DR. PAT ROBERTSON
TRANSCRIPT WILLIAM & MARY SPEECH
ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND THE DEATH PENALTY

Dr. Robertson: I'm very honored and delighted to be with you today on this important topic that you're to discuss. I want to talk a little bit about the role of religion and the death penalty—but I'd like to tell you some personal experiences because they have touched my heart, perhaps more than just a cold understanding of what the Bible says or Christian ethics say. About 15 or 17 years ago, I was in the maximum-security prison in Raford, Florida, and after I had spoken to the inmates, and had several interviews for our television program, I was permitted to go back into the death row.

It was a very sobering sight, because just down the hall from where I was was the electric chair, you could see that rather grim room. And there were 2 men that they had asked me to talk to. One was a young man in his mid-twenties who had been a contract killer for organized crime. He had dispatched at least 20 people to the next world as a cold-blooded killer. He was there on death row awaiting execution.

The other man was a rather simple soul who had discovered his wife having an affair with another man, at least that's my understanding, and in a fit of rage, he killed her. In the subsequent trial, he had received the death penalty for his action. Both of these men had had profound religious conversions. I know the difference between some jailhouse conversions---and there are plenty of them out there---and something that's sincere from the heart. Both of these men, in my opinion, had been spiritually transformed.

I went into that prison, not so much as a sociologist, not so much as a lawyer, not so much as a professor, but I went in as a minister to minister to them. But I carried with me a clear knowledge of what the Bible had to say about the death penalty. If you go back into the book of Leviticus, for example, as I was reading this morning, in the 20th chapter in the book of Leviticus, I would recommend that you read chapter 20 if you want to see something about the death penalty in the Old Testament -- it chronicles the list of offenses that brought death. Among them were bestiality and adultery and incest and offering children to Molech and the pagan gods, and so on. It was a rather comprehensive list and each one of them involved the death penalty.

The one who wrote that was Moses, the same one who wrote the 10 commandments. People say, well the commandment says "Thou shall not kill", well it says, "Thou shall not commit murder", and these were offenses.

I also knew, in the Old Testament it says when blood is shed on the ground, the earth is to be cleansed by the shedding of blood. I also was familiar with the New Testament where in the trial of Jesus, the Jewish leaders said, "We have a law, and by our law, he needs to die." I'm also aware of what happened with the first martyr, Stephen, who was stoned, to death because of his religious beliefs. He said, "I saw Jesus, I saw God", and they stopped their ears and they said he was a heretic and they stoned him to death. I'm also aware that the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, where he said, "The civil authority wields the sword and he doesn't do so in vain, but he's a minister of God to bring vengeance on the malefactors." So I was aware of all that when I went in to talk to these men.

I went in as strongly pro-capital punishment. And now I'm going to pray with 2 men who are facing death in a week. Both of whom have had religious conversions and who are now my brothers in Christ. So what am I gonna do with them? I could pray a prayer, "Oh God give them grace to be launched into the next world"…or I could say, "Oh God, please commute their sentence so that they won't face this terrible fate." I didn't know how to pray. They were in adjoining cells. I took the hand of one in this cell, took the hand of the other, put their hands through the bars and I held both of their hands, and I said, "Oh, God, I don't know what to ask for, but I ask for a miracle. Amen." So I told them, God bless you and I'll see you later.

The next day, the Supreme Court of the state of Florida, reversed both of their sentences of execution, and they were released into the prison population, and the death sentence had effectively been commuted. The One, who, in my opinion stands above all the courts in this world, had ruled that in their cases, there would be no death penalty. It was certainly not up to me to argue with God, because I didn't ask Him for anything except a miracle and it was up to Him to decide what to do. I didn't say to the Lord, if you just read Leviticus, here's what it says or here's what the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans. I didn't tell Him all those things because I presume He knows the Bible a whole lot better than I do. But I merely asked for a miracle, and that was what He did.

Well, I had another very profound experience some years later, fairly recently, that dealt with a woman in Florida whose name was Carla Faye Tucker.

