes.

Q: Unintelligible

CAPPS: No, I would think if you look us straight in the eye and you tell us that you are taking this course, that we will trust you. There won't be any problem.

We have a program tonight that is, I have been looking forward to very, very much. We have come to the portion of the course where we, for our own sakes at least, need to get involved in interpreting the subject that has been under our scrutiny. We have had a number of sort of testimonials, speakers from inside the various political interest groups talking about how they see the world and how their groups operate. And tonight we have an opportunity to listen to someone who I would say is very much on top of this subject. Professor Robert Bellah is the chairman of the department of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley. He came to Berkeley in 1967, I believe, after teaching at McGill University, and at Harvard University. Those of us in the religious studies profession know him for a wide variety of contributions to the field, and to American religious self-understanding. He is the one most closely connected with the subject of civil religion in America. He has written an article on religious evolution, which is required reading for all majors in religious studies, and certainly for all graduate students. He has been here before. He gave the Laucks Lectures here in 1976, sponsored by the Institute of Religious Studies, and I can say a great deal more about him. For example, he was with President Carter at Camp David prior to President Carter's speech, when he declared that the country was suffering malaise, in July, 1979, many, many more things of that kind. But I won't take from his time. So I'll

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simply add that he is the person that I trust most of all in coming to terms with the dynamics of contemporary American religion. It's a great pleasure to welcome Dr. Robert Bellah.

BELLAH: Thank you very much, Walter. Is that the right sound? OK. Well, I must say that I find this a bit intimidating. I think when Walter invited me, I had the idea of a small, informal seminar, not quite anything the proportions of this, which is a little beyond anything I have ever tried to do at Berkeley.

I want to talk about religion and politics in America tonight, very much in the context of what's happening in American political life, in the relatively immediate present, because I think we are in a very new situation, which has developed over the last year in some ways that many of us expected, in some ways that I don't think anybody quite expected. The present political climate in the United States did not begin with the inauguration of Ronald Reagan. We have seen straws in the wind for quite some time. We have been told about silent majorities before we heard of moral majorities. We have been told that there was a rising conservatism or neo-conservatism. We have seen signs of that among the intellectuals. We have heard about the new Right and the Christian Right. We have been told that many people in this country hanker for a return to what is called traditional morality. We have seen, particularly those of us in the State of California, one of the first signs of the taxpayer

revolt, Proposition 13, which was passed several years ago, but which is only now beginning to be felt, because that immense budget which the Democratic geniuses in this state allowed to accumulate to the point that is almost asked for Proposition 13 has finally been spent. And anybody who knows about the budget from the University of California, and I think that applies to Santa Barbara as well as to Berkeley, knows that that is finally coming home. And it's going to be much worse next year than this year.

Reagan is alleged to be a conservative President. I'll have a word about the meaning of that term, conservative, in a minute. But in another sense we've had conservative Presidents for quite some time. Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter were both, in one sense, conservatives of sorts, neither of them doctrinaire. But the people who have referred to the Carter-Mondale Administration as Reaganism of the center were not entirely wrong.

In spite of all these signs and early warning systems, what has happened in the last twelve months has a kind of stunning clarity that I don't think many people were fully prepared for.

What is going on in Washington now is not simply a change of administration or a change of party. It comes close to the classic political-philosophical notion of a change of regime. Not like a shift, Eisenhower or Johnson to Nixon, another more home-grown phrase for it is a basic political realignment. The shift away from

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directions that we have followed for fifty years, and the beginning of new directions which, the full consequences of which, we do not yet see.

Programs that it took thirty or forty years of hard work, painstaking work, and political coalition-building to put together have been destroyed or drastically weakened in a matter of months. It is perhaps not too much to say that the changes that we have seen in the last year amount --

GAP IN TAPE, ABOUT 10 SECONDS

--the role of religion--

GAP IN TAPE

--in particular make the word conservative helps us very much.

GAP IN TAPE

--we have virtually never had any conservatives. All we have is various kinds of liberals, and the chief liberal, arch-liberal, extreme liberal, in the classical meaning of that word, is of course Ronald Reagan.

The fundamental notion of liberalism is a devotion to the free market capitalist economy, above all else.

