

ALACHUA PORTRAIT FORUM #5

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ALACHUA PORTRAIT FORUM #5

"RELIGION AND IDEALS"

SEPTEMBER 20, 1983

VOICES IN ORDER OF SPEAKING;

- TC: Tim Check, Panel Moderator - Safety Officer, City of Gainesville
- JK: Jim Kelly, panelist - local horse breeder/Holy Faith Catholic Church
- CL: Charles Lawson, panelist - Saint Matthew's Baptist Church
- AB: Allan Burns, Ph.D., Humanities Consultant
- NS: Neil Sherouse, panelist - Pastor, First Baptist Church
- ME: Marilyn Escue, panelist - Housewife/Assembly of God
- LR: Leoris Richardson, panelist - Santa Fe Community College Department of Community Education/ Paradise Methodist Church
- WF: Reverend Willie Frazier, speaker from audience - local minister (denomination unknown)
- AS: Arthur Spencer, Jr., panelist - local amateur historian; vineyard owner; retired educator
- FW: Fiermon Welch, speaker from audience - retired school principal
- JM: Joe Mager, Speaker from audience - HARE KRISHMA FARM representative
- SA: Unknown University of Florida nursing student, speaker from audience

Due to the limitations inherent in transcribing these audio tapes, there may be misspellings of proper names and geographic locations. The language has been reproduced as accurately as possible, however, there were some problems with the quality of the sound.

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TC: Like we have done in the past, I would like to introduce all of our panelists for the audience, and get a brief sketch of their background. Then have each panelist share with us their experiences, feelings, and fundamental thoughts and beliefs. If you have any questions or need clarification on a point or want to make a point, these are the people that we would like you to interact with. Mr. Jim Kelly, Deacon Charles Lawson, Reverend Neil Sherouse, Mrs. Marilyn Escue, Dr. Allan Burns, Mrs. Leoris Richardson, Mr. Arthur Spencer.

JK: I feel a little bit intimidated because of the Reverend and what not. I am just an old racehorse breeder who raises horses for people to gamble on. I also have not been too popular. I have been called a person from the whore of Babylon. I have been called a nigger lover. I just never fit in with the mainstream. Things have not always been that way. They were not that way fifteen years ago, ten years ago. If we want to dwell in the past, we have nothing to be proud of. I am not a preacher. I was born a Catholic and always had a hard time being one. The Baptist Church across the corner on one hand, the Methodist Church on the other: The Klu Klux Klan would meet in one one week and talk about the Catholics, niggers, and Jews. It left me in a kind of limbo. Even when my kids were at Santa Fe on Sunday morning, we would get up early and go to the seven o'clock Mass. You would be driving down the road here past First Baptist Church and you would see us with the horse trailer because we were going horse racing.

My present is what I am concerned with. But I bring up the past so that we do not slip back into the past. Today I was going down to Ocala to deliver a truckload of hay and I saw an old man I know on a farm there. I asked him if he wanted to ride down to Ocala with me. He said, "Yes." We were riding along and I said, "I have to make a talk tonight. It is supposed to be on religion and values. Can you help me?" He said, "You know I am an atheist." So anyway, he gave me a bunch of values and goals for Alachua County and Alachua. I got to thinking how it was pretty much the same goals as most of us have. We want to grow, we want to stay a small community with growth. We want clean industries. We want nice people. We want all these things. We want our children to grow up and be able to have jobs. Now this is supposed to be religion and he has got the same goals a lot of us have. Our real goals should be that we arrive at a point in life where we have peace, joy, and happiness which comes from God. Our goals should be that our children should grow up in an atmosphere that they will have love, joy, and peace.

I say I am not a preacher, but I am lying a little bit. For the last six or seven years, I have been going over to the Union Correctional Institution the first Saturday of every month. We go over there first because the Catholic men over there felt they were not going to church if they did not have Mass. We try to get a priest to go with us sometimes. So these seven years we have been going there. We have gotten to know the main chaplain very well. A month or so ago he said, "We are starting a new program. We have always stayed here in the chapel and waited for people to come where it is nice, comfortable and safe. The only people that can come are the ones that are on good behavior, the ones that live in the West Unit, because it is the less restricted part. There are people up there which have been locked up for two years that never see anybody, but in that you have been coming a long time and you should know

your way around in this type of atmosphere. Come on a Thursday night and join us." I agreed to join these two. There was another man that we invited to come with us. I called him and he said he just could not go. Boy, was I relieved. The next Thursday came, and I could not go. A third Thursday came, and we went.

That is a prison over there - UCI - that is where they put all the people with long terms, repeat offenders, people that have been trouble-makers, and other criminals. They have a head chaplain who is with the Church of the Nazarene. They have an assistant chaplain who is in the Church of God. They have another new assistant chaplain, a Baptist. They have an Episcopalian minister that comes in on a voluntary basis, about four days a week. They have an occasional Catholic priest that comes. We drove over there and when we got there the chaplain talked to us for a minute. Someone had just gotten murdered that day, gotten stabbed with a screwdriver right outside the chaplain's office. So just to shorten up a little bit, we were all shook up, trying to get in touch with the man's family. They brought his folder out to look at it. His mother and father were Catholic. It evaluated him as being indifferent to any religion. But they were very concerned. We had a little prayer meeting before we went into the locks. We went into a chapel that had 120 prisoners, three chaplains, and visiting volunteer ministers. At the prayer service the prisoners were all there praying for our safety when we went in there. We were in there by ourselves with several hundred murderers and rapists with no protection at all. But with the prayers of this little group, we felt safe and comfortable. When you are spit at, it does not hurt. We could not talk to Spanish people because I do not speak Spanish. We did not have anybody who spoke Spanish that went over there. Say, "Comprende, praise God!" Pray a little in sign language.

