

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MORAL VALUES, POLITICS, AND THE FAITH FACTOR

Tuesday, January 18, 2005

Washington, D.C.

[TRANSCRIPT PRODUCED FROM TAPE RECORDINGS.]

Introduction:**John Podesta**

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Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution; Co-editor, *One Electorate Under God*; Columnist, *Washington Post* Writers Group

Panelists:**Jim Wallis**

Founder, *Sojourners*; Convenor, Call to Renewal; Author, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get it* (HarperSanFrancisco 2005)

Dr. Richard Land

President, Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Rev. J. Bryan Hehir

Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Religion and Public Life, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

Marian Wright Edelman

President, Children's Defense Fund

THIS IS AN UNCORRECTED TRANSCRIPT.

PROCEEDINGS

MR. PODESTA: Welcome, everyone. I think that the standing-room-only crowd just indicates both the timeliness and the importance of Jim's new book and the topic that we're here to discuss today. I am John Podesta. I'm the president of the Center for American Progress. We're happy to co-sponsor this along with the Brookings Institution.

The title of today's program is Moral Values, Politics, and the Faith Factor. The panel that's been assembled clearly represents, I think, some of the most important voices in that discussion today.

We're honored and privileged to have moderating this discussion my friend E.J. Dionne, who, of course, is a senior fellow here at Brookings. He's also a columnist with the Washington Post Writers Group, co-editor of "One Electorate Under God?", and started, along with several others, the Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life, and writes often in his column on these topics and has been a leader in this discussion.

E.J.'s going to do more justice to our panel, but we're pleased to be joined by Dr. Richard Land, who maybe feels a little outnumbered here today; Bryan Hehir, who just flew in from Boston, I think; and Marian Wright Edelman; and of course Jim Wallis, whose book "God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It" has just come out and puts Jim on the bestseller list, at least on Amazon, and, we expect, across the charts in the near future.

As I said, I think this conversation could hardly be timelier. Yesterday America celebrated the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the man who more than any other religious leader in American history, perhaps, embodied the

belief that there was a seamless bond between faith and progressive social action and taught us that if you believe in a just God, then we are compelled to work for justice in the world that God created.

On Thursday, of course, I think religious conservatives will be celebrating the inauguration of President Bush, who sees his own conservative political beliefs, I think, as a just expression of his faith. I think to casual observers, perhaps on both to the left and the right, the results from this last election might suggest that the religious tradition represented by Dr. King has been entirely superseded by the one represented by President Bush.

Today, I think, describing someone as one of the most important voices on the religious left is perhaps a bit like talking about the tallest building in Omaha, Nebraska. Sure, it exists, one might say, but it might not matter a heck of a lot. But I think that while conventional wisdom holds that last year's election was a triumph for the religious right, I think if you take a closer look at the results, I think there really is something of a different story that comes across from both the American electorate and from the American culture.

We at the center, along with Res Publica and Pax Christi, commissioned a post-election Zogby poll after the, as Jim likes to talk about, the famous exit poll question that got everybody discussing this topic. We did that poll last November. Forty-four percent of all voters said that faith and/or values were very important in their decision about who they would vote for for president; three-quarters said faith was at least somewhat important to their vote. But more important than that, I think, is what voters said their moral priorities were. Forty-two percent told us that the war in Iraq was the most important moral issue facing the country and influencing their vote. When

asked to identify the most urgent moral problems facing the country today, 64 percent of the voters chose either greed and materialism or poverty and economic justice.

That moral vision embraced by those Americans, I think, is one that we sometimes don't hear from when we think of James Dobson or Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell. I'd argue instead it's more reflected in the works of Marian Wright Edelman and Jim Wallis and other. I think that's why Jim's book is so important, because all too often, I think, progressives forget that the reason we prevailed in the past in our efforts at social justice was really because of the moral clarity of the vision, and that was a vision for many of us that was rooted in our faith in God.

In his 1963 letter from the Birmingham City Jail, Dr. King spoke to that so clearly when we wrote a group of clergymen, telling them, "We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of men and women willing to be coworkers with God."

That notion of making God's work our own lays at the core, I think, of the American progressive tradition--the civil rights movement, the labor movement, the struggle for Southern tenant farmers, abolition. It was no coincidence that these causes were pursued with religious intensity, because the men and women leading them were often deeply religious themselves. They were Americans who believed, as Abraham Lincoln did, that the real question must never be whether the Lord is on America's side, but whether America is on the Lord's side.

Jim Wallis's book is a crucial contribution to that discussion. I hope that dialogues like the one we will begin today will continue in that tradition. I'm convinced,

both as a progressive and as a Catholic, that the cost to America of our failing to consider these questions will be staggering not only to our nation but to the world.

So with that introduction, let me introduce E.J. Dionne, who will lead us in this discussion of this panel. Thank you, E.J.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: I am so grateful to John Podesta for joining us today. Paul Begala, actually, in his wonderfully partisan way, had a twist on this idea of religious progressive. He said that term "religious progressive" sounds to a lot of people like "jumbo shrimp" or "compassionate conservative."

I am grateful to John. John is well-known as an expert on politics and policy--and a skill few people have, he actually knows how to run a White House even in difficult moments. Very few can put that on their resume. Not enough people know, though I hope more will be learning in the coming months and years, of John's passion for faith and his understanding of faith's relationship to public life and his commitment to opening our minds and hearts on the subject. So, if I may say so, bless you, John, and thank you very much.

I don't want to say too much because I want us to get to Jim Wallis right away and this magnificent panel. What I'm going to do, just so everybody knows how we're going to do this today, Jim is going to give a talk, and then we are going to have our respondents. Now, Marian Wright Edelman has one of the strongest, most powerful voices on these issues that we're discussing today of anyone I know. Unfortunately, due to a technical problem with her voice, a kind of laryngitis, she has asked mostly to be able to bear witness on this panel. So I am praying that the Holy Spirit will come and

give her her voice back for a little bit. But we are just so, so grateful that she could join us today.

So Jim is going to talk, we will have our respondents, and then I'm probably going to go fairly quickly to the audience, to bring you all in. I may occasionally ask a few questions myself, and I will try to repress my own comments. But as you know, repression often fails, so I may just join the discussion a little bit.

I don't need to give this crowd a long introduction to Jim Wallis. Archbishop Desmond Tutu called Jim "compelling, provocative, and inspirational." Cornel West called him "the major prophetic evangelical Christian voice in the country." Like so many in this room, I have been a fan of Jim's for a quarter of a century. I was a fan long before I ever met him. I admired his witness, his clarity, and his passion.

Jim was an activist progressive evangelical long before many progressives even knew what an evangelical was. He has a passion for the poor and for peace. This makes him, I think, a very rare figure in our politics. He can be radical, searching, and committed, and yet he never stops trying to build bridges, not only across the lines of faith and denomination, but--and this seems, I think, so much harder these days--across the lines of party and ideology. Whenever two or three are gathered in his name to help the poor, Jim wants to be part of it. He has built alliances with conservatives and liberals and moderates and Christians and Jews and Muslims and many others, aimed at getting us all to think more seriously and creatively about the poor and the left-out.

