



# The Interfaith Alliance

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## NATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS ORGANIZE TO COUNTER RADICAL RIGHT

THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE WILL TAKE ITS MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC

For Immediate Release  
July 14, 1994

Contact: Pat Lewis  
202-639-6370

Washington, D.C. -- National religious leaders announced today the formation of The Interfaith Alliance, an organization that will work to combat efforts by the radical right to impose political litmus tests on people of faith.

"These extreme organizations claim to be the sole religious voice in American life," said Dr. Herbert Valentine, a Baltimore Presbyterian minister who recently served as the head of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and who chairs The Interfaith Alliance board of directors. "All too often, this claim is being made against a backdrop of fear and hate. As Americans, we all have the right to hold our own political beliefs without our religious conviction being questioned."

"The religious community has always been an important voice in the debate over our nation's direction," he said. "We are committed to broadening the spectrum of religious voices now being heard."

Board member Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, said that the oncoming elections have intensified the debate and made the Alliance's formation even more crucial.

"Right now, this debate is centered on influencing the way people choose elected officials, and how they make choices on other emotionally charged issues," she said. "The public deserves to hear issues in a more open, honest and fair manner. Everyone deserves to see the whole picture when considering these important decisions."

The Interfaith Alliance includes Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religious leaders from across the country who have been growing increasingly concerned about the impact the radical right is having on the nation, Dr. Valentine said.

The Interfaith Alliance

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"As individuals, we've been speaking out for years. But we've only reached small audiences. We have realized the need to do much more in response to this well-organized and well-funded effort to impose one narrow set of religious beliefs on everyone"

He outlined the three-part strategy the Alliance has adopted to get its message out to the public.

"We will work to make our voices heard in the national forum; we will strive to communicate with people about the scope of the radical right's agenda in states where it is most active; and we will serve as a national clearinghouse for religious, grassroots and political Americans."

The Interfaith Alliance will use community forums, grassroots organizing, radio, television and newspaper to get its message out, Valentine said.

The nation is going through a challenging and difficult time, said board member Bishop Francis Murphy, Auxiliary Catholic Bishop of Baltimore.

"The question is, will we turn to policies based on hate and intolerance, or will we seek answers in our diversity? Will we bend to one religious belief, or will we allow religious liberty to continue to flourish?"

Board member Rev. A. Knighton Stanley said that the agenda and message of the radical religious right "is completely opposed to the vision of those of us who have fought so hard and so long in the struggle for civil rights. We must celebrate our diversity as we seek out answers - not retreat into the days of hatred that my community remember all too well."

"For those of us who call America home and yet who are not Christian, these words are far from innocuous references to the nation's majority religion," said board member Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, former president of the American Jewish Congress. "Instead, they raise disturbing questions about the right of people whose views may differ from their neighbors to enjoy the same religious freedom."

-End-



## THE RADICAL RIGHT

"Radical Right" is a broad term that describes hundreds of national and local organizations that share a common purpose of advancing an extremist agenda. Among the best known of its leaders are Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell; and Robertson's Christian Coalition is one of the largest and best organized of these groups.

- o The Christian Coalition claims to have raised \$13 million in 1992, with a membership of over 250,000 in 49 states.
- o The Coalition distributed 750,000 voter guides during the 1990 U.S. Senate race between Democrat Harvey Gantt and Republican Sen. Jesse Helms.
- o The Coalition claimed to distribute 30 to 40 million voter guides during the 1992 Presidential election.
- o At the 1992 GOP Convention, the Coalition had 20 members and eight allies on the 107-member platform committee. It also reportedly controlled seven state delegations at the convention, including: 42 of the 46 Iowa delegates; three-fourths of the Oregon delegation; two-thirds of South Carolina's delegates; 14 of 19 Alaska delegates; and one-third of the California delegation.
- o The radical right has made significant inroads into state party structures -- most notably in Virginia, Ohio, Texas, Iowa, and Minnesota -- and they are helping to nominate and elect candidates who share their views.

## THE AGENDA

While radical right organizations are impressive and their resources are formidable, it is their vision of America that is most disturbing. Using religion as both a shield and a weapon, the Coalition and other groups are trying to fundamentally change the face of our country.

## EDUCATION

- o According to press reports, fundamentalists already claim control of 2,250 school boards nationwide, or about 15 percent of the total. (*U.S. News & World Report*, June 6, 1994)
- o ...(T)he Lake County School Board...dominated 3-2 by vocal members of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition...embarked on a radical restructuring of public education in Lake County. Head Start money was returned to the federal government unspent. Attempts were made to expunge sex education (materials) and books...and to mandate the teaching of creationism in the science curriculum. (from *The Berkshire Eagle*, Pittsfield, MA, as reprinted in *The Orlando Sentinel*, June 5, 1994)

## CHILDREN

In La Mesa, California, a local Christian Coalition chapter opposed a feeding program for school children, despite the fact that one quarter of the children qualified for the program.

- o "We shouldn't take away a parental responsibility."...(Christian Coalition member Donald J.) Smith, who scorned the food program as "one more example of government interference in family life."