Now, Carla Faye, as a young girl, I presume she was a teenager or just into her very very early twenties, had been involved in a hippie lifestyle, heavy user of drugs, had taken up with a boyfriend who himself had been a drug dealer. While in a…drug-crazed state, the boyfriend said, "Carla Faye, there's a man in an apartment---in I believe it was Dallas---who has cheated me in a drug deal and we need to take vengeance on him." So they planned to go and take severe vengeance. They took with them a pick-ax to punish this person, and I presume, kill him. Well it just so happened that this man, this reputed drug dealer was now in bed with the wife of a citizen of Dallas, who had been put out of her house. Her husband, a rather brutish gentleman, had rejected her entreaties to let her return to her home, he literally threw her out of the house. He wouldn't let her come back even though she asked her children to ask daddy to let me come home and he wouldn't do it. So, through his actions, and perhaps through her will, she was now in harm's way.

Carla Faye and her boyfriend broke the door down to the apartment, came upon this couple in bed and brutally murdered them with a pick-ax. There was blood all over the place, it was just an absolutely heinous crime that was committed by these people, as I say, under the influence of drugs. They were tried---duly tried---the evidence was clear. They were guilty of the crime, there was no question about it, and they were sentenced to the death penalty.

In the process, there were 13 years of appeals for Carla Faye to get her sentenced commuted in some fashion. During that period, she had a profound conversion experience, and when we sent a reporter down to talk to her, we didn't find some wild-eyed hippie, we found the most beautiful Christian women we had encountered…sublime, if I can use that term. Lovely spirit. The person who had committed those crimes really wasn't there anymore. She was different, it was like a different person, and when we interviewed her and showed her testimony on television, and others did the same thing, and there were quite a few people who went down to interview her---they found a person who was absolutely radiant. It was so impressive, actually, that during her time of incarceration, she married the assistant chaplain of the president, even though they couldn't have any physical contact with each other, they got married anyhow, because there was a bond of love between them.

We did everything we could to see if there wasn't a possibility of mercy in that case. Because you see, what we're dealing with here is not justice, it's vengeance. And we said, is there some way that her sentence can be commuted?

Well, Texas has a rather unique prison system in terms of the pardon and parole board. They are supposed to be a deliberating body, but they don't ever meet to deliberate. As a matter of fact, we found up to that time, they had never had a meeting where they all got together in one place. They communicated by mail with each other, and they sent reports out of somebody who was coming up for the possible commutation of sentence or pardon and they decided by mail. Up to that time, they had never commuted anybody's sentence for anything. So, it was very difficult, and we also put a great deal of pressure on Governor George W. Bush, who apparently had some other political aspirations, as you've heard, and he said, basically, "My hands are tied, I can't do anything about this." We said, but there's got to be an escape valve in the law for some type of mercy. He said, "The law is clear in Texas. The governor cannot commute a sentence unless on the recommendation of the pardon and parole board, and this board has voted not to commute Carla Faye's sentence. She was duly tried and they did not determine that there was going to be any mercy." So the execution went forward. The brutish individual who had thrown his wife out of the house, put her in harm's way was quoted as saying, "Kill the bitch", talking about Carla Faye. Outside the prison, it was like a Roman circus. There was bloodthirstiness out there, they were cursing and cheering and chanting for her to be executed. This beautiful person that we had grown to love, and actually when we showed her the day before her execution, there wasn't a dry eye in our place and I think all over the audience because of what we saw and what a tragedy this execution was, but there wasn't a thing anybody could do about it except that particular board.

Just for your edification or information, there are 12 states in the United States that do not have a death penalty. Fifteen states have unilateral clemency power given to the governor who can pardon who he or she sees fit. In Virginia, that's one of those states that has given the governor that power. Some states have a clemency board whose decisions are not binding on the governor. In nine states, the governor can commute a death sentence only on the recommendation of the clemency board. That was the case in Texas, as in Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Montana, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania. Three states have only a clemency board, cutting the governor out entirely…that's Connecticut, Georgia and Idaho, and then there are three others that have the governor as a member of the pardoning board, Nebraska, Nevada and Utah. Apparently in most states, there is some kind of…relief from the death penalty, but now we have found, you know, in Illinois, they've suspended the death penalty because there have been so