If I am right, and conservatism is almost as off the spectrum in America as socialism, and what we really have is a variety of kinds of liberalism, what we are facing now is a crisis within American liberalism, and not really a conservative challenge to it. Concordantly, the really important religious dimension in our present situation, I believe, is not that with which this course apparently

has been mainly preoccupied, namely, the rise of the Christian Right, which I will suggest is a relatively marginal phenomenon as we go along. But I think a more central crisis is the crisis in the main tradition of liberal religion in America.

If these assertions make any sense, they certainly require something of a historical background.

America has had a fortunate history. We need not gloss over our failings, which have been numerous, to see that relative to many societies American society has been remarkably successful. It is easy to point to the extraordinary good fortune of our geographic location, to account for our successes, insulated from foreign invasion. How many other societies in the twentieth century have undergone no major conflict on their own soil? We have exploited the enormous riches of the best part of an entire continent, and yet in Democracy in America, the wisest book ever written about this country, Alexis de Tocqueville argued a hundred and fifty years ago, that though the physical circumstances of our country contribute to our public happiness, the laws contribute more than the physical circumstances and the mores more than the laws. We were fortunate indeed to inherit from the founders of this Republic, a constitutional and legal order that have proven sound and flexible. But the origin, interpretation, and perpetuation of that order are in turn dependent on the mores embedded in society. A society with different mores would long since have

eroded and subverted our constitutional and legal order. And indeed, many societies have tried to copy our constitutional and legal order and were unable to sustain them.

Tocqueville defines mores in a number of ways. Perhaps the most poignant phrase he uses is, habits of the heart. The mores are the opinions and practices of the people who actually live within the society, and the mores create a moral fabric or what we might call today a moral ecology, which allows people to live together in some sense of mutual concern and mutual support.

The American mores, Tocqueville argued, and I think this self-evidently true, were rooted in our religious tradition, in our long experience of political participation, particularly of local political participation, and also in our commercial life. And indeed if we wish to understand the situation of our society, now or in the past, it is good to look not only at the politicians and the parties and the administrations, but also at the mores, the moral fabric or moral ecology which actually operates in this society, because politics tends to be an expression of that.

America, during its formative period, during the long period when an agricultural economy and a mercantile economy were dominant, but before the rise of modern industrialism, was largely a Protestant, rural, and small-town society in which basic institutions were the church, the school, and the home, farms and shops were family enterprises, most white Americans were self-employed, political life involved a great deal of participation at

the local level. There is still a great hankering for this America, this small-town and rural America, and indeed our President has gone so far as to quote Tocqueville. We'll be considering in a moment how valid that hankering is in the society in which we live.

In that earlier day, voluntary associations were the natural response to particular social needs, and government, both national and state, remained remarkably small-scale. Tocqueville commented that in the eighteen-thirties, when he was here, the bureaucrat, so omnipresent in Europe, was hardly to be found. In such a society, individual independence and social cooperation went hand in hand. Even during this formative period, this largely pre-industrial period, public spiritedness and self-interest, concern for the common good, and looking out for number one, did not always go harmoniously together, as most Americans hoped. There were indeed two partly incompatible models of the relation of individual and society that were deeply rooted in the American tradition. One model was the covenant, so vividly in the minds of the Puritan settlers, and reiterated in the Declaration of Independence, with its mutual pledge of our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor. The covenant is based on unlimited promise involving care and concern for others, under divine law and judgment. In the covenant model, people participate in each other's lives because they are mutually committed to values that transcend self-interest.

The second model is the contract, in which people join together to maximize self-interest, and in which they stay

together only for the benefits that they may gain. And of course, the contract model always requires a larger context of something like the covenant model, or why would people keep their obligations at all?

The contract model was rooted in the market, in what came to be called capitalism, and in the ideology of individualistic liberalism that defended capitalism. In a small-scale, religiously and culturally homogeneous society, these two models could exist side by side, uneasily, to be sure, but with no great sense of strain between them. In the years after the Civil War, particularly in the great transition phase in our society, from 1880 to 1920, enormous changes occurred which have only speeded up since, which have taken us ever further away from this image which we still somehow keep as the true America, what we really are.

I am doing some research that I will refer to a little later on in this talk, in which we are talking to Americans, mainly white middle-class Americans in a number of parts of the country, with very different views, but all of them express a certain nostalgia and desire to return to that earlier America.