## ANTI-SEMITISM

- o Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition has spoken of Jews being "spiritually blind" and "spiritually deaf." (*St. Petersburg Times*, June 26, 1994)
- o ...The Rev. Billy McCormack, the Christian Coalition's Louisiana director and former member of the state's Republican Party Central Committee, refused to repudiate former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke during his campaign for governor and the U.S. Senate, saying Duke was not as much a threat as the Jews in the ACLU. (*U.S. Newswire*, June 9, 1994; from the recent Anti-Defamation League (ADL) report *The Religious Right: The Assault of Tolerance & Pluralism in America*)
- o Bailey Smith, a founding father of the movement, once told 15,000 people at a Religious Roundtable briefing in Dallas, "With all due respect to those dear people, my friend, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew." (*St. Petersburg Times*, June 26, 1994)

## WOMEN

- o ..."I know this is painful for the ladies to hear, but if you get married, you have accepted the headship of a man, your husband. Christ is the head of the household and the husband is the head of the wife, and that's the way it is, period." (*Federal News Service*, Sept. 11, 1992, quoting a Robertson newsletter.)
- o ..."(T)he feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." That is what television evangelist Pat Robertson wrote in a recent letter to help raise money to defeat Amendment 1, an Iowa ballot initiative that would extend the protections of the state Constitution to women...The three-page letter was paid for by the Christian Coalition of Chesapeake, VA, and was an in-kind contribution to the Iowa Committee to Stop ERA. It was sent to households in Iowa and around the country that have contributed to the Christian Coalition. (*The Washington Post*, August 23, 1993)
- o ...(Robertson) chastised women legislators who support no-fault divorce laws that he says encourage men to split. "Any woman who votes for no-fault divorce is like a turkey voting for Thanksgiving," Robertson said, paraphrasing a conservative commentator. (*The State-Record*, Columbia, SC, June 28, 1992)

## SOCIAL SECURITY

Pat Robertson has explicitly called for an end to the Social Security system.

- o ...Accompanying (the) low-rate flat tax (Robertson was advocating) should be a shifting of social security from a compulsory government system, where all surpluses are used to pay federal deficit spending, to a compulsory private system where younger workers can save tax-free for their retirement by investing in American free market capitalism instead of wasteful federal boondoggles. (Undated Robertson newsletter)

## JERRY FALWELL -- PROFIT FROM POLITICS

- o ...You, too, will have a chance to hear (Paula) Jones' story by ordering from a series of tapes being produced by Falwell, the preacher explained during the Old Time Gospel Hour. On sale now for \$40 is "Bill and Hillary Clinton's Circle of Power," which covers the Whitewater controversy and even suggests complicity by the president in murder. (*The San Diego Union-Tribune*, May 20, 1994)



### Statement of Principle

The Interfaith Alliance is a coalition of concerned religious leaders and other citizens who have joined together to articulate and promote the unifying principles of all faiths—compassion, tolerance and justice.

In a world plagued by strife, fear, and hatred, we affirm the values of respect and community against the politics of division.

We reject efforts to pit groups of people against each other for personal or political gain.

We consider it our moral obligation to promote understanding and participation.

We will work to inform and unite citizens, to reinvigorate public discourse, and to hold our leaders accountable for their works and deeds.

We enthusiastically welcome all people of good will to join in our effort to affirm these ideals.



America was founded on the premise that its citizens would participate in the debate over our nation's direction. Today, with so many crucial issues on the agenda, public debate plays an even greater role. The religious community has always been an important voice in that dialogue. The Interfaith Alliance has been created to ensure that this proud tradition continues.

### The Challenge: The Radical Right

Radical right-wing extremists have declared a holy war in America, promoting an agenda based on hate and intolerance. They are preying on Americans' very real concerns about their families and communities in an attempt to impose one narrow set of beliefs on an entire nation.

Organizations such as the Christian Coalition, the Oregon Citizen's Alliance and the Traditional Values Coalition have adopted a broad strategy that is succeeding in state after state. Religious extremism is increasingly being used to attack politicians, pull textbooks out of classrooms, cut back on school breakfast programs and promote discrimination.

This movement has polarized the political debate, choking off discussion with its harsh and unyielding rhetoric. Claiming to be the only religious voice in the debate, the radical right attempts to silence its critics with charges of religious bigotry. At stake is the fundamental ideal of America as a haven of religious liberty and tolerance, where individuals have an uncompromised right to their own beliefs.

### The Response: The Interfaith Alliance

This is a time when our nation must work harder to bring our families and communities together, not drive them apart. We must look to our religious diversity as a source of strength, not a weakness.

Thousands of religious and other leaders are eager to speak out against these messages of division, yet they have had no platform from which to make their voices heard.

That is the mission of The Interfaith Alliance, a national organization made up of religious leaders and other citizens who are concerned about the impact of the radical right. Working with religious, political and grassroots communities across the country, it will bring a new voice to the public debate.

### The Interfaith Alliance's Activities

The Interfaith Alliance has a three-part strategy:

- **Public dialogue:** It will work to restore civility and common sense to the public debate, attempting to make its voice heard in the national forum.
- **Public education:** In states targeted by the radical right, the Alliance will work to educate voters about the far right's activities, positions and affiliations. Working closely with other national and state organizations, it will coordinate grassroots and other educational activities.
- **National Clearinghouse:** It will serve as a national clearinghouse for religious, grassroots and political citizens looking for ways to respond to the radical right.

### The Interfaith Alliance

The Interfaith Alliance Board of Directors consists of a diverse group of religious leaders. It is a proud demonstration of the success of our nation in fostering religious diversity.

The board, recognizing that this issue extends to all aspects of public policy, is also developing a bipartisan advisory group that will draw from labor, business, grassroots activists, elected officials and other concerned citizens.

The professional staff, led by executive director Jill Hanauer, is based in Washington, D.C. It includes finance director Joe Blumenfeld, religious outreach director Bill Golderer and communications director Pat Lewis.

The Interfaith Alliance is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization. Contributions are not tax-deductible for federal income tax purposes.