many people, apparently, a large proportion of whom are poor blacks, or African-Americans, who have been unjustly accused and unjustly tried and who have been sentenced to death on charges that are not being supported, and there apparently are dozens of them, so the whole process had to be shut down. But what happened in our country in the last 10 or 20 years, the politicians were concerned with what seemed to be a rising crime wave in America. They passed a sentencing bill which itself has become a nightmare. The United States has perhaps as high a percentage of its population incarcerated as any other country, with the possible exception of Communist China. It is a shocking fact that…in certain federal prisons some prisoners spend …30 years, 40 years in prison. In Virginia we've passed a law that takes away the privilege of parole, so except in rare occasions, there's no parole opportunity. But when politicians go before the voters, the voters say, "We're sick of this crime wave, we want something done about it." And so the next push of course was not just to lock people up for a long time. They said in order to show harshness against crime we have to put a barrier against crime, and this is the death penalty. In 1976, the Supreme Court brought down what is called the Greg Decision and they re-instituted the death penalty for capital crimes so long as there was a duel track system of justice and some other safeguards appropriate to that. In 1973, the Supreme Court had banned capital punishment entirely, I suppose, saying it was cruel and unjust punishment. Now they came back and changed their mind. And since that Greg Decision in the United States, we've had 500 executions since 1976, including 68 a couple years ago. Twenty-three states, most in the South, conducted executions, Texas topped the list with 20 in 1998 and 37 in 1997. Nationwide, we now have 3,517 people---that was as of last year---awaiting execution. So there's been a dramatic increase in people who have been convicted and sentenced to death. I'm under the impression that in Ohio alone, there are over 100 people who are now awaiting sentences of death. I don't think that really speaks well for our society because we're looking at vengeance, or we're looking at capital punishment as a way to mitigate against the fact that we have taken away many of our moral standards away from our young people, and we have an epidemic of drugs and we have an epidemic of broken homes and we have an epidemic of out-of-wedlock births, and young people are growing up without the proper influences in their lives, and so the stop gap on that is if people don't conform, we're going to put them in prison or we're going to execute them.

I think we're going at it the wrong way. From a religious standpoint, what we need is to bring moral values back into the schools. What we need is to bring moral values into the home. What we need to do is to strengthen families, and particularly to make sure young people have some kind of an intact family where they can identify their fathers. Young boys particularly need fathers, they need a parental influence. And when they don't have that, they're going to tend to move into gangs, they'll tend to move into crime, and in many of the inner cities---I've worked a great deal in the inner cities of America--- I have found that there's a sense of hopelessness among many of these young men. They don't have enough education, we're not teaching them how to read and write properly in the schools. They can't succeed in a high-tech society because they don't have the learning skills that they need, so they tend to be bored in school, then they drop out of school at an early age, and they hang around on the street corners, and crime and drugs are given to them as one of the major opportunities because, after all, if you can make a hundred dollars a day selling drugs, why should you take a job at minimum wage doing some unpleasant task? So many people are moving in that direction and they're the ones who are arrested and they're the ones who often commit the violent crime.

We have in our society, the need for something far, far more profound than merely executing 3,000 people. That's not going to solve society's problems. And if the death penalty is going to be effective at all, it needs to be swift and certain. But it's not swift and it's not certain. In the case of Carla Faye Tucker, she waited 13 years on death row in the anguish and agony of not knowing what's going to happen tomorrow, through endless appeals, where there was absolutely no certainty and there certainly were no deterrents to crime. It does not seem to have deterred any crime whatsoever from what we can gather, in this era. The only thing we can say about the death penalty as it's currently being applied is that it does keep society from having to pay for hardened criminals for the rest of their lives, which a year in prison costs about what an education at Harvard would cost. I'm not sure whether they're comparable in their value or not, but having gone to Yale, I'm not sure (laughs) but nevertheless, uh, it's very expensive to incarcerate people. Perhaps you don't realize the religious roots of the term "penitentiary", but the early Puritans and others thought that if somebody was a malefactor, had broken the law, that by putting him in some kind of confinement that he would become penitent, that he would become sorry for his sins and he would ask God's forgiveness and he would be penitent. That's where the word penitentiary comes

from. I don't think that there are many people locked up in today's penitentiaries who are exactly sorry for their sins and who are in cells praying. I think there's a great deal more training now in violence, and they've become hardened criminals and skillful criminals when they come out.