These men prayed, not for themselves, they were praying for us. They were praying for the families, for the man that was killed. They were praying that the murderers would come to God for forgiveness. The whole thing was the sweetest relationship that you have ever seen. And the one thread that goes through it all is that we all respect each other. We all love God, believe in his love, but in a different way. I am telling you this hoping that they same thing will come forth, but we never forget how easy it is to slip into hate, mistrust, and telling other people what they believe. You do not know what they believe.

We are just a small group here and each one of us will have a little part in spreading his type of love and have an effect. When we think of big cities, like Detroit which was once a town like Alachua, a little old tiny village with people and churches scattered around. We could become another Detroit, God forbid. But when they were growing, they let their values get completely out of hand. Instead of their values being love, joy, and peace, their values got to be big industry, high-paying jobs, lots of money and prestige. They came down here and bragged about their high wages while we were down here working for nothing; sell those cars whether they were a piece of junk or not. They did not care, just sell them. So they were in the same place we were. This was a little town. And if IBM came here, great. That was what everybody wanted, a nice, clean inustry. If IBM comes with a whole lot of people, we will have to do our little part in trying to keep a sense of values.

TC: Last Thursday night, we had a program on local government and we really did not have a hot issue to discuss at all. At this time Dr. Deacon Charles Lawson, will you share some of your thoughts with us, please?

CL: Right now, at this point, I only know about two men. One of the men was scared and the other one dead. You see, I am still here. I would like to take out one word here and work off it, and that word is religion. We are all the time wondering, "What is religion?" We have been asked questions about religion. You deal with people who want to think that religion is something that you get. But really, it is something that you keep. You must keep it. You have got to keep it. There is no other way out. But for our community and our churches, the genuine religion tonight would bring about a unity of the community. Let's go back and get the homes where we need the foundation of this religion. Now, your religion will teach you to do unto all men the things you would have them do unto you. Therefore, we would be a good and better people. But we must, by all means, have that good, genuine religion. This genuine religion is based on love. I hope I am not getting out of character. I do not want to get into the Bible. I want to kind of beat around it. I would like to say you can tell, you are not a judge, but you can tell a man or a woman that fails to have that genuine religion. This is one point I want to get over at this meeting tonight. You can love everybody. It is a bad condition if nobody loves you. This love, it is something that moves about, that is involved in this religion and when we keep this religion, we live it in our homes, we live it in the community. We live it in our churches, we teach it everywhere we go. Tell men and women how this religion will make you act, that this religion will make you respect and obey the rules and regulations of the community in which you live. This religion that I have will not allow me to litter in the city because it is genuine.

AB: Deacon Lawson, we are not going to let you off the hook that easily. Now Mr. Kelly said that we do not want to slip back into the past, the hate and the problems we had with the past. But if you could just talk a little bit about the early days of your church here in Alachua. What started it and how did it draw people to it? A little of that history might be good for us.

CL: I would like to say, let's go back and pick up that first statement. There is nothing wrong with looking back, but I would advise you to not go back. Now I have only been working here in this church or in this city for about forty years. I have been working with the churches of this city now for about thirty-five or forty years and I have found that we really have some religious people in our churches. We have that in our community and in our church. We have religious people. Now, in our community, we have organized twelve churches. This is the unity of our community and once a month, every second Sunday, we come together. We have the sermon, we have the other parts of the program, and fellowship. So I feel that our churches in the community are going forward with the good desire to do better as we go. Now, I do not want anyone to think that we have graduated. We have got a good little piece to go yet, because it has not yet appeared what we should be like. We have got to keep on working with our churches. We have got to keep working in our community until we can reach our goals, and that will be perfection. But whatever happens, I will still be a Christian. If I have to, I will come back and talk some

more.

AB: I am sure some people will have some questions later on.

TC: Reverend Neil Sherouse.

NS: Mr. Kelly, if it will make you feel any better, this is one Baptist who went to seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, the home of Kentucky Bourbon and the Kentucky Derby. There is a subject which is near and dear to my heart which I am going to perhaps bore you with tonight. But, we were given a good bit of freedom in determining our topics tonight. In fact, they told us to talk about whatever we wanted. So I chose something that, to me, is very significant and I think I am sharing this tonight because of some observations I have made about our community in the three-and-a-half years I have been here. The Gospel of Luke records Jesus' growing in wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man. Luke, you remember, was a physician and it is rare in any Hebrew literature that we get that kind of delineation of what is the totality of personhood. Jewish literature usually just talks about the soul, as one unity. Spirit and body cannot be separated.

But in this particular case Luke, the physician, chooses to enumerate for us four areas of growth in which Jesus exhibited development and maturity. I think we also acknowledge these as being important areas: Wisdom, intellectual growth, stature, physical growth, in favor with God, growth in terms of spiritual growth, and in favor with man, social growth. It was not that Luke was uneducated and did not recognize the psychological or emotional dimension of personhood. But Luke, being the good Jew that he was, also recognized that emotional development cannot proceed without spiritual development. So in his mind the two were the same. That is why he seemed to have left that out where we would have put it in. In our society we tend to put emphasis on only two of those areas of development, to the neglect of the others. Our government right now is pushing very hard to upgrade the science and math programs in our schools. We are, again, placing emphasis on the intellectual development of our children. We have, for a number of years, probably at least since President Kennedy, put a great deal of emphasis on the physical training and conditioning of our young people. This is all well and good but to be perfectly honest with you folks, unless we develop these other dimensions of personhood, the increased intellectual prowess and vast physical strength of our young people is going to be positively worthless because it will not be channeled constructively. You see, what good is it going to do us to be the most intellectual and physically conditioned nation in the world if we do not know how to make moral decisions, if we do not know how to relate to other people as reflections of our own personhood?