**YES! I support the beliefs and ideals of The Interfaith Alliance. Enclosed is my contribution of:**

\$25     \$50     \$100     Other

**I would like to receive additional information.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

FAX \_\_\_\_\_



## THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dr. Herbert D. Valentine, Chair.** As former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Dr. Valentine held the highest elected position in the church body until last year. He is currently serving as the Executive Presbyter for the Baltimore Presbytery.

**Dr. Joan Brown Campbell** is the current General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. As part of a distinguished career marked by a commitment to ecumenical dialogue, she has served as President of the National Association of Ecumenical Staff and as a member of the Steering Committee for U.S. Church Leaders. She also serves on the board of directors of the Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

**Denise T. Davidoff** is the Moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the highest elected office in the UUA. She has also served as President of the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation and currently sits on the Unitarian Universalist Board of Trustees.

**Rabbi David Gelfand** is Senior Rabbi of the Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition, he serves as a chairperson for the Clergy Division of the United Way and is an Executive Board Member of the Synagogue Council of America. Rabbi Gelfand also was an adjunct faculty member of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City and has published numerous articles on issues related to social justice.

**Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton** is the Roman Catholic Bishop from the Archdiocese of Detroit. Bishop Gumbleton has a distinguished career as a spokesman for world peace. He has served as President of Bread For the World and is serving on the Board of Witness For Peace. He has received numerous awards, including the University of Notre Dame Peacemaker Award, and has published over twenty articles in national publications on issues related to world peace and social justice.

**Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg** is one of the country's most influential theological minds. Rabbi Hertzberg is the former president of both the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Policy Foundation. He is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Dartmouth University and visiting professor of history at New York University.

**Reverend Leonard B. Jackson** is an Associate Pastor in the First American Methodist Church in Los Angeles. He played a major role in planning and rebuilding efforts immediately following the recent civil unrest in Los Angeles. He has devoted himself to the reinvigoration of the Los Angeles community by providing leadership for a number of volunteer organizations, including the Los Angeles Youth Motivational Task Force.

**Dr. Robert H. Meneilly** is the Senior Pastor of The Village Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, which is a 7,600 member congregation. He recently served terms on the Board of Trustees at both Pittsburgh and McCormick Theological Seminaries and is the current President of the Kansas City Council of Churches.

**Bishop Francis P. Murphy** is the Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore. He has a long-standing involvement with issues related to care for the poor, including his current term as President of the Western Maryland Interfaith Housing Development. He also serves as an advisory Board Member for the Christian Children's Fund and is a member of the board of directors for Bread For the World.

**Dr. A. Knighton Stanley** is the Senior Minister of Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ of Washington, D.C. and a member of the United Church of Christ General Synod's nominating committee. He chairs the board of trustees of the University of the District of Columbia, serves on the Steering Committee of America 2000 of the District of Columbia and is a member of the board of directors of both the Columbia Heights Development Corporation and the Latino Development Corporation.

**Reverend Dr. John M. Swomley** has been a pioneer in the field of social ethics and political science for more than thirty years. He has published over 350 articles and six books on religious liberty and Christian ethics. He is a committed member of national peace organizations, such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, where he served as Executive Secretary. He has had a long involvement in the struggle for civil rights, including strategic planning for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

**William P. Thompson** has an unparalleled record of service reflecting his concern for the unity of the Presbyterian Church, which he has served as Moderator and Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the church's highest governing body. He is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, a former President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and also served on the General Board of the National Council of Churches from 1966 to 1984.

**Dr. Foy Valentine** has distinguished himself as a theologian, scholar and Christian Ethicist, publishing numerous books and articles in the Christian Social Ethics field. He has served as chairman of the Christian Ethics Commission for Baptist World Alliance and served on President Jimmy Carter's Commission for a National Agenda for the 1980s. He is the immediate past president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State and for 28 years was Executive Director of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.



# The Interfaith Alliance

*Darkness cannot drive out darkness;  
only light can do that. Hate cannot  
drive out hate; only love can do that.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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**THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE  
ANNOUNCEMENT PRESS COVERAGE**

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MAINLINE RELIGIONS FORM LOBBY FOR 'ALTERNATE' VIEW  
*New York Times, 7/14/94*

TACTICS OF RIGHT-WING FUNDAMENTALISTS ARE ASSAILED;  
A NEW COALITION, THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE, DENOUNCES THE  
DEMONIZATION OF ADVOCATES OF DIFFERENT POLITICAL POSITIONS  
*Los Angeles Times, 7/15/94*

INTERVIEW: DR. HERBERT VALENTINE, CHAIRMAN  
OF THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE, AND  
REVEREND JERRY FALWELL, CHANCELLOR OF LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
*NBC News - TODAY Show, 07/14/94*

EXPERTS DISPUTE RELIGIOUS RIGHT'S EXCLUSIONARY NATURE  
*Cable News Network - Inside Politics, 07/14/94*

TWO MULTI-FAITH COALITIONS CRITICIZE RELIGIOUS RIGHT;  
REFERENCES TO U.S. AS CHRISTIAN NATION HIT  
*Washington Times, 7/15/94*

CLERICS FORM GROUP TO FIGHT 'RADICAL RIGHT'  
*Reuters Wire, 7/15/94*

RELIGIOUS RIGHT FACES A NEW FOE;  
INTERFAITH LEADERS FORM GROUP AGAINST 'THREAT' TO TOLERANCE  
*Boston Globe, 7/15/94*

CLERGY FORM GROUP TO FIGHT INFLUENCE OF 'RADICAL RIGHT' IN  
POLITICS  
*Baltimore Sun, 7/15/94*

NEW GROUP TARGETS UNGODLY NAME-CALLING  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 07/16/94*