But there's something else, and I want to commend His Holiness John Paul the Second on his stand in relation to life, and I think it's very important. But I don believe, from Protestants and Catholics alike, that we must recognize that life is a seamless whole. It is very hard for those who are of the liberal political persuasion to say, "Well we oppose the death penalty of hardened criminals because this is a barbaric act, and yet we applaud the slaughter of---now it's almost 40 million unborn babies---through abortion." We can't have it both ways. We can't have Kevorkian and people like him advocating the euthanasia of the elderly and creating a culture of death, while we say, in this one particular discreet segment of our population, those who really have done things that are wrong should be let go and kept at society's expense for the rest of their lives, where innocent people can be killed. I think that if we're going to deal with this matter, we've got a much, much larger scene that we need to address. And that is the question of, are we going to be for life? The Pope is for life, and so he says, "I'm opposed to the death penalty." That's fine, but he's also opposed to the killing of innocent unborn babies. So, it's a seamless whole, and I believe that we need to address that if we're going to grapple with the whole question of the dignity of life. I, frankly, stand before you as one who is in favor of the death penalty. I'm not opposed to the death penalty as such for somebody like Charles Manson who's a vicious killer, who has brutally murdered people, who apparently is crazed enough so if he's let back on the streets he would kill again. I'm not sure the society needs to be burdened with somebody like that. I don't think there's anything morally wrong, there's certainly nothing Biblically wrong about an execution. I'm not opposed to it personally, and I don't think the Bible, which is the rule of faith and practice of most of the Christian denominations and the, I think, the Jewish faith as well, at least the Old Testament. We can say that there's a moral Biblical basis for just doing away with the death penalty and not having it. But I think people on their own can come to the point, as I have, that we must temper justice with mercy. There has to be the concept of mercy. There has to be the ability of the legislators, the governors, the judges to determine when mercy is applicable and not be bound that certain things have to be done, that there has to be a sentence of death, that there has to be this killing. The last thing that we

need in our society is the Roman orgy and spectacle of and execution where people are cheering and applauding the killing of somebody. We don't need that sort of thing in our society. We need to have a society based on love, a society based on compassion, a society based on mercy.

But having said that, I also want to say that hardened killers and career criminals and those who would use the system to continue lives of crime are not necessarily candidates for a great deal of mercy in society. In a state like Virginia, where we just had an execution, I talked to the governor about it. There was only one thing that was being requested is that, Lonnie Weeks is his name, who had shot a patrolman, a state police of Virginia. He asked for one basic thing: he wanted to be able to speak to the relatives of that patrolman, to ask forgiveness because he had taken the life of their loved one, and he was being prevented from doing that by the prison system. I interceded with the Governor and I think he said, "I don't want to get into a big public relations battle", and I don't blame him for that, but they did arrange that indeed a call was made to the patrolman's---I believe it was his sister---living in California. They didn't want to visit because they didn't want a circus and these things become circuses if they're not careful.

But in that case, again Lonnie Weeks said, "I have made peace with God, I have done something wrong, and I just want to ask forgiveness of those that I offended." And, you know, I think when he died, he died at peace with God. I think that all of us in our society are somewhat ambivalent of how to deal with a raging crime wave. We have organized crime pushing crack cocaine, heroine, various other types of amphetamines, barbiturates, and designer drugs on the young. They're destroying the lives of millions of people, ruining the futures of young people, and I think society wants to deal with that. At the same time, I believe that the sentencing guidelines that are currently in effect that have been passed by Congress under this anti-crime wave fervor need to be amended. There's a law that just has to be changed and taken off the books to give judges discretion again. We don't want people to get slaps on the wrists if they've done something terrible, but at the same time, there has to be discretion in a judge so that he just doesn't put someone in jail for ten years or 20 years, or 30 years or 40 years for a relatively minor offense, and his hands are tied and there's nothing he can do about it. Congress should be petitioned to deal with that. But on a broader basis for our society, we need, in my opinion, a vast public relations campaign to change the hearts of our nation toward mercy, toward a respect for life, toward a