What I want to address tonight really is the absolute necessity of religious education. Now, when I mention that term, the first thing that comes to your mind in Sunday School when you were seven years old. That is not what I mean, though that very well may be an important ingredient. So religious education, I would define as the process of developing the spiritual dimension of personhood and relating those dimensions to other dimensions of life that make up our selfhood. We generally assume that religious education ends with adolescence. When kids get old enough to say I do not want to go to Sunday School, I do not want to go to church,

we assume that that is the end of the process of religious education. And regrettably, for most of us that was the end of our religious education. Religious education ought to be an ongoing process that speaks to the needs of every phase of life, that addresses itself at every stage of life, at every juncture of life. So I am pleading the cause of religious education tonight because I think this community does a rather poor job in that area and it is not the fault of churches. I believe, in fact, in studying the root, the offerings in religious education in all of the churches in our community, I really honestly believe there are many more resources in our community, in every community of faith, than are being taken advantage of by our community. In other words, there is a lot more here for you than you are taking advantage of. I know quite probably you folks in here are not the ones I ought to be preaching at. Mr. Kelly chose not to, but I will choose to preach at you a little bit tonight.

Let me pause and recommend a book, and I am not pushing John Claypool's book. I do not have an interest, nor do I have any stock in his publisher. I have read voluminous tomes on religious education and the religion of psychology and this tiny little book is worth more than all of them probably put together because of the concise way in which Claypool addresses precisely what I want to address tonight. And I recommend this little bitty book to you very highly. There are tasks which religious education must accomplish at each of the stages of life. I want to address just briefly the four major stages of life and address religious education. St. Madeline's is involved in religious education. That term is very broad but religious education needs to be plugged in at each one of these important junctures of life. Now, if there is a psychologist or sociologist, and I know there is a sociologist among us, they are going to say, well, there are a lot more than four stages of life. If you want me to talk about eight I can, but we will run out of time. So we will talk about four, childhood being the first.

Gordon Cosby has said that the primary responsibility of any parent is to enjoy his children. Now to those of us who grew up in a rather Puritan-informed background, that grates against the conscience. We expect children to be seen and not heard. We do not tend to enjoy our children, we just kind of tolerate them. But Cosby says the most important thing a parent can do for his children is to enjoy them. I believe that is an important task of religious education, to communicate to children God's delight in them. The message of scripture, I believe, is that when God had completed creation, he pronounced it good. Now we are not arguing evolution nor the precise way in which God chose to bring creation into being. I frankly do not know, and I do not think it is really relevant. The important thing is that at each stage God looked at what he had done thus far, and said, "It is good." Now somewhere along the line, somebody screwed up and it was not God. Our responsibility is to communicate God's delight in those around us who are relatively knee-high. The church sometimes has to compensate for the failure of others to do that, including parents. There are some times when parents simply do not communicate delight and the church, or religion in general, must compensate for the failure of others. We must also call forth from our children their unique gifts and talents to give them something that is theirs, something about which they can feel good and proud.

Second is the stage of adolescence. The noted psychiatrist Erich Fromm

says that neurosis itself is, in the last analysis, a symptom of moral failure. Now that is a pretty shocking statement coming from a psychiatrist. Psychiatrists do not usually tend to talk in religious terms and moral failure is a religious term if ever there was one. Our responsibility as religious educators at that juncture we call adolescence is to teach the adolescent, first of all, to accept responsibility for his or her own actions. It is what Claypool calls stepping back without walking away. It is giving them a sense of freedom without leaving them with no support system. In other words, we try to provide for them a basis of moral decision-making. I am not sure we are doing that very well these days, folks. In fact, I am relatively sure we are not doing that very well. We must provide for our adolescents a laboratory, if you will, in which they can experiment with decision-making. But at the same time we have got to be there to provide them with support and interpretation when they blow it, which they most certainly will. That is a primary responsibility that we the community must bear in terms of the religious education of our teenagers.

The third point, or stage of life, is adulthood. Our primary responsibility there in educating ourselves, those of us who are adults and others who will be adults, is to help span the gap that always exists in all of our lives and in the world around us between what is and what ought to be. There is generally a wide gap between reality and the idea. And one of the important tasks we have in adulthood is to bridge that gap and teach others to do so. There are basically three frontiers of life in which that must happen. In terms of our work, vocation, calling, relationships with significant other people in our lives, and also ourselves, we must bridge the gap between what we are and what we ought to be.

Finally, the point in life we call senior adulthood. Dag Hammarskjold, whom some of you are adult enough to remember, served the world faithfully through the United Nations and was also a very dedicated Christian. He had this to say: "For all that has been, thanks. For all that will be, yes." I think the task of religious education to those who are in this stage of life or this period of life called senior adulthood is to teach them to say yes to all of life, to life's beginning and its maturing and its blossoming and bearing fruit and to its ending. You know, by coming to grips with death and the fears that are related to death, we really overcome those things which tie us to this life, those things which tie us to materiality. So we must provide for these folks, a source of hope. We must provide for them a framework in which they are able to define what life really meant and means and will mean. We must focus, and help them focus, on being. You know, the great emphasis in our society is on doing, on getting, on accomplishing. Our senior adults need to be focused into being. Being grandparents and being wise. And being comfortable with being. Most of us who are younger would have a great deal of trouble just being and that is a task that we need to work on, but we definitely need to assist them in accomplishing it.