On the back of his important new book, the first line is, "God is not a Republican...or a Democrat." I told my 12-year-old son, who's become a little bit partisan about this bumper sticker, and he said, Why can't you cut off the bottom and just

have it be "God is not a Republican"? And I think that's revealing of the kind of mood that's in the country these days, because I think other people would cut off the other part of that bumper sticker.

But it is something to think about. It is "God is not a Republican or a Democrat." How, then, are we to think about God's politics? "God's Politics" is the title of Jim's new book, and I'm honored to introduce Jim Wallis for helping us all in discerning some answers to a question that we should all ask with some humility.

Jim Wallis.

[Applause.]

MR. WALLIS: Well, this is a great occasion. I'd like to thank Brookings, first of all, for hosting this event on moral values, politics, and the faith factor; the Center for American Progress--and John, thank you for co-hosting and being here. I thank Harper Collins, who's publishing the book, and my amazing team of sojourners who call to renewal for not just this event but for a whole book tour that we're trying to turn into this kind of dialogue wherever we go--panels and forums and conferences. And all of you who came. The turnout shows that indeed this is an important conversation to many of us, and it's a conversation that I think perhaps its time has come.

Thanks especially to E.J. Dionne, who's our moderator and Brookings and the Washington Post, who is what I call a panel moderator extraordinaire, who's legendary for this kind of role in this town.

Marian Wright Edelman is indeed the strongest voice for children in this country, despite her laryngitis.

Bryan Hehir is a Catholic priest and a professor and, in my line, one of the most insightful thinkers we have on the relation between faith and public life.

And Richard Land is a principled and formidable religious conservative, who is becoming for me a new friend and dialogue partner.

You'll notice not all the points of view on this panel are the same. That's on purpose. And the reason I wrote this book was in fact to spark, hopefully, deeper and better conversation on faith and public life. To do that, you need multiple points of view, and perhaps the nation is ready for that. I've suddenly become a new father. My son Luke is 6. When I read the manuscript, I looked back and he was all over the book, so the book is dedicated to him.

But he said something on the eve of the election that I thought I'd start with. We were out trick-or-treating the night before, and, sensing the national mood, he said, "Daddy, this election is more important than Halloween, isn't it?" He was right. No matter the outcome of the election, you were guaranteed that half the population was going to feel crushed by the result and crushed at the point of their basic values and even their faith. It was that kind of election and it's been that kind of conversation ever since.

Luke was watching Harry Potter one night with his mom--Joy Carol [ph], who's right down here in front--watching "Philosopher's Stone" and the confrontation between the evil Voldemort and Harry. He was trying to persuade Harry to join him on his evil side, the villain. And he said to Harry this. He said, "There is no good or evil, Harry. There is only power." And my 5-year-old at that time turned to his mom and said, "Mommy, that's not true, is it? Evil lies, and good tells the truth."

Faith and politics are not just important for political demographics--who voted which way last time; who gets it and who is comfortable, and who doesn't; who

won or lost key constituencies. It's important for deeper reasons about the moral values that have to be brought to bear on political life because there really is good and evil in this world. There is right and wrong in our public life. Everything must not just be reduced to a battle for power between the right and the left.

But this topic is so polarized, so politicized. The conventional wisdom now says that one party owns the language of religion and values and the other is just a bunch of secularists. Now, neither of those statements is true. But when it comes to God's politics, I really do believe that the right often does get it wrong and the left often doesn't get it. First Harper Collins made me take out the "often"s from the subtitle for a good marketing message.

But as has been said, a flawed exit poll created a new and more visible public discourse about moral values--flawed, because the poll separated moral values and issues. And of course, values are deeply embedded in issues. And John quoted the Zogby poll just a week later. I was struck by the same thing, that 64 percent of us responded that the greatest moral crisis in America was greed and materialism on the one hand, or poverty and economic justice on the other hand. Too bad that neither party or candidate made a central issue of that in this last campaign. Abortion and gay marriage were well down that list but are on the top of many lists--and I agree both are moral, deeply important conversations, and a better moral discourse on each one has to occur. We might get into that later.

But I want to say that I think values are the best politics. This is the right conversation. They guide our moral, our political compass. The question is what kind of values do we want to shape our world, protect our children and all of the world's children. So I welcome--I think we should all welcome the discussion of moral values.

I think the values debate ought to be the future of American politics. And probably whoever prevails in that debate will shape that future.

How widely or how narrowly will those values be defined? How partisan will the discussion be? Will moral values cut both ways in politics, challenging both the political left and the political right, both Republicans and Democrats? Will they be used--this issue of faith and values, will it maybe be used as wedges and weapons to divide and destroy us, or indeed could this whole topic of faith and values also provide some bridges to talk together between red and blue states, to find, yes, some common ground that we desperately need? How do we find common ground on the biggest issues? How do we really achieve economic justice, find real security, and even seek some common commitments on the most divisive social issues of our time in regard to the sacredness of human life, family? Whole chapters in this book try to take on that question.

There are two questions: Where is the real debate about moral values? Because there is a real debate in this country. And, where do we find the common ground? We may learn something about both today.

Some Democrats are now realizing the importance of faith, values, and cultural issues, but a strong group of what I would call secular fundamentalists still fight to keep moral and spiritual language out of the liberal discussion. Some Republicans would like to see an expanded application of faith beyond just abortion and gay marriage, but the religious fundamentalists there, some of them, still want to restrict values to just those two, only those two hot-button social issues. And a very smart group of Republican strategists effectively appealed to both the faith and the fears of an important conservative religious constituency.

The religious and the political right have adopted a moral values strategy. I think that has brought success in the short run, but I want to suggest that could be a longer-term mistake for the right. I don't believe the right will be able in the long run to limit the values discussion to just those two issues of abortion and gay marriage. They are important but hardly the only moral questions, and a serious national conversation on faith and values will critically challenge, in my view, the right's economic agenda which rewards wealth over work, clearly favors the rich over the poor, and a foreign policy which turns to war as a first, and not as a last, resort.

I often ask how did Jesus become pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-American? It sometimes feels to this evangelical that our faith has been stolen and it's time to take it back. We need sometimes a rescue operation. Because I am an evangelical Christian, I don't apologize for that. But when I find 3,000 verses in my Bible about the poor, I want say poverty is a moral value, a biblical value, a religious matter. The environment, the protection of God's creation, is also a religious issue for a growing number of young Christian activists and people across the spectrum. Human rights, the defense of every human being created in the image of God, is a moral absolute and a religious matter. War and peace--how we go to war and when and whether we tell the truth about these things is a fundamental theological issue, as Bryan here has often showed us. As my friend E.J. just two days after the election said, social justice is a moral value and war and peace are life issues, too.

Given the day, we must ask where would we be if Martin Luther King, Jr. had kept his faith to himself? No other American religious leader has brought faith into politics more effectively or faithfully. He said that churches are not meant to be the master of the state nor the servant of the state, but the conscience of the state. That

means we don't try and ram our agendas down the throats of our fellow citizens or just clean up the mess of bad social policy as faith-based providers, but rather, tell the truth about the fundamental issues of justice and injustice, right and wrong, as he did.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was not a member of the religious right. He focused on issues that are not much a part of their agenda today--racial justice, poverty, and war. But neither was he a member of the secular left. He spoke unapologetically about how the words of the prophets and Jesus apply to politics. And this book tries to do that, too.