Since the rise of industrial capitalism we have experienced an enormous increase in prosperity, power, knowledge, but the structure of our society has changed rapidly and drastically. The rise of corporate industry, of vast private bureaucratic aggregates of economic power, has been the motive behind many of the other changes. It has caused our concentration in great cities and the immense social problems that that concentration has brought

about. It has caused, directly or indirectly, the growth of big government, because the problems resulting from the rise of an industrial economy have simply eclipsed the capacity for voluntary action to ameliorate them. The rise of corporate industry is linked to the growth of a consumer economy, to the stimulus through advertising of an insatiable desire for material things, unknown in the previous history of mankind. On the world scale the rise of industrial capitalism has created a new and highly unstable world system, one with which we are, as we never were in our earlier days, inextricably involved. As part of this involvement has come a degree of militarization unthinkable to the founders of our Republic, who believed, every one of them, that the greatest threat to a free people is a large military establishment.

When we add to all the other changes the great immigration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in part a response to corporate industry's need for labor, and the consequent pluralization of religious, ethnic, cultural, of our population, we find an America hardly recognizable, if we think of the formative period that still gives us so many of our self-conceptions.

For a long time it was possible for most Americans to ignore the growing disparity between what we thought we were, and what we were rapidly becoming. The world of Norman Rockwell reflecting the America consciousness of but yesterday was the world of what I am calling the formative period, or rather, the world of the twentieth

century as though it were basically the same as this earlier period. We have seen television series like the Waltons or Little House on the Prairie, which look back with nostalgia on that past, and we have a President who has consistently alluded to, and utilized that nostalgia to gain legitimacy for his own ends. And yet, as the nostalgia has grown, confidence in American institutions, in the American project, the confidence that could be taken for granted through most of our history, has steadily declined by every measure that we have of such decline.

We have been told that if we could only, quote, get government off our backs, unquote, we would be in that pre-industrial paradise. But of course, the world of the great corporations, the world of a national and international economy, the world of vast private bureaucracies, as well as state and federal bureaucracies, would still be there. And indeed, far from any easy return to that older America, we have been in recent decades moving with ever-greater rapidity away from it. The immediate background of our present situation is the period 1945 to 1970, the greatest period of economic growth in American history, a genuine economic miracle, but one which has had profoundly unsettling consequences in our society. An increase of social mobility, of affluence, declining control of family and community, a massive growth of higher education, so that in many places chose to half of the relevant age group goes to college, whereas fifty years ago it would have been more like ten per cent, and not long before that, two per cent.

And along with that percentage going to college, and not unrelated to it, the continuous weakening of the moral and religious beliefs that held the society together in an earlier today, an earlier day.

Yet at the same time that the older ideals and structures were being undermined by economic success, there was also an effort based partly on our unparalleled prosperity, to make the American dream really come true, not just for affluent white Americans, but for all Americans. Beginning with the New Deal, and gaining impetus after World War II, we embarked on a moral revolution that was to bring the poor, the working class, the blacks, the women, all those who had been in one way or another left out of the full promise, to bring them into the American dream. The premise of that revolution was not new, we did not attempt to construct a new kind of society, we accepted the basic terms of the American pattern, of an individualistic, competitive society, but we wanted to open the competition to everyone, and not allow the continuation of those walls and iron curtains that kept so many people from ever having a chance to compete. The key term in this great effort at social change was equality of opportunity. Give everyone a chance to be in on the American project. Yet somewhere in the last ten or twelve years, the life went out of that great effort. The attempts at bureaucratic implementation of something no longer carried on a wave of popular consciousness were resented. And the full-scale counter-revolution that we see today (GAP IN TAPE, FEW SECONDS)

--background factors that--[GAP IN TAPE] --

-- and the relative stagnation of our economy since. Americans have always favored reform through the creation of new resources, not the redistribution of old ones. Americans are more interested in generosity when the pie is growing than when it is static or the fear is that it may shrink. In times of scarcity the enthusiasm for social justice seems to dry up in the American heart.

Still, these are very general background features, and we can ask more specifically, who is behind the immediate change, who wanted it, who supported it, what is the key to this new political situation that is almost counterrevolutionary in its scope?

One of the things that I think accounts for it is the shift of power in ruling groups within American corporate capitalism. We have heard a great deal from the media about the decline of the frost belt and the rise of the sun belt. Those are catchy phrases, but they-- [GAP IN TAPE--MUCH LONGER, ABOUT A MINUTE] --which has provided more than one president in recent years. I sometimes think there should be a constitutional amendment forbidding Californians to run for the Presidency, but I think that's not likely to happen too soon.