culture of compassion, and not a culture of death. The root cause of the crime wave is not just a few miscreants. I think we have throughout our society, a problem. We had it in Columbine. We had it in other areas where young people have felt alienated from society. They have gone out and committed terrible acts. They have killed their fellow students, have gone on shooting rampages, and there has to be something that touches their hearts. They have to be changed from within. I believe that in this nation, we need to return to some of the basic Biblical values: the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, some of the things that would respect to show that God is there, that we should honor Him and love Him, and that our society cannot exist strictly on a materialistic basis, because when we give ourselves over strictly to humanism, and strictly to materialism, we find the situation that we're in. And I believe that what society is doing to stop it is really not the right way.

So I would argue for more mercy, and I would certainly argue that in the state legislatures, in the laws that are currently on the books, that something be done to ameliorate the harsh edge of justice and bring about---as in the case of Carla Faye Tucker and others---the mercy that this situation cries out for so desperately.

I appreciate your being here, and I'd be glad to answer some questions about anything…

Q: …is there any chance that you might call for a moratorium (on the death penalty)?

PAT: I totally agree with that, that that would be a very good solution because we cannot have a culture that discriminates against African- Americans and the poor, and that's what's happening, and you're exactly right. Some public defenders, as good as they are, and I recall, I may have worked in the public defender's office in New Haven, you know, when I was in law school. But they might get a first year law student like me to defend them and that's not a good situation. I think the skill of some of the high-priced lawyers who can bring forth all sorts of defenses for high paid criminals, they get off and the poor are suffering, as we saw in Illinois. I don't know what the numbers are, maybe some of you do, but it's shocking. I've heard seventy or eighty people I think were falsely convicted, and it was a police scandal of people who were manufacturing evidence just to get convictions. So I think a moratorium would indeed be very

appropriate until we get this matter settled out, and we as a nation can deal with this whole problem. Thank you for that, very good..

Q: (Inaudible, about Carla Faye Tucker?)
PAT: Very good point, I've had it raised before, and I think it's---she had 13 years of appeals, and during that period of time, she had a profound religious conversion, and had she been executed within a few weeks of her sentence, that never would have happened, and I don't know what the answer is. Some things you have to leave to the Lord, but in order to accommodate that, you'd have to essentially do away with the death penalty entirely because you never know at what point of time somebody would have an experience, but the vast majority of criminals would think this is just an escape valve. And there are jailhouse conversions, I mean, cons are really good at it. The whole idea of, you know, he conned me, that's where it comes from. Convicts are very good at lying and it takes a very discerning spirit to find out. Frankly, the point you raised is excellent and I don't have an answer for it, I really don't.

Q: (inaudible)
PAT: Well, that is a very good point. You know, I served on president Reagan's task force on victims of crime, and our task force went all over the nation and took testimony from people who were the victims of crime, and made a report. A number of parts of our report were incorporated into law. One thing we recommended was a constitutional amendment, which would give victims of crime standing in court. If someone is beaten up or wounded in some fashion, or he's murdered, neither---course if the man's murdered, he's gone, but his family has no rights---but if he's a victim of some brutal attack, he has no rights. In the trial, it becomes the state versus the perpetrator, so the victim is withdrawn from the case. Our recommendation was that the victims have a right to be heard as a matter of constitutional privilege, to be heard in a hearing, before a judge and sentencing and so forth. But there's a good point, there needs to be a cleansing because what we found was a great deal of hatred and animosity. It wasn't so much that these people wanted to go and love their assailant, but they wanted to make sure their assailant got everything that's coming to him. So I think the ones who you mentioned are very noble and I think there needs to be more of that Christian love and forgiveness. I've encountered a great deal of it, but it isn't pervasive through our society, I assure you.