As John said, Martin Luther King, Jr. was part of a proud, progressive religious tradition in this country. It helped to fuel virtually every major social movement for reform. King always did that in a way, though, that was welcoming, not just to Baptists like himself, but Catholics and Jews and those of no particular faith but who cared about spiritual issues and moral values. King knew, as we all must say again and again, that religion can claim no monopoly on morality, but a vital and socially conscious religion is crucial to shaping the moral compass of a nation, especially when so many of us in this nation are religious. King is a model for how to bring faith to bear in our pluralistic and diverse society.

Just a few decades ago, the Democrats were allied closely with the civil rights movement--just a few decades ago. It was led by black churches. So have they now become so successfully portrayed as secular and hostile to the values of faith? We have these options in America, political options--Democrat/Republican, liberal/conservative. They fail to capture, I think, the imagination of many of us, despite our voting behavior, split, mostly evenly, one way, then the other.

There's a joke, you know, that I've heard outside the Beltway. I don't know if you've heard it inside. But I've heard it a lot outside, so I thought I'd repeat it. The joke around the country is about a man drowning in the Potomac. Republicans hear about it and rush down to the river. He's slowly sinking about 100 feet offshore, and he's crying for help. Republicans throw him 50 feet of rope and tell the man the rest is up to you. Democrats hear about it; they rush down to the Potomac. The poor man is now going under, still about 100 feet offshore. The Democrats throw him 200 feet of rope and then let go of their end.

[Laughter.]

MR. WALLIS: Why is that joke so popular outside the Beltway? Maybe it touches a nerve, because people are often responding to what they feel is either heartless conservatism or mindless liberalism that seem to dominate the political landscape.

We must admit that we have not solved our problems. Record prosperity has not cured child poverty, as Marian will remind us. Family breakdowns occurring across all class and racial lines. Public education remains a disaster for millions of families. Millions more don't have health insurance and can't find affordable housing even if they work full-time. In Denver--I was there recently--you have to work 120 hours a week at minimum wage to afford any kind of housing in Denver, Colorado, and that's not the worst place in the nation. The environment suffers from unresolved debates. Our popular culture becomes more and more polluted by violent, sex-saturated entertainment. And I want to tell you, when around the country I say parenting has become a countercultural activity, all parents, liberals and conservatives, nod their heads. Our foreign policy has become an aggressive assertion of military superiority in

a defensive and reactive mode seeking to protect us against growing and invisible threats instead of addressing the root causes of those threats.

I think we need some new options. The Chapter 6 of this book is the heart of it for me. It lays out the new options. This is the story that begins that chapter. I was in Boston at the Institute of Politics, the Kennedy School, in the election cycle of 2002. Afterwards, a Republican strategist came to speak to a private fellows dinner. I can't say who he was, because it was off the record. But here's what he said. He said he was full of his success, he'd just won five races, gubernatorial and Senate, and he wanted to tell us how he'd been so successful. He said here's how we win--this is quoting him directly: We win working class people and many middle-class people on the social issues--abortion, marriage, family--those moral and cultural issues Democrats don't seem to understand or appreciate. Then he said, We get them to vote against their self-interest, he said. And the rich are with us anyway, he said, and so we win elections.

Now, Richard probably won't like that strategy, but that's what he said. And I find that too often to be less than a principled conservative response, but a very smart political one that helped to win this election.

I raised my hand and I asked the following question: What if you confronted a candidate who was quite traditional, or conservative, on family values--cared about parenting, raising kids, was not going to be mean spirited and blame gay and lesbian people for the breakdown of the heterosexual family, which is rather stupid. Even Focus on the Family, in a conversation I had with them a year ago, said, okay, we admit that family breakdown is due more to heterosexual dysfunction and sin than gay and lesbian people. Then they said, But don't expect our fund-raising department to agree. But what if that candidate was a traditional conservative with those values--

personal responsibility and the rest--but then was an economic populist defending working people against corporate power; talked about equity, fairness; was an internationalist on foreign policy, preferring international law to preemptive and unilateral war? What would you do with that kind of candidate?

Long pause. He said, We would panic.

We would panic. I think that kind of candidate follows closely along the lines of Catholic social teaching, which Bryan may speak something about. I think it is a winning option in American politics, linking personal ethics and social justice, talking about personal responsibility and social responsibility, woven together. The Catholics have a great phrase for this called "the common good." That kind of political option would open up new possibilities, I think. It would be progressive on economics, pro-environment, pro-feminist, in favor of gender equality, pro-family, pro-kids, and trying to find some solutions.

In Washington, D.C., we often see a conversation where the political leaders will take a problem and pin it on their opposition--it's called the politics of blame--take a poll, and then see who won the poll. The election's the final poll. They never get back to actually trying to solve the problem. The media participates by saying there are only two sides to every issue in America. Only two sides--liberal and conservative, left and right. Try to solve an issue like youth violence or gang warfare with just two sides. You can't do it. The nation is hungry for a politics of solutions.

So I want to suggest the one option of conservative on everything--cultural, moral, family concerns, to economic, environmental, foreign policy issues--is a limited option. So is liberal on everything. Same set of issues; differences there, but same kind of ideological frame. Or the new option, libertarian--meaning just leave me

alone, don't spend my money--is a growing option in American political life. The better option, I think, is this traditional faith-based, or morally based, family-based personal responsibility populism, progressive, radical on poverty and racial justice, good stewardship of the earth and its resources. It would appeal to many people, religious or not.

The heart of it is this link between personal ethics and, I think, social justice. It's tested by how we treat children, what happens to kids. The book talks about applying the kids test to all of our policies and see how the kids come out.

So we should welcome this conversation on moral values. We should remind people that religion does not fit neatly in the categories of right and left. Neither party has it right, I don't think, right now. Republicans are comfortable with the language, they like the language of faith and values, but often narrow it to one or two issues and then obstruct the application of those same values to where it threatens their agenda. Democrats are seemingly uncomfortable with the language and almost are saying, sure, we have faith, but don't worry, it won't affect anything. Democrats need to recover a moral vocabulary, to put principles ahead of programs. You start with values, not policies. Don't start with policies. Start with values and then say how your policies flow from them.

John's right that Lincoln said this best. You don't claim God to be on your side. That leads to all the worst values of politics--over-confidence, triumphalism, and, I think, bad foreign policy. You worry, you pray to make sure you're on God's side. That leads to what's often missing in politics--reflection, humility, penitence, and even accountability. And King, I think, did it best.

God is not partisan. God is not a Republican or a Democrat. When either party tries to politicize God or co-opt religious views for their political agendas, they make a terrible mistake. I was grateful to Richard Land when he was critical of the Republican Party for asking for a Congregational mailing list to be sent to the party. We need a more independent critique from right and left of our parties when they try and co-opt us. The best contribution of religion is when we are not ideologically predictable or loyally partisan.

God's politics, therefore, in conclusion, is never partisan or ideological at its core, but God's politics challenges everything about our politics. God's politics reminds us of the people left out of our politics, those we always neglect--the poor, the vulnerable, the left-behind. God's politics challenge all of our narrow, national, economic, ethnic, cultural self-interest, reminding us of a much wider world and a creative human diversity of all those made in the image of the Creator. God's politics remind us of the Creation itself--a rich environment in which we are meant to be good stewards, not mere users, consumers, and exploiters. And God's politics pleads with us to resolve the inevitable conflicts among us--I am not a utopian on the issue of violence--the inevitable conflicts among us as much as is possible without the terrible cost and consequence of war. God's politics remind us of the ancient prescription to choose life so you and your children may live and challenge all of our selective moralities which would emphasize one set of issues over another.