In the first instance this gift from the northeast to the southwest has been economic, but as I have just indicated, it's clearly also political. New faces, new forces coming from the areas of prime economic vitality. What this means politically is the decline in influence of the old corporate leadership that expressed itself in part in the Democratic Party. in part in the moderate

and liberal wings of the Republican Party. It really sounds rather antique to speak of moderate and liberal wings of the Republican Party today, but there were such things once.

This group has usually been called pejoratively the eastern establishment, and there is much certainly to be criticized about the eastern establishment. I must look with some bemusement at myself that I should seem to be nostalgic for it. But I think the day has come when we may genuinely regret its departure from our political scene. For one thing we might remember about this eastern establishment, it did have a social conscience, derived from long-standing family traditions of public service, of education in the great centers of liberal learning, of religious commitment to congregations and denominations that have had a strong sense of social responsibility at the public level. Unfortunately, the new sun belt capitalists, sometimes called pejoratively the cowboy capitalists, so evident in the entourage of our present President, are very different creatures. They lack those family traditions, that education, that religious commitment that would give them any breadth of social vision. They have a highly individualistic competitive model of economics, often, and politics, often using the analogies with sports. I am not saying that these people are not religious. Some of them, like the Secretary of the Interior, are apparently very pious. But their religion is highly personal. It doesn't seem to have any social or public implications.

This shift in the elite structure of American

economic life, and political expression of them, would perhaps be less dismaying if this were not associated also with a mass ideological base. We have heard a lot about the Moral Majority, and I want to say a bit more about that before I am through tonight. But this is not the base that I am talking about. Most of the liberals in the current American sense of the word that I know, such as fellow members of the Berkeley faculty, are very frightened of fundamentalists and Moral Majority types, and much more interested in talking about that than what I am going to try to depict for you in the next few minutes.

What I believe is a far larger component of the mass base of the present political mood in the United States is something I would call the amoral majority. And which probably is closer to a majority than the self-styled Moral Majority. Very strange that a biblical movement should call itself a majority. Well, if you have any resonance for that, you will see what I mean. But as far as the hard, cold numbers are concerned, I don't think it's Jerry Falwell, and even his most remote parallel, that are close to a majority in the United States today. What I am referring to when I use the term amoral majority is a new type of American middle class, oriented as middle-class Americans have been for a long time, to making it economically, but this time to making it economically in the new world of the late twentieth century in the world of the zero sum society, in a world where you can't go out and be your own entrepreneur, and start a new business, but where you have to

think about getting ahead in the corporate world. It is an ethos formed and expressed by people like Milton Friedman, Milton Simon, at a somewhat more vulgar level, Robert Ringer. Its essential message is looking out for number one. In a world of scarcity, be sure to get to the well first before it dries up. Don't worry about the other guy, think always about yourself, and if you're generous, about a few people who are close and intimate to you, your family and friends. But the essential motto is, get yours, keep it, and then do everything you can to see that you don't have to share it with anyone else. To some extent this new middle class replaces an older middle class, just as the new elite replaces the older one. And this new middle class mass ^{base?} partly reflects the shift in elite structures that I already referred to. But it's not just a geographical difference. In particular, we have very good evidence that it is a generational difference, and that it is recruited very much from younger generations of what used to be the old liberal mainline denominations in the United States, who don't keep the younger generation nearly as well as the conservative fundamentalist churches.

It is from this old center of American civic and religious values that new attitudes with different implications for our life as a people have been developing.

I want now to share with you some of the results of the research project on American values that I am directing at the present time.

The central value that we find expressed over and

over in many different ways is the value placed on the freedom and the autonomy of individuals. This is why, by the way, I don't think the Moral Majority has a chance in this society. The last thing that most Americans want is anybody to tell them what to do, in bed or out of it.

I'd like to give you a little sample of the new kind of culture that we seem to be moving toward--

END OF SIDE I OF TAPE

SIDE II OF TAPE

BELLAH CONTINUES:-- this is a sentence from a young woman therapist in Atlanta, Georgia. She speaks for many. I wish I had the tape to play it to you, because it's the quality of voice, not just the words, when she says: In the end, you are really alone, and you really have to answer to yourself. You are responsible for yourself, and no one else.