RELIGIOUS LEADERS ASSAIL TACTICS OF RIGHT-WING  
FUNDAMENTALISTS  
*The Los Angeles Times, 07/15/94*

RELIGIOUS LEADERS FORM GROUP  
IN OPPOSITION TO THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT  
*The Seattle Times, 07/15/94*

INTERFAITH ALLIANCE COUNTERS RELIGIOUS RIGHT  
*The Evansville (Indiana) Courier, 07/15/94*

CLERICS FORM ANTI-RIGHTIST COALITION  
*Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 07/15/94*

CLERICS' GROUP TO COUNTER RIGHT  
*Portland Oregonian, 07/15/94*

GROUP TO BATTLE FAR RIGHT  
*Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel, 07/15/94*

RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE TO OPPOSE 'RADICAL RIGHT'  
*The Cincinnati Enquirer, 07/15/94*

CLERICS LAUNCH CRUSADE AGAINST RELIGIOUS RIGHT  
*The Salt Lake Tribune, 07/15/94*

RELIGIOUS RIGHT OPPOSED  
*The Sacramento Bee, 07/15/94*

CLERICS FORM GROUP TO FIGHT 'RADICAL RIGHT'  
*Rocky Mountain News, 07/15/94*

CLERIC GROUP TO FIGHT 'RADICAL RIGHT' AGENDA  
*The Memphis Commercial Appeal, 07/15/94*

GROUP FORMS AGAINST RELIGIOUS RIGHT;  
COUNTERACTING POLITICAL CLOUD OF CONSERVATIVE CAMP IS ITS AIM  
*The Kansas City Star, 07/15/94*

CLERICS TAKE ON 'RADICAL RIGHT'  
*Chicago Sun-Times, 07/15/94*

GROUP TO COUNTER CHRISTIAN COALITION  
*The San Diego Union-Tribune, 07/14/94*

ALLIANCE TO FIGHT RELIGIOUS RIGHT  
*The Indianapolis News, 07/14/94*

COALITION TARGETS RELIGIOUS RIGHT  
INTERFAITH ALLIANCE ENTERS POLITICAL FRAY  
*Phoenix Gazette, July 15, 1994*

CLERICS OF VARIETY OF FAITHS UNITE  
TO COUNTER 'RELIGIOUS RIGHT'  
*Philadelphia Inquirer, July 16, 1994*

**CLERICS UNITE TO COUNTER THE RELIGIOUS 'RADICAL RIGHT'**  
*San Jose Mercury News, July 15, 1994*

**CHRISTIAN COALITION CHALLENGED;  
A NEW RELIGIOUS ALLIANCE IS FORMED**  
*Charlotte Observer, July 15, 1994*

**MAINLINE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ESTABLISH ALLIANCE  
TO CHALLENGE CHRISTIAN RIGHT**  
*St. Paul Pioneer Press, July 14, 1994*

**RELIGIOUS RIGHT FACES OPPOSITION  
CHURCH GROUP CITES DIVERSITY**  
*Miami Herald, July 15, 1994*

**ALLIANCE TO COUNTER RELIGIOUS RIGHT**  
*Beacon Journal, July 14, 1994*

**BIGOTRY ASSAILED**  
*Richmond Times-Dispatch, July 17, 1994*

**'RADICAL RIGHT' FINDS CRITICS IN NEW ALLIANCE**  
*Palm Beach Post, July 15, 1994*

**RELIGIOUS LEADERS JOIN FIGHT AGAINST THE RIGHT**  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 15, 1994*

**CLERICS UNITE IN ALLIANCE TO COUNTER 'RADICAL RIGHT'**  
*Wichita Eagle, July 15, 1994*

**RELIGION IN BRIEF GROUP TO COUNTER THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT**  
*The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, July 23, 1994*

**SOME RELIGIOUS FIGHT RELIGIOUS RIGHT;  
GROUP PROMOTES CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION**  
*The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer, July 23, 1994*

**MODERATES HOPE TO COUNTER EXTREME RELIGIOUS RIGHT**  
*NPR Morning Edition, July 21, 1994*



MEMORANDUM

TO: Friends of The Interfaith Alliance  
FROM: Pat Lewis, Communications Director  
RE: TIA Announcement Update  
DATE: July 27, 1994

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Just a quick note to let you know that our July 14 announcement was a great success. Our chair, Dr. Herb Valentine, started the day on the NBC *Today* show, where he managed to speak forcefully and articulately about the organization's goals, despite repeated interruptions by Jerry Falwell. We had a well-attended news conference in Washington in the afternoon, with several board members delivering powerful statements. After that, board member Dr. Joan Brown Campbell was interviewed on CNN's *Inside Politics* alongside Christian Coalition executive director Ralph Reed.

The good news just keeps pouring in. As of today, TIA board members have participated in and are scheduled to take part in more than a dozen radio talk show programs, including National Public Radio's Morning Edition, the NPR affiliate station in New York City and a show on the Independent Broadcaster's Network carried in 74 markets across the country.