I want to leave you with a commission the book leaves readers with. The last chapter is my favorite one. It's about the real choice in our time is not belief in secularism, as some say. The real choice now is between hope and cynicism. And hope is not a feeling, hope is not a personality trait. Hope is a decision, a choice because of

what you know about faith, about God, and about the world. Hope, finally, is about what the next generation needs to hear. I talk to students a lot every single week and I ask them that every day. Give your life for something big, something important. Understand the difference between career and vocation--calling. Do something that your life will matter.

Lisa Sullivan, a friend of Marian's and mine--on my board and on your staff for a long time--the best street organizer I ever knew. Hip hop, rap, she'd hug, she'd scold, she'd plead, and she changed a whole generation of kids. And she died an untimely death at 40 years old. Marian and I were at her gravesite and I remember we held each other and wept for the loss of this incredibly bright young African American woman from D.C., from the streets; so smart, she went to Yale, got a Ph.D., and came back to the streets to work with the kids. She could have been anywhere. She came back here and she gave her life for those kids.

And she left us with a whole lot of kids who'd been changed, but also with a commission. And I leave you with this. Lisa would get angry when people would say what they did yesterday: "Where are the Martin Luther King Juniors now? This is all too big, too much for us. We can't do it. It's just--where are the Kings now?" She'd look at them and say "Don't say that. Don't say that. Don't you understand, she would say--Don't you understand that we are the ones we have been waiting for?"

A whole new generation is about to discover that. And that could be, I think, the crucial moment, the tipping point, if you will, on many of our biggest issues.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: I want to thank Jim Wallis for that great talk and that summons. Did you notice, as I did, that he has at least two favorite chapters in this book? I think every writer is entitled to at least two favorite chapters in his own book.

That was wonderful. I once debated Ralph Reed, and I said that, Ralph, you know, I absolutely will always defend your right to base your politics, your political action on your faith. But you have to explain one thing to me. Where in the New Testament do you find Jesus talking about cutting the capital gains tax? Please explain.

And he didn't do the parable of the talents. Perhaps Richard will help us today, although I don't think that's necessarily his politics either.

We have a great panel. Marian will either speak or bear witness as she sees fit. I'm going to introduce her first.

Marian Wright Edelman is the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. She's been an advocate for disadvantaged Americans for her entire life. CDF has become one of the nation's strongest voices for children and family. She's the author of a lot of books. She's a graduate of Spellman College and Yale Law School. She began her career in the mid-'60s when, as the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi bar, she directed the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson. She moved to D.C. in '68, was counsel to the Poor People's Campaign that Dr. King began organizing before his death. She founded the Washington Research Project, a public interest law firm and the parent body of the Children's Defense Fund--an organization with that name should have a parent body. For two years she served as director of the Center for Law and Education at Harvard University, and then began the CDF in 1973. She has so many awards that I would take up all my time just listing them. It's just such an honor to have Marian Wright Edelman here.

J. Bryan Hehir is one of my favorite people in the world. I always say that I doom his chances, because I'm a Catholic and Bryan has always been my candidate to be pope. And as soon as I say that, I know that I will sort of jinx the possibility. So maybe I should nominate Bryan for a job he doesn't want, which is to be chair of the Democratic National Committee, and then he might get to be pope.

He is the secretary for social services and the president of Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Boston. He is also the Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Religion in Public Life at the Kennedy School at Harvard University. He was president and CEO of Catholic Charities. He served on the staff of the U.S. Bishops Conference, was a principal mover in one of the great debates we have had on this relating religion and public life--a principal mover behind the bishop's letters in the 1980s on both foreign policy and then one on economic justice.

He was on the faculty of Georgetown University and the Kennedy Institute of Ethics. He was on the Harvard Divinity School faculty, and he served as interim dean and dean of the Harvard Divinity School--the first Roman Catholic to do that. Am I right about that, Bryan? Yes, we talked about that at the time and what kind of reaction people would have had about 200 years ago if they had known that a Roman Catholic would become dean at the Harvard Divinity School.

He got his B.A. and master of divinity degrees at St. John's, his doctor of theology at Harvard Divinity School. And on top of everything else, Bryan is a brilliant strategist on foreign policy, so that he brings together divine inspiration with some of the most practical and difficult questions confronting us.

And finally, Dr. Richard Land. It's really good of you to be here, Dr. Land. He's got a B.A. from Princeton and a D.Phil. from Oxford. He has served as

president of the Southern Baptists Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission since 1988. During his tenure as a spokesman on Capitol Hill for the largest non-Catholic denomination in the country, Dr. Land represented the Southern Baptists' interests in the halls of Congress and in the major media. President Bush appointed Dr. Land to two terms on the United States Commission on International and Religious Freedom. He's been recognized by the National Journal. He has two nationally syndicated radio programs.

And just to show how open-minded everybody on this panel is, it is yesterday's New York Times where Dr. Land is quoted as saying--I'll just read this paragraph: "But Dr. Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, called Mr. Wallis 'a left-wing evangelical,' ill-qualified to instruct Democrats on conservative Christian values." And I continue the quote: "The Democrats are turning to the guy they could find that is least scary to them."

Now, what you should know about Christian charity and journalism is that Dr. Land assures me that he said a lot of nice things to the reporter, too, but the reporter just didn't want to quote a word of it. So we can get into--if anybody wants to raise journalism issues.

DR. LAND: Actually, he told Jim that. The reporter told Jim, he said, He said a lot of nice things about you, but I wanted to get the controversy going.

MR. DIONNE: Yes, well, we'll see which way Dr. Land goes today.

It's great to have you all with us. I'll call on Marian first. Marian Wright Edelman.

Oh, you--okay. Then Father Hehir, my candidate for many offices.

REV. HEHIR: I feel the need at Brookings to make a sort of presidential statement, that I aspire neither to the papacy nor the head of the Democratic National Committee. I respect the Democratic National Committee and I reverence the papacy, but others can do both of those.

MR. DIONNE: That's what they always say.

[Laughter.]

REV: HEHIR: I am grateful to be here. Everyone on this platform is an old friend I've known at various times. I think that there's no question that Jim Wallis has given us in this book and in his talk today a topic that couldn't be more prominent in the life of the country substantively and with a felt sense of need, that we need to address this question. I received the book about 10 days ago, and it was right at the time of the high point of the church's liturgical season at Christmas and also the time I'm supposed to be grading papers for Harvard. So as Jim said, you had to make choices. So I come to you three chapters short of finishing the book. I figure if you're an ethicist you ought to declare your ground ahead of time.

What I will do, on the basis of what I have heard and read, is to respond in the following way. There's no question, I think, that what Jim has given us is an agenda for reflection. I think he probably would agree he opens up large questions that he cannot close in the book, much less close in a 20-minute presentation here at Brookings. I found myself, as I go through the book and the talk, finding myself in agreement on a number of conclusions, but saying to myself I would have gotten there a different way.