This sense of personal freedom is the most resonant, deeply held American value today. It defines the good in both personal and political life. Yet this freedom turns out to mean being left alone by others, not having other people's values, ideas, or styles of life forced upon one, being free of arbitrary authority in work, family, and political life. What it is one might do with that freedom is very difficult for the people we talked to to define. And if the entire social world is made up of individuals, each endowed with the right to be free

of others' demands, it becomes hard to forge on to attachment to or cooperation with other people, since such bonds would imply obligation, and obligation can impinge upon our freedom.

Thus our therapist, for example, sets great store on becoming an autonomous person, responsible for her own life, she recognizes that other people like herself are free to have their own values and lead their own lives the way they choose. But then by this same token, if she doesn't like what they do or the way they live, her only right is the right to walk away. Walk away and don't look back, as one of the people we talked to put it very aptly. A fundamental mechanism for handling all difficulties is to walk away and don't look back.

So in some sense this freedom to, to be left alone is a freedom which implies being alone. This radically secular freedom, which is continuous with what Tocqueville analyzed when he was one of the first to use that word, individualism, which is so powerful today, undermines at least potentially every human commitment. If I am responsible for myself alone and for no one else, then I am the source of all moral values. My feelings, wishes, and desires are the only criterion. The word good can only mean what is good, or feels good, or seems good, to me. If any other person or any group or any institution, quote, doesn't meet my needs, or if I don't feel good about them, or if I don't feel comfortable with them, those are phrases we pick up all over the country. I am sure no one in Santa Barbara talks that way, but we

do hear those things.

So if persons and groups don't meet my needs, then there is no reason why I should stay around. And of course, if they feel that way about me, I have no claim on them. Thus marriage, friends, job, community, church, religious faith, are all dispensable. If one doesn't work, I can always find another. Then if I don't, it's my fault. Tough luck.

Kenneth Kenniston has recently pointed out some strange ironies about recent American cultural history in getting at some of the same things that I am talking about this evening, when he pointed out that the so-called cultural revolution of the sixties had some ironic victories. It was not, the way most people in Berkeley think, a total failure. It succeeded in some ways all too well. For if we look at some of the premises of that cultural moment of the sixties, we will see things that in only slightly different form are widely prevalent today. Of course, the sixties insurgents insisted on greater freedom of personal expression, doing your own thing, non-traditional forms of sexual and personal relationships. Today the norms and standards with respect to those things are far more permissive than they were in the nineteen-sixties.

Secondly, the sixties activists were skeptical and cynical about the American government and most other American institutions, and throughout the nineteen-seventies, we have seen a continuous decline of confidence

in the American government and all other American institutions. A recent California poll showed the one category of persons that Californians have most confidence in, is a category called research scientists. The clergy was well below that, and members of the United States Congress were way down.

Third, the sixties generation was filled with dark expectations about the future. By the early nineteen-eighties, most Americans were indeed filled with dark foreboding about the future, about economic crisis, economic decline, over the long haul, and about catastrophic nuclear warfare, which could end it all even relatively soon.

Yet these victories of sixties attitudes in the decade after that great cultural effervescence, has sparked no major efforts at structural change in American society. Rather, they seem to reinforce the privatism and individualism that are at the very heart of what is called the new conservatism, though I have suggested that's perhaps not the right word for it.

Secular liberalism, I am afraid, is in considerable part responsible for the phenomenon that I am now calling the amoral majority. It has often advocated a degree of individualism that in its radicalness begins to lose any moral or any social context whatsoever. I think many people in the amoral majority [GAP IN TAPE] teachings that they learned in Sunday School when they went to college. But the changes I am talking about are not matters merely of ideas and culture. They are rooted in fundamental structures

of the American economy.

I'd like now to look at a second and to some degree incompatible segment of this new political moment that we are in in this country. Here I am coming more specifically to the Moral Majority, which in the broadest extension, I think, of its values is shared by no more than twenty to twenty-five per cent of the American population, and falling. These are the people that my colleagues are most worried about, because they are people who live somewhere else, and who talk with a different accent and it's easy to caricature [GAP IN TAPE] --ironically more than a little overlap between the Moral Majority and the amoral majority. It is one of the sad things about the Moral Majority, is how badly they want in on the material pleasures of American life, which suggests again another thing we might remember about the Moral Majority, which is that people who share this orientation are not and have never been at the center of American society. They are poorer rather than richer, they are more apt to be Southern than Northern, they are old rather than young, they are people who have been left out and dismayed by the changes in our society, and one of their impulses is to want to be let in. And this is one way they tried to get in!. So they frequently secretly admire the life style of the very people that they criticize.