Q: (long question about how he feels about people being on death row when there's strong evidence of their innocence)
PAT: I'm not conversant with the legislation you're just mentioning, but what I would say, definitely, we should do everything in our power to permit new scientific evidence to come to pass. Now I know the idea of settled justice when a case is finished is finished, let's go on with something else, but nevertheless, I think to avoid miscarriages of justice, if there is definite evidence that is brought to bear, we should make every effort in society to let that come to light and it should be given significant weight before the appropriate sentencing authority, I totally agree with that…

Q: (from same person; said it would be a wonderful thing if he could call the governor about a guy on death row; lots of applause)
PAT: There is no question, a DNA test is so simple. It is so simple. It is very inexpensive, and it is very probative, and people moved on circumstantial evidence in years gone by, and there have been miscarriages of justice because they did the best they could with what was available, now we have better evidence, and that should clearly be brought out. It should be given weight by the appropriate authorities, and we shouldn't dismiss it. I don't know if any of you are prosecuting attorneys. My father used to be the Commonwealth's attorney when he started out in politics, and he was pretty good at. But there's a certain ego that comes into a political job, and prosecutors don't like to lose cases, and once they have gotten a verdict of conviction, they don't want to have them overturned, so they'll fight like tigers. Sometimes you---the (inaudible) case up there in Boston. It's just disgraceful what's being done to those people, and yet the prosecutors just said, "no way, we're gonna get them"…and there's some children whose minds were somewhat twisted, if you can use that term, by a psychiatrist and it was outrageous the things they were claiming that these people did. And yet, they've gone up on appeal and they can't prevail, and they're facing 20-year jail terms. They're respectable people whose lives have been ruined and the DA, commonwealth's attorney, whatever you call him, was not willing to receive any additional evidence. I think that's wrong. But, if you're running for office, and you've got to "I am a crime-fighting DA, I'm gonna put those rascals behind bars"…that's what he gets votes for. In certain cases like Texas, for example, they really are strong on law and order, and that has been the cry, if you

will---and I'm a strong Republican---and that's been one of the Republican issues, but I think we've gone overboard on it, especially with the sentencing.

Q: (asked if Carla Faye was still in prison or what happened to her)
PAT: Oh, she was executed, oh, absolutely, it was a tragedy, I mean absolute tragedy, but as I say, there was a circus atmosphere outside. I mean, cursing, and chanting---it was just awful.

Q: When was she executed?
PAT: When? '98 I guess it was. A couple of years ago. It was a terrible thing.

Q: (about liberal and conservative views on life)
PAT: I think there is a certain amount of justice involved. You know, there is a gentleman named Dostoyevsky who wrote a book called "Crime and Punishment". I think that for crime, there has to be some punishment, and we've grown up in a society where people don't think there's any punishment for doing wrong…

Q: (about Charles Manson)
PAT: Well, it's a punishment to him, I'm sure it is. He's probably locked up in solitary cause he's a little bit crazy, but we have to pay the cost of it year after year after year. Whether or not it's the ultimate justice, and people in California didn't seem to think so, so it was their decision.\

Q: so is it cost then?
PAT: Well, it isn't just cost, but there's a combination of things. There's a certain amount of question of justice. He shed a lot of blood very brutally, and the question is, should his blood be shed, you know, in justice therefore? Yes or no. Secondly, it does burden the innocent people in a state to have to pay the bills for somebody like that for his entire life. There's no question that there's economic reality involved in it, and there's something else, there's a question of deterrents. I don't know how much deterrence is involved in Charles Manson one way or the other, but that is a thought. I think the whole concept of societal retribution is not something that we would consider a worthy motive, but those other three are certainly to be considered not just one or the other.

Q: (about mercy)