Finally, to end my sermon, I want to say in all sincerity, I do not believe that we as a community are doing a very good job of any of this. But the weakest link in the chain is, I believe, that we are not effectively giving our young people the basis for moral decision-making. The young people in our community do not seem to have a standard, a

framework on which to hang decisions. They do not seem to have the consciousness that circumstances are always related to other circumstances, that decisions are always followed by ramifications, and it is not their responsibility to discover that through trial and error. First, it is our responsibility to take them through the experiences of life and provide for them this framework on which to make decisions.

I want to close with some scripture. I am not going to get into the Bible. Forgive me. Unapologetically, I read from the book of Hebrews. We do not know who wrote it. We assume probably Paul did. But the writer, whoever he was, was addressing a group of Christians who apparently were having a great deal of trouble moving into the next stage of spiritual maturity and so he says to them, "About this we have much to say which is hard to explain since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the work of righteousness for he is a child, but solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil."

Let me close with this admonition to all of us here: "Therefore, let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying a foundation of repentance from dead works." Case closed.

TC: Thank you very much. Mrs. Marilyn Escue.

ME: The question that I was given was fairly specific, and that was what is my vision for the future of the churches in Alachua. I will have to say that my comments are rooted in my personal belief and when I see a vision I see it through my eyes, I do not see it through anybody else's eyes. Jesus Christ is my personal Lord and Savior. I believe the Bible is the very Word of God. The Word of God says that there is one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus Christ. The Lord says the way is narrow and straight that leads to life and there are few that find it. The way that leads to destruction is broad. So here is my narrow viewpoint: My vision for the future is that the church, or the body of Christ, would be the glorious church which is without spot or wrinkle for which Christ will soon return. My vision requires among us in Alachua a spiritual renewal, and to speak of renewal is to speak of the quality of relationships that we have to several entities, and I am going to discuss some of the relationships in order of their priority. I was not asked to tell how to accomplish this vision, but I do have a couple of ideas.

The most important of our relationships is that relationship to God. And as Christians we know from the Bible that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. You have to be in Christ in order to be a new creature, and I think it would be absolutely wonderful even if just the people who are in our churches, all the people who were in the churches, knew this truth and had the assurance that they had a right relationship with God. John said this is how we know that he lives in us. We know by the spirit that he has placed in our hearts. That is how we know. If all the people in the churches knew there would be no hypocrites, there would be no pretense, there would be no one trying to earn their way into God's favor. They would know they were born again and

were in the right relationship with God. Only when we have His spirit within us can we then truly worship Him as He said we must, which is in spirit and in truth.

My vision is that the Body of Christ would hunger and thirst for righteousness, to seek Him daily in Bible study and prayer, not to be complacent but continually fine-tuning our obedience to His word. The central focus in the lives of Christians would be to mature in Christ and to develop the fruits of the spirit that Brother Kelly has slipped in on you, like love, joy, peace and the others. It is in Galatians, Chapter Five, if you want to read it.

The second most important relationship, really, is your relationship to yourself. If you deal with the first, the chances are very good that you are going to have a good relationship with yourself because God is love and when you know His love, you have the love for yourself that you need.

The third relationship is our relationship with our families, and Brother Sherouse has dealt some with that. We need to apply biblical principles to our families. We need to teach this in the churches for successful family life. Our children should be raised with a balance of love and discipline. As mates, we should prefer one another in love. I will have to tell you so honestly, humbly, I do not do all these things. Wives should nag less and submit more. Husbands would be tender and take the leadership role in the home, especially in spiritual matters. The church needs to offer opportunity for discussion of these family problems. So often we hide them, we do not even talk about them with people who are supposed to be our friends. Yet they are rampant, they are everywhere. We all have them. I think the church is the place to teach a family how spiritually to live according to God's way. To bring these things into the open so that they can be discussed and dealt with and not hidden, not to have everyone feel like they are the only one who has problems.

The next area of relationship is our relationship to the church, or within the church, our relationship to each other within the Body of Christ, the relationship to one another. In Christ's words, we should love one another as He loves us. And that is a lot of love. We need, within the churches, to forgive wrong and to ask forgiveness. We need to say what is edifying to one another. We need to have more prayer than gossip. We need to honor and support our preachers and not murmur against them. We need where there are denominational differences, to deem those differences less important than the common denominator of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We need to have the love that Mr. Lawson spoke of, that crosses and even erases racial lines. I will say this, I have been to a black church here in Alachua and I was treated like a queen, absolutely like a queen. And that puts a lot of people to shame that are the same color I am.

Finally, under the relationship to the church, the spiritual gifts that God has given the church for its edification will be allowed to operate freely. God has given gifts to the church that we need. They are in Corinthians 12-14. I am not ashamed of the Bible. I believe it is God's word. We need to share the love of Christ through our word and our deed. If we believe they are bound for hell, we need to love them, and tolerance is a fine word, love is a better word. But that love, for a Christian, should in some way demand evangelism. If you believe with all

your heart that a person is going to be assigned to an eternal death it is obligatory for you to tell the person you believe they are wrong.

We should attempt to welcome and embrace newcomers in this community. A lot of people who come to this community feel that it is a cold community and they have a great sense of isolation. I think the church could do something about that. Jesus said he came to heal the broken-hearted and to set captives free. We should try to be the ones to go to help the one who is hurting by bringing them to the one who can help them. We need to end hatred and conceit against any human being.