So to some degree, my purpose is to both acknowledge our agreements and illustrate what I mean by "I would have gotten there a different way."

There's no question that I would agree with him that connecting the personal and the social, the spiritual and the public is an absolutely essential task for us as a nation.

Secondly, joining both domestic and foreign policy around questions about how people at the edge of the circle of life, within our own country and abroad, should be at the heart of the way we discuss politics in this country.

Thirdly, a sense that we are in a changed context--internationally, to be sure, but to some degree also domestically, as we debate the role of the historic function of the welfare state and social security and social safety net.

All of that we really agree on.

When I say I would have gotten there differently on some things, and that leads to differences in both method and conclusions, what do I mean?

Well, let me talk about how I think it would be useful to structure the question that is at the heart of Jim's concern, namely, religion and politics. Let me say a word about how I would structure that question, and then illustrate some differences in two different cases.

First of all, in my own view, I suspect I am probably more parsimonious, that is to say more cautious, about the introduction of religious claims directly into the political order than probably almost all of our panelists. I may differ with them on different grounds, but on the whole, in this nation with its heritage and history, there is no question that Jim is right about the historic role of religious communities, religious traditions in galvanizing support and direction on crucial public policy issues. At the same time, as I think about the issue, I'm hesitant, as I say, about encouraging direct translation of religious claims into political discourse and public policymaking.

Well, what's the alternative? I think the middle term between religion and politics is the moral factor. It is the moral factor, I think, that divides us most powerfully on many of the issues today that are described as clashes of culture within our own country, or clashes of civilization. The moral factor at the beginning of life, on abortion; at the end of life, on assisted suicide; in the middle of life, on war and peace and poverty and justice--it does seem to me the moral factor is the key element that ought to be discussed and placed in prominence.

Now, why do I do that? Well, I think, in the first instance, if you use the moral factor as the transitional term between religion and politics, what that does is to open up the possibility that people of very different persuasions can come to find some common ground of argument about policy, law, and politics. Many people identify religion and morality. To some degree I find Jim, in the book, goes back and forth, interchangeably at times. I think that's a mistake. Many people do draw their moral values from religious traditions, but it is also true that many people with very powerful moral insights have no religious conviction or affiliation whatsoever. So if the moral factor is the mediating term between religion and politics, it immediately opens the argument on an equal footing to all parties, that they make their moral claims wherever they derive them from and then translate them into the political order.

That's my first point. I would structure the debate always in terms of morality as the mediating factor between religion and politics. That means that religious traditions are free to make all of the interjections that they are compelled to make in public affairs, but they must somehow justify and translate those claims into the kind of moral discourse that others who do not share their faith may find value in their moral wisdom.

Secondly, if the moral factor is the mediating term between religion and politics, then how do we think about the moral factor? Well, I think one of the most debilitating consequences of the debate of the last three months is the identification of the moral universe with values. Values are one way to look at moral argument. Values are an inadequate way to take apart the complexity of the American public policy process.

Take the value of justice and think of Harry. Harry you've known all your life. He is a person committed to justice. He lives by it. He honors the term. And so you go to Harry and you say, Harry, you have demonstrated such a commitment to justice that I have an assignment for you for next week. You are to write precisely a fair, just tax code for the United States. That's your assignment for next week. Harry's value of justice will not be translatable into the complexity of a tax code without some other factors. The moral factor is about values, it's about rules that translate values, it's about principles that must be related to complex, empirical choices.

And so once again, just as the moral ought to mediate between the religious and the political, so in the moral, values are only one dimension of what it means to be moral.

How does one summarize a wider view of the moral? I would at least, for shorthand purposes, say that it's necessary to talk about the ethics of character, the ethics of choices, and the ethics of community.

Even this won't do the job, but the ethics of character means that we can test candidates, individuals by precisely the personal character they demonstrate. Character is what kind of person I ought to be.

The moral life is filled with complex choices, and there the kind of virtues that make up character must cede to rules and principles that define what it means to be a just person--what it means to be just interpersonally, what it means for the state to be just, what it means for the society to be just.

And then finally there is the ethic of community, which comes up throughout Jim's book, rightfully so. Who fits into the circle of moral obligation and moral concern; to whom are we responsible? And of course in religious, but I also think in moral terms, the answer to that is we are responsible to the human community as a whole, and then we are responsible to our own civil society, and particularly responsible to the most vulnerable within it. And then we are responsible to those to whom we have specific ties professionally, familiarly, relationally.

So the moral is the center, I think.

Now, how does that play out? Let me give you, first, one example. Jim discusses here and in his talk the ethics of war. Obviously, one of the things that he has said many times is that war is a religious question. And there's no question that it is. But the issue, it seems to me, once again, is where you want to locate religious discourse in debates about war and peace. In my own view, I would be very cautious about bringing large religious claims to bear on questions of war and peace in the present state of international affairs. I think we ought to put moral restrictions on how force is to be used, and that tradition of placing moral restrictions gives you more than enough ammunition, I think, to bring to bear limiting restraints on the power of the state.

Once again, I would stand with Jim in his critique of the war in Iraq. I think it was conceived in confusion, carried forward by arrogance, and has issued in chaos. And there are plenty of ways of making the case that you neither had the reason

to go to war nor did we have the methods in conducting the war that would pass the test of just war. But my hesitation about bringing religious claims into this is that I think, once again, religious claims can be used both to set limits but also to expand the reasons for killing. I, once again, would be parsimonious about the exercise of the religious.

Finally, there is the question, then, of where do you locate religion. Am I trying to eliminate it from public policy discourse? Absolutely not. I think there are three dimensions in which, in a polity like ours, the role of religion has a role to play.

The first is as a framework for life and motivation of individuals. So I think public figures who are infused with a religious sense can be of an enormous benefit to the welfare of a country. Religion provides a sense of both motivation and a sense of responsibility. And I'd have no problem with public figures appealing to their religious convictions, as long as that can then be tested in terms that the whole society can try to understand what it means when someone says I draw on religious motivation.

Secondly, religious discourse should be part of our public discourse, part of what we call civil society, part of sessions like this. The way in which Martin Luther King appealed to the conscience of the country is a good example, I think, of civil discourse.

Thirdly, when you get to law and policy, where the coercive power of the state will be used against others or the coercive power of the state will set limits on citizens, to either force them to do things or to prohibit them from doing things, I, once again, would move back to say that religion needs to be mediated in that debate through moral argument about right and wrong, and that leaves plenty of ground for all of us to participate in the public debate.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

DR. LAND: Thank you, Father Hehir. Thank you, Jim. It is a delight to be here. I did read the book all the way through, and I gave him a copy of my new book, "Real Homeland Security: The America God Will Bless." I suspect he'll have the same response to my book that I had to his. I found parts of it that I agreed with, parts of it that I disagreed with, parts of it that were challenging, and part sort of it that were exasperating.

Let me say first of all that when I read the first chapter, I really was stunned at the similarity in our early backgrounds. We both were born to Navy veterans right after World War II and raised in homes that were purchased with the GI Bill. In fact, I grew up in a neighborhood where the streets were actually named Ardennes, Baston, Calais, Doolittle, Eisenhower, Forrestal, Guadalcanal, Herkin Forest, et cetera-- Iwo Jima, alphabetically through the alphabet of the World War II history. And literally everyone, every father in that neighborhood had served in the military. In fact, we didn't ask what our dads did, we said what was your dad in--the Marines, the Navy, the Army, or the Army Air Corps.