PAT: Actually, we have an appeals process in the judicial system that pretty much guarantees that anyone can take an appeal almost as a matter of right after a conviction, and there's a considerable delay, I mean, there's none of it that's swift. If there is, I'm not aware of it. In the old West, they used to hang people on the spot, but they don't do that any longer. They have a long appeals process for almost everybody, so that will go on. The question was how long does it last? Do you give them 20 years to have a change of heart or something? I don't know. You said God is merciful---but God is also just and He's also a Judge, and the Bible---that we believe is inspired by Him, ---clearly makes a case for capital punishment in both the Old and New Testament. As I said, in my own personal experience, I've found God very merciful to a contract killer who society would say if there's ever a man that needed to get the death penalty, it's somebody who killed 20 people in cold blood as his profession. He was a professional killer, but God gave him mercy, and what I said at the beginning of my remarks, is who was I to argue with God? But I do think, in terms of the written law in the written Bible, which is our rule of faith and practice in terms of the Catholic and Protestant churches, there's a clear case for capital punishment. But we're saying that as we move farther in maybe our understanding of mercy, we would like to extend it more. And what's been suggested here I think is a very, very well taken suggestion is that we would establish in our country some kind of moratorium on the death penalty until these matters get straightened out by our society.

Q: (inaudible)

PAT: The question is, a person kills. After they kill, they'll kill again. You release them on parole. We had a case in Norfolk, VA where a man came out on parole. He went into the house of an elderly woman. He raped that woman, then he nailed her to a chair, and tied her up and set her house on fire and burned her up, see? And if he was turned loose, he'd do it again. And so, he didn't have any conversion. He wasn't a different person. With Carla, she was not the person who did the act. It was like a different person was there, and that's what I was referring to.

Q: (about death penalty on women and doctors if abortion ever became illegal)

PAT: In 1973, the Supreme Court brought down Roe vs. Wade. Up to that time, the question of abortion was considered within the police powers of the states. It was not a federal matter. It was federalized by the ACLU, who brought the case on what seemed to be a trumped up---you know, Roe vs. Wade---they were, I think, phony plaintiffs, but in any event, it came up in the Supreme Court, and without any basis whatsoever, what was called "Blackmon's Abortion" came down that suddenly made this a constitutional right based on the Griswald vs. Connecticut case of the right of privacy, which was stretching something called a penumbra in the 14th amendment. You know all that, I'm sure, so anyhow, up to that point, each of the several states, with maybe one or two exceptions, had laws prohibiting abortion, and they had it in various fashions of how they prohibited it. What I would like to see done, and I like to consider myself pro-life rather than anti-abortion, I would like to see a reverse of the Supreme Court, overturn Roe vs. Wade, and let the matter go back to the states so that the people of each of those states can determine what they would like to do by way of restriction. And what laws were in effect before? We seemed to do very well in our society for several hundred years and there wasn't all this outcry about what you did. I do think the abortionists did face some type of criminal sanction…maybe a year? I don't know, maybe 2, 3 years, I don't remember what the laws were because they were all over the country. But I think to punish a woman who has an abortion I don't think would be very wise, but I'd like to see this debated in the several legislatures. I think that's where it should have been, it should never have become a federal constitutional issue. I think they made a big mistake doing that. That's basically my opinion.

Q: (about whether mercy is only for Christians on death row and what about Muslims, Hindus, etc.)

PAT: No, no, no…I think the question is a change of heart. Are they really going to go out and kill again? Is it something one time they did. Circumstances deal with human beings and each circumstance is different, but it's a terrible thing, and I'm glad I'm not in a position to have to make those decisions. The governor of Virginia told me he agonizes over these things. He agonizes over them because he has in his hands the power of life and death, and I'm sure there are judges who agonize over sentences that they have to give to people who come before them.

This is a terrible thing, to take away a man's freedom and put him in jail for 10 years or 15 years or something like that. To fine somebody a huge amount, to break up a business or to sentence somebody to die. This is an awful responsibility…that we have given to our various officials---elected officials and appointed officials. And each one of them has got to answer to God and answer to their own conscience and answer to the people. But it certainly isn't just mercy for somebody that has a religious conversion, but they have to determine before them. But so many judges get a bit cynical because they've heard it all and there's so many stories that are given that are speeches that come before them. And so, it's going to be very difficult, but that to me, in a society such as ours, we entrust that power to a broad number of officials. I mean, you know, juries of their peers, these are just so-called ordinary people who come together and make decisions, they bring about verdicts. The judges have the privilege of assessing a sentence. Governors, as I've mentioned, in some states anyhow, their clemency boards have a chance to bring clemency. So it works all the way down the line, and each one needs to discuss with the person what it is they're dealing with and who it is, and the nature of the crime.

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