The story of the announcement was carried in newspapers from coast to coast, including:

The Los Angeles Times  
The Boston Globe  
The New York Times  
The Baltimore Sun  
The Washington Times  
Chicago Sun-Times  
The Seattle Times  
St. Louis Post Dispatch  
The Evansville Courier (IN)  
Seattle Post-Intelligencer  
Portland Oregonian  
Sun-Sentinel (Ft. Lauderdale)  
The Cincinnati Enquirer  
The Salt Lake Tribune  
The Sacramento Bee

Rocky Mountain News  
The Commercial Appeal (Memphis, TN)  
The Kansas City Star  
The San Diego Union Tribune  
The Indianapolis News  
The Atlanta Journal and Constitution  
The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)  
Philadelphia Inquirer  
San Jose Mercury News  
St. Paul Pioneer Press  
Charlotte Observer  
Phoenix Gazette  
Miami Herald  
Richmond Times-Dispatch  
Palm Beach Post  
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette  
The Dallas Morning News  
Hotline  
International Herald Tribune  
Reuters News Service  
Wichita Eagle  
Beacon Journal (Akron)

Each additional story has generated a flood of phone calls from people eager to join our efforts.

We'll be sure to keep you posted. Thanks again for all your support.

# The New York Times

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NEW YORK, THURSDAY, JULY 14, 1994

75 cents beyond the greater New York

## Mainline Religions Form Lobby for 'Alternate' View

By RICHARD L. BERKE

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 13 — A broad coalition of mainline religious leaders plans to announce on Thursday the establishment of an educational and lobbying group intended to counter the Christian Coalition, the leading organization of religious conservatives.

Organizers of the new group, the Interfaith Alliance, said there had been few people from religious organizations speaking out against the religious right, leaving most of the attacks to come from the Democratic Party. They said they hoped that people from theological backgrounds would appear more credible than politicians.

"We really get quite upset with religious litmus tests and people of faith and religious conviction getting attacked because they don't believe in certain things," the group's chairman, Dr. Herbert D. Valentine, executive director of the Baltimore Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said in an interview. "Putting it another way, we're against spiritual intimidation."

### 'Alternate Religious Voice'

Another board member, Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches, said: "Our concern is that the radical right lays claim to the fact that they uniquely speak for people of faith in this country, in essence that 'God is on our side.' We feel we must come together as an interfaith group and say to this country there is an

alternate religious voice."

Dr. Valentine said the group's first-year budget would be about \$4 million. He said that both the national Democratic and Republican Parties had been solicited for donations, but that so far only the Democrats had contributed. The financing will mostly come from individuals, Dr. Valentine said, and not from the religious groups.

Like the Christian Coalition, the group will not endorse candidates. But it will not take positions on social issues either. Dr. Valentine, for one, said his church favored abortion rights, while other churches represented on the board, including the Roman Catholic, opposed abortion.

The alliance's board includes Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a former president of the American Jewish Congress; the Rev. Leonard B. Jackson, associate minister of the First A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles; Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, auxiliary bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit, and William P. Thompson, former president of the National Council and the World Council of Churches.

Dr. Valentine described the group as "an alternative to the Christian Coalition."

Mike Russell, a spokesman for the Christian Coalition, which was founded by Pat Robertson, took issue with the characterization. "If their sole objective is to counter us," Mr. Russell said, "I would seriously question how many grass-roots supporters they're going to get. It's a weak foundation to get started on."

WASHINGTON EDITION

Southern  
California's  
Newspaper

# Los Angeles Times

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## Tactics of Right-Wing Fundamentalists Are Assailed

■ **Religion:** A new coalition, the Interfaith Alliance, denounces the 'demonization' of advocates of different political positions.

By JEFF LEEDS  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

WASHINGTON—A new coalition of religious leaders announced plans Thursday to counteract the political clout of the Christian Coalition and other conservative religious groups.

Organizers of the Interfaith Alliance denounced the tactics of right-wing fundamentalist groups as well as recent broad-brush attacks on evangelical conservatives by Democrats, saying that both groups engage in "demonization" of advocates of different political positions.

The group, which characterizes itself as nonpartisan and ecumenical, was formed just weeks after Clinton

Administration officials and Democratic Party leaders condemned religious conservatives for engineering a "stealth takeover" of the GOP.

Among the new alliance's members are religious leaders from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and other faiths.

On issues ranging from abortion to homosexual rights, the members may disagree, but each opposes invoking "God to assert the moral superiority of one people over another," said Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ.

The group's leaders said evangelical right-wingers threaten American traditions of religious liberty by claiming to be the only representatives of true Christian values.

By using religion at once as a weapon and a shield, conservatives fragment the nation's families with "spiritual intimidation," said Dr. Herbert D. Valentine, a Presbyterian minister and the alliance's chairman.

"Religious extremism is being used as a weapon to attack politicians, to censor classroom textbooks, to cut

back school breakfast programs, to promote discrimination and to mislead voters," Valentine said. "The message of the radical right is that there is only one way to think and live to be a good Christian."

Alliance members also said that they object to remarks by Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, who lashed out at religious conservatives recently as "un-Christian."

Similar comments by Rep. Vic Fazio (D-West Sacramento) and Democratic National Committee Chairman David Wilhelm have triggered Republican accusations of witch-hunting and discrimination. But until now, most prominent religious leaders have tried to avoid the cross fire.

The new group said it hopes to raise \$4 million this year but will not endorse candidates or take positions on social issues. Instead, it plans to register voters, distribute voter guides describing how office-seekers stand on different issues and become a "national clearinghouse" for grass-roots organizations dedicated to religious freedom.

THE  
BALTIMORE  
SUN

FRIDAY, JULY 15, 1994

THE SUN

# Clergy form group to fight influence of 'radical right' in politics

By Michael A. Fletcher  
Sun Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Charging that the "radical right" dominates and distorts the moral debate in American politics, clerics from a wide range of denominations have formed an organization to counter the influence of conservative religious groups.