The Moral Majority speaks to the old, white Protestant constituency, now it's not just Protestant, but still it's heavily Protestant, that feels itself threatened, psychologically at sea, because of the rapidity of changes in our

society which they do not fully understand. Economic, social, and moral changes that have happened so fast that the life that they expected isn't here any more. The reaction of this group to the confusion brought on by rapid social change is of course nothing new. It's taking a new form, but it's continuous with patterns that are very old in our society. When you see social changes you don't understand, and forms of public expression which disturb you, it is easy to concentrate on personal, sexual, and familial issues, as the heart of the problem. These are tangible issues that can be immediately understood about individual human beings. They are precisely the issues that what I am calling the amoral majority is utterly uninterested in. In its fundamental permissiveness toward what anyone else does, couldn't care less. And I would suggest that if you look at public opinion polls over the last thirty years, you will see a continuous decline of the traditional morality championed by the Moral Majority.

| So the concerns of this group do not represent the mainstream of what's happening in American society. They represent a sharp reaction in some ways to what's happening in the mainstream. The Moral Majority, in its concerns tends to draw upon a rigid authoritarian and legalistic religion and theology, which ties into something that I have talked about before, American civil religion. Because it's not only back to the Bible, it's back to America, in a very simple, patriotic way.

They imply that if there are troubles at home and weakness abroad, it must be because our people are individually

sinful. We are being punished by an angry God and the evidence of the sins for which we are being punished are rampant sexual immorality, teenage pregnancy, disrupted families, in large part caused by women who refuse to accept their God-given subordinate status, and homosexuality that calls in question the God-ordained pattern of stereotyped sex roles between men and women.

What the Moral Majority and related fundamentalist groups do is play on the most dangerous strands of what I would call the folk civil religion, to account for our problems. They want to interpret our society in terms of some of those great Biblical archetypes, and images, something which Christians in America have always had to do, however delicate and dangerous it is to do it. But this particular strand in our history, which goes back, far, far back, can never quite decide whether our society is Babylon or the new Israel. And that gives you two different strategies. The charm of their intellectual agility is that they can shift from one to the other in the same sermon. The essential teaching that would emerge if we are indeed Babylon is that we are hopelessly corrupt. We are suffering God's wrath, and if we are going to suffer it, and we are going to suffer it much more intensely, and therefore the best thing to do is to stockpile food and perhaps guns in the hills, and wait for the total collapse of our society. I think I don't have to tell you that there are thousands, probably hundreds of thousands, of Americans acting on those assumptions today in this country.

Some of the people who have this Babylon image take pleasure in each sign of our impending collapse, because they think they are the only ones who will make it when the end comes.

If, on the other hand, we are the new Israel, then perhaps our present punishment is merely a chastisement of God's chosen and God's beloved. If we can take that chastisement to heart, clean up our act, put women back in their place, probably blacks, too, though that isn't too popular to say right now, put the homosexuals in prison for thirty years, then the Lord will make His face to shine upon us and give us back our domestic prosperity and our world empire. Of course, that is a parody, but it's not wholly a parody. And it's precisely this concern with controlling one's neighbor that makes these people so deeply unpopular to the great majority of Americans.

The sad thing is that the true interests of the followers of Jerry Falwell have little in common with the new, hard capitalist class that is emerging in this country. Precisely because these people are relatively poor, and relatively left out, and from relatively underdeveloped parts of the country, they need government support, they need precisely those mechanisms to give them equality of opportunity which are being dismantled in the country today. But the ideological climate is such that they can vote against their economic interests at least for a while, and go along with the present political mood.

On the other side of the coin, although the amoral majority is typically tolerant, as I have suggested, on all

the issues where the Moral Majority is intolerant, indeed presses for an extreme toleration, probably at the limits to which any society could successfully operate under, the problem is, in a society which is in many respects falling apart at the seams, the rise in the anxiety level among the people that I am calling the amoral majority, could lead to a vulnerability to simple authoritarian answers, such that under enough pressure, they could opt for what presently is the opposite of their present commitment.