And I was raised in a home, as Jim relates that he was, where religion was central. I mean, the church and our faith was central to our home. I grew up in a Southern Baptist home. I must say, in the interest of--you may not know this from my accent--I was raised in a bi-cultural home. My father is a fifth-generation Texan who still sounds like Lyndon Johnson and said "rainch" and "painch" and "ainch" and "aace" and "naace" and "raace." And my mother's from Boston.

[Laughter.]

DR. LAND: I told you it was bi-cultural. And I thus got a rare gift. I got Texas with perspective. The great Texas heritage with a Bostonian mother whispering in my ear that biggest was not always best and loudest was not always wisest.

I also learned that people of good will could disagree about politics, because my mother and father cancelled out each other's vote in virtually every election during the time that I was growing up.

I also was taught, Jim, that--my mother taught me that if there was a playmate at school that nobody was playing with, it was my moral obligation to play with them. And if someone was being bullied, it was my moral responsibility to take on the bully using just war theory with as much force as was necessary.

[Laughter.]

DR. LAND: And I must say that anyone who challenges that there's evil in the world hasn't spent much time on a children's playground, where you're often reminded of the truth of William Golding's "Lord of the Flies."

I sometimes found myself this morning and also in reading Jim's book wondering whether I'm--you know, am I really a conservative? I didn't find a lot of what I believe described as I believe it in this book.

But let me just say something as simply and as clearly as I can. Jim's book, this gathering, the discussion that it symbolizes across the country means the so-called religious right has won its fight with secular fundamentalism. The attempt, pretty vicious attempt, to censor religion from the public debate, a group that is as upset with Jim as they are with me--and he has found that out as he's talked with some of these people.

I can symbolize it with a debate that I've had, two debates now that I've had with state chapter heads of the American Civil Liberties Union. One debate on the abortion issue and the other debate on the defense of traditional marriage issue. And in both cases, the ACLU representative said, well, now, Dr. Land, are your objections to abortion on demand--and in the second case, are your objections to same-sex marriage--based upon your religious convictions? And I said, yes, they are, absolutely, indubitably. And then, with a very smug smile on their faces, they said, well, of course, you know in America we can't base public policy on religious beliefs.

Well, I take very--I accept Father Hehir's comments absolutely. You have to--you can't say I believe this, this is my religious conviction, and thus it should be the law of the land. But the systematic attempt described by Stephen Carter in his book, "The Culture of Disbelief," to disqualify religiously informed public policy conviction, religiously informed moral beliefs about public policy issues from being involved in the debate and having their say in the public policy debate is now over. They have lost. And I welcome their defeat. I'm delighted that Jim Wallis and others have come forward to say, yes, there needs to be a debate and you cannot disqualify people of religious belief from bringing their religious beliefs and religious convictions and how that forms their moral values into public policy.

Yesterday was Dr. King's birthday. I can think of no one outside my immediate family who had more impact on me in my formative years than Dr. King. I grew up in the segregated South in a home where I was, fortunately, always taught that racism was not only wrong, it was sin. But I can remember, as a 16-year-old boy sitting in my living room on the evening news, watching the excerpts from Dr. King's speech at the Lincoln Memorial. And I can remember, as I sat there in that chair, thinking it's not

enough to be opposed to racism. It's not enough to believe it's sin. I have a moral obligation as a Christian, I have a moral obligation to fight it, to do what I can to change policy to reflect racial justice and racial equality. And Dr. King would be on my list--if you asked me to name a list of the five greatest Americans in the 20th century, Dr. King would absolutely be on the list.

And in our acknowledgement that we have not completed the journey to racial justice and racial equality in this country, we should give thanks, as we celebrate his birthday, for the progress we've made--symbolized, perhaps, as I was riveted by Condoleezza Rice's confirmation hearings this morning before I had to tear myself away to come over here, as she is seeking confirmation as the secretary of state to replace a secretary of state, and both of them are African American. America has changed for the better. And I praise God for it.

I certainly believe that we have the right to bring the moral factor, informed by religious convictions, into public policy. And a debate about which values and how those values ought to be applied, between myself and people like me and Jim Wallis, is going to be a much more productive debate for the country than a debate between myself and people like myself and those secularists of the ACLU stripe and Americans United stripe and People for the American Way stripe, who want to disqualify people of religious conviction from even suiting up and coming out onto the field. I always carry with me--and if anybody on our staff at the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission is caught not having a copy on their person, they have to make a contribution to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund--our vision statement, which is: An American society that affirms and practices Judeo-Christian values rooted in biblical authority.

Now, I want to draw your attention to the fact that when I say "an American society," I didn't say "an American government." The society has to change before the government changes. Dr. King spoke as a Baptist minister. You can't really understand Dr. King unless you understand that he was, first and foremost, a Baptist minister. But he took his religious convictions and how they informed his moral values, and he came out into the public square and he challenged America to live up to the principles and the promises of its founding documents, and he persuaded a critical mass of the society. He didn't wait till everyone was convinced. Those of us who lived through those years know not everybody was convinced. But he convinced a critical mass. Because in a participatory democracy like the United States, you don't bring about legislative and public policy change without first getting a critical mass of support.

And when I say that we won this debate with the secular fundamentalists, I point to the 2004 elections as sort of the final test of that. The American people have decided--and they have a funny way of doing this--that they want religious values to be part of public policy. Does that mean they're always going to come down on the conservative side? No. Does it mean they're always going to come down on the moderate side? No. Does it mean they're always going to come down on the liberal side? No. But they have rejected, at a national level, this idea that some perverted understanding of separation of church and state means that we are to disqualify ourselves--and as Stephen Carter said, you know, we want to drive religious conviction and belief to the margins of the culture.

For too often in the last 30 years we have been accurately described by Peter Berger, who in the Gallup Poll did a study internationally to try to determine the degree of religious conviction and belief in a society, asking questions like Do you

believe in the existence of God? Do you go to mosque, synagogue, temple, or church on a weekly basis? You know, do you practice a faith? And they discovered--this was about 10 years ago now--they discovered that the most religious country in the world, according to those formulations, was India and the least religious country in the world was Sweden. And Peter Berger, when he heard this, said, Hmm, America is a nation of Indians ruled by an elite of Swedes. And I think that Stephen Carter's book puts chapter and verse to that in "The Culture of Disbelief," about how the various elites in this culture--I hope it doesn't come as a shock to you that we have elites in this culture--and that the various elites in this culture have sought to completely privatize religious faith.

Election results are the consequence, not the cause, of social change. And America is the exception to what had been perceived as the rule of modernity, which is that the more modern a culture becomes, the less religious it becomes. Certainly true of Scandinavia, certainly true of Western Europe, certainly true of our neighbors to the north. I was part of a BBC special on what the world thinks about God, and the BBC was surprised to find that when they did their polling they found that only 17 percent of people in the United Kingdom said that religion was important in their lives. Twenty-eight percent in Canada said religion was important in their lives. Sixty-one percent of Americans said that religion was very important in their lives. And I would argue that it's getting more important, not less important.