The new group, called the Inter-faith Alliance, was formed to "oppose the notion that only one set of convictions may be held by people of faith," the group's chairman, Herbert D. Valentine, the executive

## Conservatives called intolerant

presbyter of the Presbytery of Baltimore, said at a news conference yesterday.

Dr. Valentine and other members of the alliance said conservative religious groups, particularly TV evangelist Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, "pose a serious threat to the American principles of tolerance and liberty."

Alliance leaders said that the conservative Christian agenda is al-

ready being felt across America, with school boards banning textbooks and altering curricula and with personal attacks against political leaders, including President Clinton.

Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, dismissed the alliance's assertions that the Christian Coalition breeds intolerance, adding in an interview yesterday that "we advocate positions that mainstream American voters agree with."

He also called the alliance a tool of the Democratic Party and "window dressing for a very partisan

campaign of Christian-bashing."

Jill Hanauer, executive director of the alliance, said the group has no partisan interest. Instead, she said, its goal is offer an alternative religious view to clear the way for substantive debate on many issues that now get bogged down in moral invective.

For this year, the group has set a fund-raising goal of \$4 million. Dr. Valentine said the Democratic and Republican parties have been solicited but only Democrats have contributed so far among a wide range of individual donors.

The alliance has opened an

headquarters here, which will serve as a clearinghouse for information that its leaders say will expose the extremism of some religious groups.

Board members of the alliance include Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches; Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, a Roman Catholic bishop from Detroit; the Rev. Leonard B. Jackson, an African Methodist Episcopal pastor in Los Angeles; Denise T. Davidoff, moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association; Rabbi David Gelfand, from Cleveland; and Bishop Francis P. Murphy of Baltimore.

July 15, 1994

The Washington Times

# 2 multifaith coalitions criticize religious right

## References to U.S. as Christian nation hit

By Larry Witham  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Two religious coalitions yesterday warned against the "radical religious right" and groups espousing a "Judeo-Christian" nation, saying they threaten freedom of faith and fair-play politics.

"The message of the radical right is that there is absolutely only one way to think and live to be a good Christian," said the Rev. Herbert D. Valentine, former moderator, or annual leader, of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

At a news conference announcing formation of the Interfaith Alliance, Mr. Valentine said his coalition will try to "return civility" to public debate, educate the public about the "scope of the radical right's political agenda" and serve as an information clearinghouse.

Meanwhile, another coalition's leaders met with Vice President Al Gore at the White House, presenting him with a statement that belief in America as Christian or Judeo-Christian "endangers our common welfare because it uses religion to divide rather than unite the American people."

The four-page document, "A Shared Vision: Religious Liberty in the 20th Century," also criticizes secular agendas that want all religion excluded from public life.

While focusing on the importance of free religious expression, the letter strongly criticized groups that call America a "Christian nation" or that are "characterizing their [political] opponents as sinful or ungodly."

The statement was signed by 80 civic and religious leaders and given to Mr. Gore by Rabbi James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee and the Rev. James Dunn, a moderate Southern Baptist who split with the denomination's conservative leaders.

Their document did not cite any particular groups, but at the press conference of the Interfaith Alliance, Pat Robertson and his Christian Coalition were the focus.

"It's always easier to organize people who think alike," said Mr. Valentine, contrasting the diversity of his alliance with the single-mindedness of the religious right.

This diversity allows the alliance to talk more reasonably and tolerantly in public debate, said the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches.

"Words matter, and no one knows that better than the church and the synagogue," she said. "There is a very strong difference" between the religious right's rhetoric and statements by the alliance, she said.

The other difference is that the religious right "is in the process of taking over the Republican Party," said Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a leading Jewish historian. "There is no one with that agenda in this room."

Mr. Valentine said the alliance has "approached the Republican Party," among other groups, for financial support. Asked if the White House had influenced the alliance's formation, he said: "Quite frankly we want to keep a distance from the White House."

At the press conference, the religious right was characterized as a "dangerous," "arrogant," "extremist" movement that "lets poor youngsters go hungry, and keeps women down," "uses language frighteningly reminiscent of that used by the Nazis," and adds to the "pervasive sense of despair and cynicism" in the country.

While the alliance said it does not want to take stands on issues or candidates, only some members said Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders' comment that her opponents were "un-Christian" was inappropriate.

Rabbi Hertzberg said Mr. Robertson "is probably a very decent man," but his rhetoric gives cover to the Ku Klux Klan and other bigots. "They are softening up the country for the idea that the other guy is satanic."

7/15/94

THE BOSTON GLOBE

# Religious right faces a new foe

## Interfaith leaders form group against 'threat' to tolerance

REUTERS

WASHINGTON — A new organization of mainstream religious leaders became the latest group yesterday to combat what they describe as the intolerant views of the religious radical right in American politics.

The nationally prominent clerics said their organization, "The Interfaith Alliance," would oppose religious political activists who espouse a single, narrow "Christian" way to think and act.

"We believe the groups which represent the radical religious right pose a serious threat to the American principles of tolerance and liberty," said Herbert Valentine of Baltimore, the former top official of the Presbyterian Church of the United States.

This new group of Protestant, Catholic and Jewish leaders is the latest to speak out against the religious right. Others include Democratic Party leaders; People for the American Way, a constitutional freedoms group; and the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish organization fighting discrimination.

At a news conference, Valentine said his interfaith group would be a counterbalance to religious right activists but that it would not get involved in politics except to register voters and provide political education.