This is a vehicle that might help to accomplish some of these aims. The ministers will have to forgive me for being so free with their time, but I have appointed them as a committee to enact all of these goals. We need an active, non-exclusive ministerial association that is goal-oriented. I have listed a few things that might be goals for the ministerial association: To unite in prayer and have their churches fast and pray for revival. To act as a support group for one another. To cooperate in obtaining and sharing family and marriage improvement films and seminars. (I will add in what Brother Sherouse has said about education. The ministerial association could certainly cooperate in that realm.) To pool counseling resources for individual and family problems. To practice and preach love and reconciliation within and among the churches. To promote inter-church fellowship through special events such as gospel singing, Christmas caroling. Easter sunrise services. To assess and meet the needs of the poor in the community, of need that exists beyond government assistance that is received, and I believe it does. To organize or encourage a Welcome Wagon being formed to greet newcomers in the community. To maybe work in cooperation with the government or civic clubs in that effort, and to participate in government decisions of a moral nature.

In summary, my vision is that Jesus will hear from Alachua fervent prayers for spiritual renewal, that He will answer with an outpouring and an anointing of the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and lead us into all truth. I pray that we will give God the pleasure of our being a vibrant church that practices his royal law of love and gives heartfelt praise to Jesus Christ our Lord.

TC: Mrs. Leoris Richardson.

LR: Tonight we have heard various groups praising God on religion. I was sitting here listening to all the beautiful remarks, and was thinking, just what will happen tomorrow. Tonight we are united. What about tomorrow, Saturday? Some of us go to church on Saturday. What about Sunday? Will we be divided then? I feel, and I guess I am hitting upon Christianity here, maybe that is my topic. I feel that Christianity means Christ-like. It is not denominational. It is not prejudiced in any way. It is freedom. Yet we as adults bring up our children in our own faith, and I think this is what we should do. We should guide them, and I guess this is the only way we can bring them up to our own faith. By living our lives by examples and precepts. This is what we do when we baptize our children. We take that vow that we are bringing our children up by our lives and our precepts. But what are our children seeing in us? Are they seeing love as has been brought out tonight? Are they seeing hate?

Christ-like parents? All of this helps to make up what Reverend Sherouse has said pertaining to Christian education. If we bring up our children in our precepts, then I am sure that we will not have to address them in the later years, as he said, from childhood to adulthood. We would, as you say, "Bring up a child in the way that it will go. In later years it will not depart." I am sure that we all have varied from our path at sometime or another. When you are very young you go to church and you get so tired of getting up and you know that you have to go because your parents expect you to go. Teenagers start breaking away, especially when we get out from our parents' homes. We say, "Oh boy, we do not have to go to church this morning!" So we sort of have a breaking away. If we have guided our children in the right precepts of our parents, I feel that they will probably leave the path, but they will not get lost. They will probably stay away for a little while, most teenagers do this. We have done little things, and we did not go to church that Sunday, but we did not get out there and get lost. I am thinking that perhaps it is the parents who have lost the way.

I was brought up in the Methodist Episcopal Church. It later became United Methodist. We were asked the question many, many times, what do we mean by "united" when we are not? Are we really united? Are we united in words? Are we united as a group? What will happen if Blacks will come into the First Methodist Church and join there? How would you feel? Would you like that? What happens when we have Race Relations Sunday? We do not get the people from First Methodist because they will not come. We do not get the people from First Baptist because they do not come. We get people from other denominations. Years ago, we had a service that we called "The North will come South and the South will go North." In that they did not know what church they were going to. At that particular time, we did have white ministers coming into black communities and this is educational for some. I think if we are to progress in this community we have to be united, we have to be what we say we are. We have to work as a Christian group. Our children see that in us. We are saying to our children you must love, you must be this, you must be that, but yet they are seeing us as divided parents. We do not have fellowship together. We do not speak to our fellowman the next day. We see this within the church. So this keeps them away from church. They are sort of mixed up as far as what religion really is. As simple as he says, love. Why can we not love one another? Why can we not show this to our children, as what brought out in his sermon, as he called it. What would really happen if all of us got together on one particular day, it does not have to be Sunday, and just unite ourselves and forget color? And tonight, what a beautiful sound it was to have all of you sing "Amazing Grace." No one knew what color we were if they were outside the door. So why can we not get together as one and unite and try and praise God and be what we say we are, Christians? I am sure the Alachua community would progress, we would be a better community. I think if we put God first in our lives, all the other things will follow.

WF: I had talked to Ms. Burgess about this before and I said it kind of got me curious about the history of Alachua. I had a copy of that, but I forgot to bring it. My named is Reverend Willie Frazier. I just finished school at Emory University School of Theology in Atlanta. We were discussing in school some of the same things you are facing here. I got a chance to speak at a white church on the Georgia border a week ago Thursday, and

thank God I have a chance to tell you. First of all, I am a fundamentalist. If God said it, I believe it, and that is the way it is. I wish to God I had time to go into all the details and tell it like I would like for you to really see it. First of all, will you open the Bible to the tenth chapter of Romans? I believe in the word. I think I will point out that word briefly. "Brothers, my heart desires for you that you might be. . ." what? Read it out for everybody to hear it.

NS: This is a Revised Standard, okay? "Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them in Israel is that they may be saved." How far do you want me to go?

WF: A little further. Read that part loudly.

NS: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but it is not enlightened, for being ignorant. . ."

WF: For being ignorant of what?

NS: Of righteousness.

WF: And having established their own righteousness and forsaken the righteousness of God. That is where the hang-up is. You want to do your thing instead of God's thing. God gives us a choice. In the book of Deuteronomy, he says, "Choose you this day who you will. . ." what? Serve. And it points out according to the actions that the majority has chosen another god. He says, "Thou shall have no other gods." A king must have a throne, and his subject is his people and his laws. God is King of Kings and we violate His laws. Now there is a choice between life or death. We are making a bad choice. Since the beginning of time, the expressed opinion of people is what we use. Whether you are going to go your way or go my way. But it is said, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." I sat here and shed tears when I remembered speaking of Alachua back in the 1940s. Mr. Eddy had a grocery store. I was working my way through high school. The people used to bring over groceries before daylight in the morning and unload it right here in Alachua and nobody bothered it. And then I came down with Mr. Eddy when we opened at 7:30. We had a time putting in all that stuff. What that was showing me was that honesty was in Alachua at that time. But you put it out there now...