Now, our mission statement is to awaken, inform, energize, equip, and mobilize Christians to be the catalyst for the biblically based transformation of their families, churches, communities, and the nation. We are commanded by our Savior as Christians to be salt and light. We have a vision and an understanding of what that means. And we are prepared to make that case, to argue our case, and we're seeking

converts. We welcome you, whatever your perspective, to do the same. The country will be better off for all of our efforts. Because when we leave the people free to bring their religiously informed moral values into the public square, it will make Republicans better Republicans, it will make Democrats better Democrats, and it will make America a better place.

I'm delighted that we've begun this discussion. I look forward to it. And as I said, you know, it's one kind of debate when I say my religious convictions lead me to these moral beliefs and public values, and the other side says, well, I think that you need to re-study that; my religious convictions and beliefs lead me here. Let's talk about what is right and what is wrong as we understand it and what is the prudential decision. It's another kind of a debate to say your religious beliefs are irrelevant, get off the field, you're disqualified and ineligible from the debate.

We're not going to be shoved to the side of the field anymore, and we're not going to let Jim Wallis be shoved to the side of the field, either. We welcome the debate. America will be better for it.

[Applause.]

MR. DIONNE: We're glad you're in the field, a representative of the elite of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I just want to tell everybody there are these little mikes. Just so we don't have to step up and go down, there are little mikes behind your chair.

Dr. Land cited that wonderful story about India and Sweden. A French pollster friend and I were talking about these numbers on church attendance in our country compared to Western Europe, and we agreed that people lie in these polls but that what's revealing is how people lie. That, you know, America is much higher in

church and synagogue attendance and mosque attendance than the Europeans, but we agreed that Americans would feel guilty and embarrassed if they didn't go to church and the French would feel guilty and embarrassed if they did. And right there is an interesting cultural difference. So we're probably less religious than we say, and they're probably more religious than they say.

What I'd like to do is give Jim a very brief opportunity to respond and then I really want to bring in this distinguished audience. By the way, I want to thank Katherine Moore--I want to do this now because I never want to forget this at the end--Katherine Moore of Brookings, who really did a lot of work with all the good Sojourners folks to put this together. And a lot of old friends from discussions such as this. I think Melissa Rogers is out there; Amy Sullivan is here. I want to thank you all for being here.

Let me just pose two quick questions to you, Jim. Is the fact that you are here on this stage, does it mean--and if I quote Dr. Land correctly--that the so-called religious right has won the debate with secular fundamentalism? And then secondly, I love the idea that it is the Roman Catholic priest on this stage who is urging some restraint in religion's role in public life, and I'd like you to--

DR. LAND: I agreed with him.

MR. DIONNE: Everybody always agrees with Bryan. But thank you. That's a good Baptist position.

DR. LAND: It is.

MR. DIONNE: Jim, could you respond quickly to those two and, obviously, any other point you want to make, and then we'll go to the audience. We have a mike going around the room, correct? Does somebody have a floating mike? If

not, and if there's somebody listening to my voice who could make sure we get one, that would be great.

Jim?

MR. WALLIS: I do want to be brief because I'd like to open this up and give us a good half-hour for conversation.

Thank you both. When a critic--when you hear a critic of what you're saying, and you agree, you want to say I'll try to be more clear next time. Bryan Hehir is one of the clearest minds I know, and he helps clear up the rest of our muddled thinking. So let me just say that I think his notion of the middle term, the moral factor as the middle term, is exactly right. When Americans talk about how their moral factor is shaped--some by religious values, some would say spiritual values, and some say neither of those--I remember a conversation--I was in Denver a few weeks ago, and at the end of a long greeting line was a young man who waited for more than a half-hour just to say something. And when we finally got to shake hands, he said, I am an agnostic. I want to thank you for making me feel included tonight. I felt spiritually inspired by tonight because I also believe in moral values though I'm not religiously affiliated.

I want to say over and over again that I don't believe in religion as a monopoly on morality. In a democratic, pluralistic society, we must not claim that kind of control or dominance. I do take issue, as Richard said, with secular fundamentalism. But the other side is religious fundamentalism, which would enforce its religious agenda on politics. I like the middle term because what it says is that we must be disciplined by democracy. Religious folks must be disciplined by democracy, must not say "this should happen because" I'm a Baptist, I'm a Christian, or, as some say, God has spoken to me.

I like what Richard said at the end, which I would agree with--it may be a counter-statement--bring religiously informed moral values to the public square. But then you have to win the debate, not just because you are religious. You must say I believe this is the best thing for the common good. Martin King had a vision of a beloved community, where everybody had a place at the table, especially those left out and left behind. But then he said, And I want to support, I want to advocate, fight for a civil rights law in 1964, a voting rights act in 1965. He had to persuade the country this was good for the country, not just because he was a religious person.

In the church the night before Selma and Birmingham, so many places, in that room were Baptists and Catholics and Abraham Joshua Heschel came down from Boston, Jewish, Christian, other faiths, and people who had no faith at all, who would have called themselves at that time agnostic or even atheist. But those same people today will often tell me that those moments were the spiritual high point of their lives. How to prepare for it, the water cannons, the dogs, the clubs in the street; how to be nonviolent in the face of that oppression needed some kind of moral, spiritual preparation. But I take Bryan's point that perhaps I have used those terms--religious, moral, spiritual--at some times perhaps too interchangeably. They are not all the same thing, and they should be defined more carefully.

And finally, what about Harry, the very just, moral guy who maybe can't produce a budget? I agree with that in principle, but I want to say this. In the upcoming budget debates, I think Democrats are in danger of being portrayed as those who simply are--there will defensively be those who are in favor of government spending and against tax relief, and try to persuade the nation that's not really them. In the meantime, a budget may be passed that really does put the burden of deficit reduction and fiscal

responsibility on those least able to bear that burden. So I'd rather have us have a conversation. I have a chapter that says budgets are moral documents. And I believe that. They reveal the priorities, the values of a family, a church, a city, a nation. So I think one can talk about moral audits of a budget--who suffers, who benefits; who wins, who loses; who bears the burden. That's the kind of moral conversation all of us can participate in whether we are religious or not.

But I agree with Richard that it's a good thing that finally we can say to be informed in my moral compass, by my religious convictions is a legitimate thing. And King, perhaps, provides the best model of that, because at the end of the day, we knew who he was, we knew from hearing him who Isaiah was and who Jesus was. But most people didn't feel left out of the conversation he had about moral compass, moral discourse, and about the common good. That's the model we should all strive for.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, Jim. Not to respond to you now, but I do want to put in the back of people's heads, perhaps for conversation, I think both your comments and Dr. Land's comments do sort of demand a kind of clarification. Because I think many of us believe passionately that religious people have a legitimate role in the culture and think they should be suited up on the field. But on the other hand, many people who believe that also have real concerns about what happens when the state becomes too deeply implicated in religion and religious practice. You know, the prayer in public schools is a flash point in debates, but it's an entire legitimate question and I think that that is not the role of the public schools, that that can be an imposition on people of minority faiths and the like. And I do--you know, at some point, we may get around to that, but I think somebody in the audience may also put that. David Saperstein has certain concerns like that--welcome, David--that I do hope we can get into.

Where is the mike, and who wants to ask the first question?