"The radical religious right has a well-defined and dangerous political agenda," Valentine said. "Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, the Oregon Citizen's Alliance and the Traditional Values Coalition, for exam-

ple, have adopted a broad, heavy-handed political strategy that is succeeding in state after state."

Robertson, a nationally known televangelist, is a leader of the religious right.



## The Interfaith Alliance

Statement by Dr. Herbert D. Valentine  
July 14, 1994  
Washington, D.C.

My name is Herbert D. Valentine. I have been a Presbyterian minister for almost 35 years; for the last 17 years I have served as Executive Presbytery of Baltimore, a judicatory of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) -- not unlike a bishop in a diocese in other Christian denominations. I am also former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the highest elected position in the denomination.

I am here today to announce the formation of The Interfaith Alliance, an organization whose purpose is to oppose the notion that only one set of convictions may be held by people of faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition. We want to demonstrate that people of faith may hold different points of view on many issues. Together, however, we hold to two fundamental beliefs. First, we believe that religion must continue to play an active, relevant role in the life of America, as it has since the founding and establishment of this country. And second, we believe the groups which represent the radical religious right pose a serious threat to the American principles of tolerance and liberty.

The message of the radical right is that there is absolutely only one way to think and live to be a good Christian. The radical right arrogantly asserts that its voice is the only true religious voice speaking in America today. In fact, the radical religious right has a well-defined and dangerous political agenda. Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, the Oregon Citizen's Alliance and the Traditional Values Coalition, for example, have adopted a broad, heavy-handed political strategy that is succeeding in state after state, much to the detriment of the people in those states. Religious extremism is being used as a weapon to attack politicians, to censor classroom textbooks, to cut back school breakfast programs, to promote discrimination, and to mislead voters.

At the very time when our nation's families and communities are working extra hard to pull themselves together, the radical religious right is fragmenting us with spiritual intimidation. Until now, the words of those of us who promote respect and tolerance have been no match for the strident, well-organized, and well-funded efforts of the radical right. That is why we have come together to form The Interfaith Alliance.

The Interfaith Alliance

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Page Two - Dr. Valentine

The Interfaith Alliance has a three part strategy. First, we will strive to return civility and common sense to the public debate and make our voices heard. Second, we will educate the public about the scope of the radical right's political agenda in those states where it is most active. And third, we will serve as a national clearinghouse for grassroots organizations who care about these issues.

Those of us who make up The Interfaith Alliance have devoted our lives to promoting compassion, tolerance and diversity. We are angered by religion being used to pit people against people, to destroy rather than to heal. We believe that the ethical and moral lessons found in religious tradition hold the keys to solving many of our nation's most pressing problems. But the value of those lessons will be lost if we do not stand up and speak out against the harsh, unyielding doctrine preached by the radical religious right.

That is why we are here: to stand up and speak out.



## The Interfaith Alliance

Statement by the Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell  
July 14, 1994  
Washington, DC

My name is Joan Brown Campbell. I am an ordained minister and serve as General Secretary of The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA). The NCCC is the nation's largest ecumenical body comprised of 32 member churches whose combined membership is 49 million Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

I am here today with my colleagues to announce the formation of The Interfaith Alliance. We join together out of deep concern for the soul of this great and good nation. We join together so that our combined voices might be a witness to our national heritage which is enriched by many faiths and traditions that shape and inform the values of individuals and families. We come together to appeal to an inclusive and plural America to preserve and protect the best of our proud and national heritage.

We believe it is contrary to all we hold dear to appeal for support for one belief by degrading the beliefs and convictions of other religious faiths and ethical approaches. We know that any threat or act of intimidation to one group is finally an abridgment of the religious freedom of us all. Yes, we believe the voices of the radical right are a very real threat to that freedom. We believe that all realms, including political and public life, come under the judgment of God. We believe it is blasphemy to invoke the infinite and holy God to assert the moral superiority of one people over another. As our Pledge of Allegiance affirms, we are "one nation under God," not "over" God or in any other way owning God. Any partisan use of God's name tends to breed intolerance and to divide. Rather than affirming a common reverence, with room for every dissent and even disbelief, it suggests religious conformity and leads to religious arrogance.

We need to be very clear that God belongs to no one side, for we believe we all belong to God. In measuring partisan visions for our country's life, credible religious convictions can find their constructive place. Religious concerns are best fulfilled when political positions reflect the reality of a God who suffers with all who suffer, who cares for the integrity of all creation, who wills the well-being of all people, and whose way is always justice and peace. Then, a religious sense of life has filled its genuine political role.

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We are here today to support the full enfranchisement of all our nation's people and to clearly affirm that our religious freedom and pluralism is foundational to our national heritage. We especially deplore the suggestion that to be fully franchised one must not only be a Christian, but espouse a particular understanding of life in Christ. We are here today because we share a vision about the future, a vision about the kind of nation we aspire to be -- a nation where dissent is respected even as patriotism is prized. Where faith unites rather than divides and where diversity provides strength, not weakness. We share a vision as old as the republic itself, a city on a hill where persons of all faith or no faith are welcome, yet none receive preferential treatment.

We come together not to do battle with the religious right, but to restore our common goal. Our quarrel is with any who would fragment and divide our people and threaten our rich heritage of religious freedom and tolerance for diversity.



## The Interfaith Alliance

Statement of Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg  
July 14, 1994  
Washington, D.C.

My name is Arthur Hertzberg. I am Rabbi Emeritus at Temple Emanu-El in New Jersey, and have served as the president of the American Jewish Congress and vice-president of the World Jewish Congress.