You have to make daily decisions in life. The Prodigal Son had to make a what? A decision! And he said I will rise up and go to my father and I will confess that I have sinned. In the book of Deuteronomy, look what has happened in America. You need to read the Bible and leave a lot of these old comic books alone because he said, I am frank. I am just like coffee. I am not going to put any water in it. And God wants us to be firm, and to speak the truth, is that not right? For that is what saves people.

Last but not least, let's speak of values. Do you know what makes our children cry? Nobody will listen to them. I wish that a lot of old folks could be resurrected from the dead and brought back. When they said, "Sit down," what happened? We sat. But now we say, "If you feel like it, sit down." Discipline is what we need throughout the whole country.

Discipline. We need to have guidelines and stand firm by those guidelines. One of the problems we have now is that every day we see on our television the word "forecast." As I look down the road what do I see. It hurts to see people playing church, playing Christian, and not being sincere. One writer said, "Lord, Thou hath the power to make me clean." And he did. That is where the problem is. I think of Zaccheus in a situation like this, and what the people thought of him. He did not have any idea that day, as badly as he wanted to see Jesus, that He was going to stop under the same tree and call to him. That man was all "shook up" as Presley would say: Come down, today! We need to come down. If we are going to say what Kennedy said in his lifetime, "Think not what America can do for you, but what you can do for America," we need to get together and cut out these little indifferences. It is sad. All these cities in the South had a railroad track dividing the black from the white. We tolerated it, all these divisions, as they increased taxes and everything for better education. Well, what he is saying is true. A religious education, from Bible study and prayer, is important. When has your child said his prayers before he went to bed? Oh, no! People will not interrupt their hotdog for their own children. They are concerned about it, but who will be there when the children get up? And what caused all these jailhouses to be full? The lack of discipline.

AB: Thank you, Reverend. Deacon Lawson had a meeting at his church, so we have to excuse him at this point.

CL: I am very sorry, but I must go.

TC: Okay, now I would like to turn to our local historian, Mr. Arthur Spencer.

AS: Thank you. After hearing all these people talk up here, I feel I will have a hard time saying anything significant. But I have always been interested in my subject. When I was a teacher, I was a history teacher and I always like that best. When I was an assistant principal, I always liked to gravitate by those history classes if I had a chance, and I would listen, and maybe say something, and I always enjoyed it. Now, I have always been very interested in our own region, in our own part of the state, and I have also been very interested in our part of the nation. We have had a lot of faults. We have had a lot of good things to be proud of. We live right on the southern edge of the South. When you pass San Felasco Hammock coming this way, there is a great difference between this and cosmopolitan Gainesville. We have always been right here on the southern edge of the South, and this is what [pointing our points on map] we call the south part of Florida, it kind of extends down through the interior, down around the lake and back up, and we get the strip city on each coast. It is quite different from this northern part that extends down through the middle. Now, one of the things that just anybody who studies it will say is that, well, they have a name for it. If you hear people from other parts of the country talk about us, what do they call us? Well, they call us Crackers and Rednecks, and I can understand ater being out in the sun, where a lot of that comes from. They call us the Bible Belt. We might not think of it that way, but they call it that and if there is anything that ties us together, it is the adoration that Southerners, black and white, have for the churches, and I think it goes right from West Texas, right on down coming east through Mississippi, down through the southern part of Florida, this part of the South, and on up to

the Mason-Dixon Line. And I think we ought to be proud of it, and we ought to think about it, and we ought to have our children educated about our own churches.

I was hoping that somewhere there would be collected here some more information about the various churches. I would like to know. I have been hearing all my life about the St. Matthews Church and what an old church that was. I was hoping there would be something here that I could get my hands on, that somebody would have written a little bit about that church that I could read. I have always heard my father say, "That is one of the oldest churches in the community," every time we would pass by. Maybe you have done all you need to do, maybe spent all the time you ought to spend with it, but if you have not spent some time with it, get somebody to write you a good church history. Like Reverend Frazier says, you ought to get with those old folks, and if you do not have a taped conversation with them, or have not written down some of the things they have got to say, you ought to do it in a hurry. If you have not done it, if you let some valuable people go without doing that, you ought to get with their daughters and sons and talk about the things that they have told them. Those things ought to be recorded. I think if you do that, you find out things for the very first time.

I am going to start now with the early 1820s, after another part of Florida History had ended and we had become kind of a no man's land. Then the United States acquired Florida, I am going to start there. From the very first settlement at old Newnansville, you will find that the religion and churches were the unifying part of everything that happened. Now let's look at what happened there. Think about how things have changed. Think about how much the schools have changed. The schools have changed an awful lot. We have had integration. We do not have any reunions of old Alachua High School any more. It has changed.