Now, our very success as a nation has made us peculiarly vulnerable to the problems of the very difficult world of the late twentieth century, in to which we are moving. For there are no simple answers. There is no formula that will return us to the peace and quiet of the nineteenth century small town.

In particular, the results of the economic miracle of 1945 to 1970, which was of course the payoff of central strands in our culture, almost from the beginning, may have undone us. That period accustomed us to affluence as a right, as an entitlement. It also made possible the degree of individual freedom on a mass scale never before seen in any society. But the price was a grave weakening of our central meaning system, of what I have called our moral ecology, of the structures of social and community life, of the things which sustain individuals when there are moments when they need other people.

The center is not holding. Affluence and freedom, the negative freedom to be left alone, to finally be alone,

don't provide a center. There are, as I see it, three possible futures for us. Sociologists have no more idea than anyone else about what the future holds. The most we can possibly do is perhaps talk about a few options that might occur.

The first, and of course the one that lies implicitly behind everything I have been saying, because I criticize this society out of a deep love for its central tradition, and that would be a recovery of our central civic and religious tradition, of a capacity to be a community, to have a sense of what a covenant people is, of what it means to care about others, and not just look out for number one. But those terms and those phrases which are deeply rooted in our past, have radical implications today, for they would require us to think about some central problems of our society as it is currently organized. Above all, economically organized. And that would generate enormous problems and the opposition of powerfully entrenched groups. A way of making our deep democratic civic commitment real in the late twentieth century needs to be put on the agenda in American politics, but it's not there at the moment.

A second alternative, this is really the nightmare of the secular liberal intelligentsia. A new, hard center, moralistic, authoritarian, drawing from the religious Right, indeed, an alliance of power and religious dogmatism. We aren't there yet by a long shot. But if the society fails to function long enough, and anxiety levels rise high enough, this is certainly, as it has been in other societies before us, one possibility.

The third possibility that the Nobel Prize winning economist, Paul Samuelson, has placed before us is less clear-cut than either the first or the second. In some ways, if anything more appalling. The gradual collapse into a kind of pluralism none of us would want, pluralism like freedom is another one of these words that is a sacred cow in this society, but we should not forget Northern Ireland and Lebanon are very pluralistic societies. It's just that the different plural segments shoot at each other when they see them. A nasty pluralism in which each group operates for its own interest at any cost, against others. The picture of our future as a centerless congeries of conflicting power groups. Samuelson goes so far as to say, if you would see our future, turn your gaze toward Argentina.

I will not end on that rather cheerless note, but rather go back to what Walter Capps has rightfully discerned as my own deep commitment, somehow to resurrect the best in the older American pattern in a way that would help us make sense out of the difficult years in which we currently live. Thank you.

We have Jurgen Moltmann also on the program tonight, so I don't want to take too much time, but I also want to give you a chance to answer back after I have given you a fairly hard time for an hour or so. So I'll take a few questions. Over here.

Q: Unintelligible.

BELLAH: I don't think there is any political vision in the Moral Majority. They have highly specific issues, summed up in something like the family protection

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act, but essentially they affirm America's free enterprise economy, America's imperial stance in the world, America's militarization. They're not asking for a radically different political course, aside from these so-called social issues. And very much, I think, as you indicate, they would like to get in on some of the goodies that other Americans on the whole have been more successful at. Over here.

Q: Unintelligible

BELLAH: Well, there are some strange reversals going on. But what I think is really afoot here is that the present so-called conservative majority in the United States is composed of some very incompatible elements. We know, for instance, from polls, that people who feel strongly about the so-called social issues are not nearly as dedicated to dismantling the welfare state as the people that I am calling the amoral majority, the extreme of which would be the sort of libertarian party position. Those who want to get government off our backs, so that capitalism will have an unrestrained control of our lives, are very different from the people who are worried about the so-called social issues. So it depends on who you are, where you want government out. And indeed, if you look closely, nobody in this society really wants government out. They just want government to help us, a twenty-five-per-cent tax cut for those of us who have enough money to make that mean something.