There is one aspect of the radical religious right that is of particular concern to me, and that is the demonization of all dissent.

Pat Robertson, the founder and president of the Christian Coalition, has called Jews 'spiritually deaf' and 'spiritually blind.' He and his allies constantly refer to the U.S. as a Christian nation; coalition director Ralph Reed has said that his organization intends to have Christians take their country back one precinct at a time.

For those of us who call America home and yet who are not Christian, these words are far from innocuous references to the nation's majority religion. Instead, they raise disturbing questions about the right of people whose views may differ from their neighbors to enjoy the same religious freedom. The quintessence of the issue is in a statement by Pat Robertson in an interview with *New York* magazine on August 18, 1986:

"...It is interesting, that termites don't build things, and the great builders of our nation almost to a man have been Christians, because Christians have the desire to build something. He is motivated by love of man and God, so he builds. The people who have come into [our] institutions [today] are primarily termites. They are into destroying institutions that have been built by Christians, whether it is universities, governments, our own traditions, that we have.... The termites are in charge now, and that is not the way it ought to be, and the time has arrived for a godly fumigation."

To equate human beings who are not like you, and with whom you disagree, with termites to be destroyed is to use language frighteningly similar to that used by the Nazis as they exterminated my brothers and sisters. Such hateful rhetoric points at the many millions of Americans who have come here from many parts of the world, and from many traditions, as the infections of our society. If such opinions prevail, the America of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States will have come to an end. We must oppose this threat to liberty.

It is not just Jews who will suffer under the agenda being promoted by the radical religious right - it is anyone who may be different from the majority.

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Statement by Bishop Frederick James  
July 14, 1994  
Washington, D.C.

My name is Frederick James. I am the presiding Bishop of our Washington area ministry of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Let me say at the outset that my church has historically defended the religious views and commitments of all people. We stand today for justice for all Americans. Our stance is one of respect and affection for all people God has made!

My decision to become an ordained minister over 30 years ago was in pursuit of a godly vision that I have for this country. It is a vision which was articulated by Martin Luther King Jr. He spoke often of a "beloved community". He saw American society becoming a "beloved community" free of hate and violence and committed to justice and equality. In my life-long commitment to the struggle for human rights, I know the barriers that hate and arrogance, even religious arrogance, raise.

The agenda and message of the radical religious right sets people against each other by manipulation and "put-down". We have had too much of that! It destroys the vision! It claims to that in God's name. Those of us who have fought so hard and long in the struggle for civil rights have to join with others and celebrate our diversity, not retreat into the dark days of hatred which so many of us remember all too well. The challenges that face our nation insist on it.

Actually, I regret that we must be here today. But as ministers and men and women of faith, we have an obligation to our congregations, our communities and our own consciences to speak out when messages of division, manipulation, distortion and injustice are being preached.

The attempts of the radical religious right to court African-Americans is an insult to our intelligence and an affront to our religious faith. The radical religious right tries to fan the fears in our community by pushing their own political agenda in the name of "family values". But their view of family is one that lets poor youngsters go hungry, keeps women down and tries to tell people who disagree with them that they're not real Christians.

I pray for an affirmation of genuine religious values in American society, but my vision includes people of all faiths, beliefs and persuasions. God loves us all! We will know what is of God when it heals and helps and harmonizes life for everyone.



## The Interfaith Alliance

Statement of Bishop P. Francis Murphy  
July 14, 1994  
Washington, D.C.

My name is Francis Murphy. I am Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Like my colleagues, I believe that one of our greatest strengths as a nation is our religious diversity. This diversity has given us a rich tradition of biblical insight and ethical reflection on the human condition and the incomprehensible mystery of God. I am deeply concerned that as a nation, we do not have a consistent ethic of life or coherent set of moral principles and values that guide us as a people. However, the radical right, in the name of true religion, has introduced into the political debate a narrowness of view and a sense of intolerance that divides rather than unites us as a people.

The great doctor of the Church, St. Augustine, commented on the human tendency to make God in our own image when he said: "If you have understood God then what you have understood is not God...."

Diversity is a primal law of the universe that is essential to life. Diversity enriches our individual views and religious traditions. We can become more complete if we learn to listen and find truth in the belief that God's Spirit is given to all persons and lives in the hearts of us all. This is the guiding principle of the Catholic Church reaffirmed in the Second Vatican Council.

As I see it, the radical right is creating divisiveness and narrowness of view on many complex religious and moral truths, rather than enlightenment and understanding. It is adding to the pervasive sense of despair and cynicism that works against any reaffirmation of community, and against respect for persons of good will and intelligence who may wish to dissent with civility and respect for each other.

I am happy to join my brothers and sisters of the Jewish, Christian and other faiths in providing a public forum in our open society where all voices, especially those of the poor and marginalized, can be heard. We have made extraordinary advances in our ecumenical and interfaith cooperation and dialogues in the past 25 years. We must seize this new moment and energize ourselves to work together to bring a new level of theological and intellectual insight to the millions of Americans who are trying to make sense of their lives and desire a community of peace, harmony, and non-violence. The men and women who make up The Interfaith Alliance represent many religious traditions with many common beliefs. We can help bring a new and more comprehensive perspective to the dialogues that need to take place.

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In this critical moment, I am reminded of Pope Paul VI's statement about the meaning of dialogue:

"In the dialogue, one discovers how different are the ways which lead to the light of Faith, and how it is possible to make them converge on the same goal. Even if the ways are divergent, they can become complimentary by forcing our reasoning process out of worn paths and by obliging it to deepen its research, to find fresh expressions."