But the church has not changed. The church body and the people that are in it go right on through. The families actually change. Children grow up and move away, but the church family stays with you. The businesses change. Think how much the farming business has changed, and as we brought out earlier, how much the community has changed downtown. Think how different people react to business. There again, the churches have not changed all that much. The church and the association with the church are one of the things that stay with you. Of course, I like my church, but there is one thing I worry about. And that is the fact that we change preachers so often. We change preachers awfully fast. I think it has been a really valuable thing that in the white community here, we have had one or two preachers like Reverend Copeland, that a lot of times we have had a funeral at the Alachua Church, and we would have to call him over so he could say something, because the preacher there did not know much about it. He had just gotten appointed, and he might not have been there very long. These ministers that stay with a church, understanding about the community, they do so much. We ought to pay a lot of attention to them and give them a lot more credit and place a higher value on them than we do. Along that line, I was thinking about Preacher Gordon. Since he is over in Gainesville, he stayed around so long, he knew more people in Alachua than most of the preachers over here did. He actually did. He had been in the country so long and knew so many people here.

Young people do need something to tie on to and I hope that there will be more interchange among the ministers and churchpeople and the schools in the future because a lot of times the ministers and the people in the churches could help us solve those problems in the schools. Because those youngsters do need something to tie into. They need discipline. We need to talk with them about right and wrong. There ought to be more getting together, more exchanging of ideas, and more cooperation in all these matters. Like one of the things that we sing in our churches, "Blessed be the tie that binds," and that tie ought to be appreciated and we ought to use it on a more regular basis. Thank you.

AB: I am going to say just a few words of summary, but they are really aimed at getting you in the audience to talk a little bit. So if they sound a little bit harsh and sound a little bit like a challenge, they are, because I want to hear what some of you have to say at this point.

Just listening to different people who have sat on the panel this evening, I have noticed several things. One, maybe things are not so great here in Alachua in terms of religion and churches. The question of race has come up several different times. It came up in terms of the past, in terms of the railroad tracks, in terms of the lack of fellowship, in terms of the lack of a ministerial association that crosses racial lines. I would like to hear people talk from the audience a little bit about that issue as it is unique to Alachua or not unique to Alachua.

The second thing that I heard listening to different people talk, is that the teenagers, the young people, the adolescent people leaving their homes are in some really serious trouble here. They do not want to hear this any more. They have heard it a lot. What is church to them? Why is it that church is not worth going to, is not worth participating in for the young people? Why is it the churches are made up of older people and not younger people? It seems like there is a real problem here in reaching them in any way.

Thirdly, another question or point I see happening here in Alachua is that the churches are over here and the schools are over here and the businesses are over here and the families are over here and they do not seem ever to come together. So there are families having some real trouble, people with their marriages, people with their kids, people with their parents, all kinds of family problems, but they do not feel like they can go and talk with people in their church. There are people worried about what is going to happen with business and yet they do not seem to be able to talk to the church. There are people talking about the school and the problems in the schools, and yet the schools have no control over whether or not the schoolchildren come to churches. It seems like there is a lack of connection between some of institutions here, between the churches and the schools and so forth.

The newcomers are another issue. We seem to have newcomers in terms of some of our ministers and reverends, but how about those newcomers coming into the town? Why is there no Welcome Wagon? Why isn't there some way for new people to feel a part of Alachua? Let me stop here and ask people first from the audience to respond a little bit to those kinds of questions and then panel members can address the people in the audience.

FW: One of the things that I have noticed in our churches, and I am talking about Negro churches, black churches, is our young people seem to be looking for an opportunity to say and do those things that they want to do. And we are not giving them a chance to say or take a part in the activities of our churches. This is one of the things that I have noticed.

AB: Would somebody on the panel like to respond to that?

AS: I talked with our preacher about it. I have just had teenagers coming along and we have lacked programs for our youth in our church and I think your point is well taken. We need more things for the youth, and we ought to be giving them more responsibility and doing it in a way so that we can do what Reverend Sherouse said, to let them know what to do whenever they have to make a decision. Let them know how to deal with religious and moral decisions. We need more help on that.

AB: Mr. Kelly?

JK: At the church that I go to, they are making what looks like an effort, in that they are having the young people read the scripture, and even letting some young people take up the collection and letting the young people lead the singing. Some of the things that we seem to think it takes a grown person to do, a high school student can do too. It is not hard. It is just a matter of doing it.

AB: It seems like some of the young people could be invited out to Union Correctional Institute.

JK: Now let me say one thing about that since you brought it up. Out there, I said we had a prayer meeting before we went in. In that prayer meeting, I do not know what the different religions were. There was a little bit of everything. This is just prison. In the prison about eighty percent of them are black. So when a person is down, he is either sick or he has been to the depths and he cannot do a thing in the world, and he has tried everything at that time. Sometimes God uses this thing of beating a person down, so they will turn to God. I have got some of the sweetest, dearest black friends in the world in that prison. I do not have many outside except some of my neighbors, but in that prison many of them write to me. Then they get out and I hear from some of them. You know, they have always talked about us Catholics not reading the Bible much. You do not have to read too much of it, you do not even have to know all of the commandments, because the Lord boiled it down to two little simple ones for us to cover it all. You do not need to know six, seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven. Just know to love the Lord your God, and to love your neighbor. And if you love you neighbor, you are not going to steal from him, you are not going to pick up those groceries in front of the store out there. You are not going to say nasty things about him. You are not going to persecute him, and you are not going to segregate him. So, we do not need to know the whole Bible word for word.

AB: Thanks Mr. Kelly.

JM: I would like to just address a couple of statements to a couple of these points here. [Joe Mager is the local Hare Krishna representative]

According to the Bhagavad Gita, the difference between one living entity and the other is actually very superficial. If we are talking about discrimination among racial boundaries, to actually visualize one and actually perceive another person in terms of that body that they are wearing so to speak, just as if you look at some person when they have certain types of clothes on that are not particularly appealing to you, and you have some prejudice against those particular clothes. So in a similar way, one can have a particular prejudice against a certain color body that one may be wearing. But underneath, the soul is exactly the same, regardless of what color the body may be. That is just one point.