Q: Unintelligible

BELLAH: Well, it wasn't all that pleasant. Let's not forget a few things like slavery and so on. There is no golden age, you know. In some ways we did things better earlier. No, I am not suggesting that there is any past to which we can simply and uncritically return. I am suggesting that there are features of our tradition, Biblical, democratic, political, that we could creatively adapt and appropriate to our present problem. And certainly one crucial dimension of our present reality is that we live in a whole world with which our country is inextricably involved. And if we cannot deal with that world as a whole, it will blow us up and everything else, although I am afraid I probably think the most likely candidate for who's going to blow the world up is us. So it's a question of creative growth. I don't think we can abandon our past any more than any other people can abandon its past. We use it creatively to move ahead, or we cling to it rigidly and go down. That's really the problem. That's the choice that I see.

Q: Unintelligible

BELLAH: I have no doubt that they have a youthful contingent among the most active groups. It is also true that the conservative churches have kept their young people better than the liberal churches. Nonetheless, when we look at public opinion polls on the issues closest to the hearts of the Moral Majority, we find that agreement is higher among older Americans than among younger Americans. And among younger Americans

as a whole, the Moral Majority position is even a smaller minority than it is among all Americans. When you are talking about something like twenty to twenty-five per cent of the American population, that's a lot of people.

I am not saying there are not millions and tens of millions of people there. I am just saying that's not where the mainstream of society is, and furthermore, in terms of any trend data that I know, it's not where the society is going. That could reverse, but there are some very long-term stable trends that show that those attitudes are declining, not rising.

Q: Unintelligible.

BELLAH: Well, the question is a bit complex. Whether the narcissistic and introspective mood that we seem to be in at the moment is simply the result of affluence, or does it have other sources? The roots of the emergence of what Philip Rieff calls psychological man, who is an immediate descendant of the famous economic man, came in with capitalism, and by no means replaces him, because the same person is economic man five days a week at work, and then psychological man on the weekends. The roots of this highly privatistic concern for my own feelings and my own experiences as the only reality go back quite a way. Probably, I mean, there is no, for all of the enormous benefits that we have gained from modern industrial capitalism, in the material world, in some respects in the enormous growth in science and knowledge, and all

of the things we have to take seriously, it has never been a very soul-satisfying kind of life. And from relatively early on, people have said there must be more to life than this. And what's interesting is that the effort to find some kind of meaning, some kind of profound experience of life, has emerged first in the people who profited most from industrial capitalism. This is true even in the cultural revolution of the sixties, which was primarily affluent youth, more apt to be people who were at the best universities, not working-class and not at second-rate schools. The sort of inner revolt against a way of life organized wholly on maximizing profits is visible in this country, at least from the eighteen-nineties. I think it's a reaction to an economic order which is no longer seen as having any ethical or communal meaning. If work is only to make money, if it doesn't contribute to any sense of a social world, which makes our existence worthwhile, then we have to find our meaning somewhere else. And so there is this rather long-term, but recently greatly increasing, emphasis on finding meaning in private personal experience, and placing the sort of excitement of the inner life first in the hierarchy of values, and in terms of any larger concern for other people, the only relationship that's really important is the one to one relationship of intensity and intimacy. So I think this is a long-term trend that is related to the collapse of older ideals of community and religious commitment, and

the emergence of our modern economy. Not just affluence, it's the fact that the affluence is fundamentally meaningless. The full stomach and the empty soul. You've got to do something about that problem. Maybe, what, one more, Walter, question here?

Q: Unintelligible

BELLAH: Whether community can survive in great urban sprawl areas where any sense of connectedness with any one except a few intimate people is very hard to sustain. I think there is a great deal of experimentation with community, and certainly in urban areas, as well as elsewhere, of a wide variety of sorts. We've seen all through the seventies, that's partly one of the offspring of sixties political activism, the emergence of grass-roots organizations among poor people, for instance, which are able to create certain kinds of solidarity. A variety of religious groups are able to do that, including in cities. And it probably is important and valuable social function in some of the fundamentalist groups that I might not think too highly of in terms of their ideology or philosophy, but they do provide something larger than the nuclear family as the context of people who care about and, in a rather in-turned way, take care of each other. Our problem really is, outside of these very intimate relations, and outside of the few groups that are able to organize somewhat larger communities, is there any way to bring that kind of caring concern for others into our public life? That's what we seem to have lost

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hold of, and the right kind of political leader at this point who could articulate that, would certainly be someone I would be interested in listening to. Thank you.

END OF TAPE