We find that people in different colored bodies seem to congregage in different areas and form their own religious system. When actually, God never intended that. In other words, He intended that we simply have the one absolute understanding that we are all the soul within the body and that we are all part and parcel of God.

The second point is, I was very much encouraged by Mrs. Escue's determination and obviously her rigid practice of her religion because there is a very distinct difference between that and someone practicing religion casually. If someone practices their religion rigidly and it is actually a bona fide religion, not something that was actually concocted out of someone's fertile imagination, but something divinely inspired, something God has actually disseminated to the Earth. If that religion is practiced rigidly, then that person will experience a confirmation within his heart and the spiritual experience, a spiritual taste, as we call it, a taste that will actually emanate from that person. Then, they will actually want to tell others of that taste and of their experiences. This religion is meant to be practiced rigidly, not casually. Religion, no matter what it may be, if it is a genuine religion, should be practiced very rigidly and the experience will be there. It will also transfer that experience from parent to child.

To address a third question, if someone wants to actually discipline their child, the child must see that the parents are actually experiencing a real, spiritual life, and the child will also take up that spiritual life. The child will automatically become disciplined.

AB: Thank you.

SA: I want to say something from an objective view since I am not part of this town. A lot of people are talking about the churches unifying. I am going to throw out a question. Everybody is so involved in his own church, what could you do to try to get people involved in unifying? Form that committee with the preachers? Because we can go back tomorrow and everybody is going to get involved in his own church and it never really will take place. That is why there is no unification, because everybody is still working in his own church. Everyone is not meeting together to find out what they can do as a community.

AB: Now Reverend Lawson did say there was a ministerial association.

LR: Trying to address the organizations that were developed. We call it "togetherness," where twelve churches of different denominations come together and worship on one Sunday out of the month.

FW: I think that a ministerial alliance, a ministerial organization, would be one of the strong things that could help Alachua, and that is something we do not have.

NS: I had planned to address this point at some time. I was going to bar the doors if necessary and make this point before you left tonight. I have been here, as you know, it will be four years in January. And as Mr. Spencer indicated, I have thus far outlived my contemporaries at the Methodist Church three times over, Presbyterian Church twice. So, in my brief tenure I am the senior of those three. But in recent months, since George Lutz has come on the field at he Methodist Church and Snow Donmoyer has been in the Presbyterian Church nearly a year, we are just in the initial stages of pulling ourselves together. It is our intention in the very near future to do everything we can to pull all of the ministries of the community, black, white, or purple together, that we might begin to strengthen some of the ties that exist.

I want to address the issues that seem to be recurrent in all of these groups, and that is the apparant racial tension in the community. I come from this part of the state. My roots are between here and Palatka. Really, my family's roots are in Campville. My great-grandfather came here and married my grandmother right out of medical school at Emory. He was the only doctor in the area that would treat blacks, and often paid the price for that. I am saying that to say to you that my personal roots, my personal dealings, may be different from those of some of the folks in this part of the state. When Martin Luther King was shot, I was still in high school. I was a junior in high school, and I called the county judge of Putnam County and told him that the president had ordered that flags be flown at half mast, and ours was not. I said that also to say my feelings may be different from those feelings of some whites in this community.

I sincerely believe, because of the length of time I have been here, and even though it may seem brief to you, there is more unity in this community than we are seeing evidence of. I believe that there are greater ties between blacks and whites in this community than you are aware of. Now some of you have lived here all your life and you probably disagree, but it may be that my perspective is a little more objective because I have been here less time. In the last few years we have had black children in our Sunday School and in our Vacation Bible School. We have had blacks in our worship services, and this had been met with no resistance at all at our church. I frankly do not feel it would be like that at other white congregations. Now, I believe that as we begin to pull this community of ministers together in this community, you are going to discover as a community that our ties are much stronger than you thought they were. That is just my personal conviction.

LR: I have a question. I do not know how many ministers are in the building. I think because you are young, that makes a difference. Some years ago we had some ministers, maybe this is the reason they do not stay very long, that did address the issues you addressed and then they had to leave, white ministers. As far as pulling together, they did not, and because of that personalities differed and they had to go. I do not know if that is the reason why you lose your ministers so often. However, I do feel that

the leadership is the key issue as far as ministers are concerned. This is the issue that will help pull this together. I feel that if there is a member in your church, no matter how rich they are, and you will miss their money. If they cannot unite, have fellowship, worship together, and sit in your church and you preach to them every Sunday morning, and they cannot accept a different person in their congregation, they do not need to be there.

TC: Well, I think the whole point of this series of panel discussions and interchanges of ideas is to try and get us to know ourselves better, and through that to know our community better. I think if things like that are brought out in these workshops, maybe we are going to see some of the positive things go forward in the future that we all really should realize.

LR: I am going to relate one thing to you. Working with a group of clubs at the high school, a young man, a coach brought out a point in a very touching situation to us. One night after a meeting he stated that he was taught that blacks were different from whites. And he believed it up until recently when he had found out that they were the same. As he brought out, they are all the same. Different colors of skin, but they are all the same. He said that his father actually taught him that you cannot worship with them, you cannot go out with them. You cannot do this, this is the problem. You go to school together, and as I said, young people will really work together. On the elementary level, the kids are working together, playing together. They go to school together in the community, and as Mr. Kelly says, they are neighbors. Why can we not be neighbors? If you can send your money over to a foreign country for a mission, why can we not help the little black kid or the little white kid that are in need? I think we forget what mission is. I think we forget what Christianity is. We look too far. Yet there is a problem right among us.

AB: I think we had better stop. We have gone a little bit over our time, but I wanted to give people a chance to talk.

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