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Rev. Leslie Tune, and I have a question for Dr. Land about the Southern Baptist Convention pulling out of the World Baptist Alliance and seemingly becoming more of a cocoon unto itself, and your statement that you're willing to be at the table and have open discussion around these issues. But in terms of ecumenism, working with other people of faith who are Christian--unless being Christian or being saved is not being defined as being outside of the Southern Baptist Convention--how are these conversations going to happen if the Southern Baptist Convention is pulling out of those tables where these conversations could happen?

And then, I guess, perhaps for the whole panel, just a question of the black church in this debate. There's a lot of talk about evangelical versus progressive and religious faith, and we've lifted up Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as an example and the black church itself as a good example of a good merging between personal piety and social justice just as part of the fabric of who the black church is. And yet oftentimes during the election season and most of the time, when they talk evangelical, they leave black church out and they talk about black church as a sub-culture, when if we talk about Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement, that was in large part motivated by the black church. So how do you see that disconnect working to help mainline evangelical Christians maybe as a bridge or whatever, if you could comment on that was well.

DR. LAND: Okay, I'll start with the question that was addressed to me. First of all, like most Baptists, I oppose government-sponsored religious observance in public schools. The last thing we should ever want is government-sponsored religion. It's like getting hugged by a python. It squeezes the life out of you and you fall over

dead. Government will never get it right, and it's going to violate the constitutional rights of people who disagree with whatever dumbed-down religion is promoted by the government. There's a huge difference, however, between the government not sponsoring religious practice, which it should never do, and somehow the feeling that the government should suppress individual Christians or Jews or Muslims from bringing their religious perspectives to bear on public policy issues.

Now, concerning the Baptist World Alliance, first of all, one of the complaints we get from a lot of people who are more liberal than we are as Southern Baptists is that we are too much involved at the table and want to be too much involved in these debates, and they would like for us to go home--and I can assure them we're not.

Secondly, the feeling was among Southern Baptists--and I was a board member of the Baptist World Alliance for over a decade--was that the Baptist World Alliance was moving in a liberal theological direction by and large and that it was not serving a lot of the needs of a lot of the second and third world countries. We had the same phenomenon in Baptist life that you have, for instance, in Anglican life, where Anglicans in the second and third world are somewhat appalled by the liberalism of Anglicans in Western Europe and North America.

And we are not cocooning ourselves. In fact, I'm going to a meeting with other Southern Baptist leaders and Baptist leaders from around the world in Warsaw, Poland, this July to form a new alternative to the Baptist World Alliance. We just felt like that when the majority of the Baptist World Alliance wanted to go in one direction and we wanted to go in another, and we were paying 80 percent of the bills, that we had the right to try to form something that was more in line with what our belief system is.

And we are doing that. In no way, shape, or form should it be seen as a withdrawal from a commitment to fellowship with Baptists in other countries and other continents.

In terms of the black church, let me--I do want one point of personal privilege. Southern Baptists, sadly, grievously, by intentionality, were a largely all-white denomination as late as 1970. With great intentionality and perseverance and conviction, we are now a denomination that is 20 percent ethnic. And there are about 750,000 African American Southern Baptists and there are about a half-million Hispanic American Southern Baptists and nearly a half-million Asian American Southern Baptists. And we're growing at four times the rate in ethnic communities than we are in the Anglo community.

MR. DIONNE: Could I have somebody take on her--first of all, bless you for that question. Because I think there is something about this conversation where we tend to say most people who are very religious are conservative and Republican, which just happens to leave out one of the most religious communities in our country, which is the African American community. Does somebody want to--

DR. LAND: And I don't say that, by the way. I don't--

MR. DIONNE: I know. I didn't say you did.

MR. WALLIS: If Marian could speak today, she might speak about this question, but I will jump in here. The black church, for me as a teenager, became kind of a spiritual home when the white evangelical church kicked me out over the issue of race. They said, quote, Christianity has nothing to do with racism. That's a political issue. Our faith is personal.

And the stake in their saying that was, indeed, that God is personal but never private. So I found, having been kicked out, the other evangelical church in

Detroit. The other evangelical church was a black church--same Jesus, same Bible, same hymn book--they made it sound much better than we did. And I learned that there was a church that was deeply, if you will, evangelical, as he just said, Biblical--Jesus loves you, and all the rest--but understood that feeding the hungry was as central to that as having your own personal life change. That's why in fact your life changed. The black churches have got these questions right. More than any other church in America, in our history, the black church has always offered a more holistic message than any other American church. And the fact that they are overlooked every time in elections, except as the place where candidates come and feel free to talk about God. How the black churches are themselves a constituency offering insight in history to how to resolve these issues of personal ethics, transformation, and social justice, I think, is the missing part of the conversation of almost every election season.

MR. DIONNE: I feel like--but I won't--inviting Bryan to defend the Catholic social tradition after that comment. Oh, did you want to say something, Bryan?

REV: HEHIR: All I would say is I'm willing to take on a lot of tough jobs in life, but not being the voice of Marian Wright Edelman. If Marian Wright Edelman just stood up and breathed, then you'd have the black church incarnate right here, and we'll know how indebted we are to it as a country and as a religious tradition.

DR. LAND: E.J., if I could just cite--let me just make one comment on that. Many of you saw the movie, "The Preacher's Wife." It was set in the context of a black church. That's a remake of a movie that was made in 1947 with a white church. And I think the reason it was made of a black church, aside from the fact that you had some marvelous actors playing the roles, was that the only credible--in the America of the 1980s and 1990s, the only credible place that the church was seen as the central

focus of the community was in a black context. And that is a tribute to the black community.

MR. DIONNE: Incidentally, "The Preacher's Wife" brings to mind the fact that Jim Wallis is a preacher's husband. And I want to welcome Joy, his wife, who is an Anglican priest. And if she cares to defend the Anglican tradition on these questions, I hope she will join us.

What I would like to do--is there a mike in the back? I'd like to bring in several people at the same--both of you in the back there and then we'll slowly move forward. Just one after the other, so we can bring more voices in.

QUESTION: My name is Olin Thompson. I'm a complete stranger here. I arrived in this country a week ago, so this is kind of a new experience for me.

MR. DIONNE: Welcome.

QUESTION: I come from a place, which the accent you may recognize, where religion and politics have been fairly closely intertwined for many years. I'm from Belfast, in Northern Ireland.

Just an observation. My parents--I'm Baptist, my parents were Baptist, my grandparents were Baptist. They grew up in a country where 61 percent would be considered a pretty poor score for church-going on a Sunday. And they grew up in a country where they weren't political people, they weren't engaged in community conflict, they weren't waving flags and banners, they weren't marching in the streets. They had a fairly pietistic approach to their faith and they helped out their neighbors as best they could, whether Protestant or Catholic.

The problem was that, because they believed that they were doing what they should do and because they believed that through their faithfulness God was

blessing Northern Ireland, they were incapable of seeing that Northern Ireland was politically and socially dysfunctional. And it strikes me just how this notion that there are large numbers of people with a religious background or have a religious voice or a religious sense of what society might look like, and it can be as blinding a reality as enlightening a reality.

And one of the consequences we face now in Northern Ireland is while we're not quite there into the 17 percent that the rest of the U.K. has in terms of religious importance--I think that's quite a high figure, actually, rather than a low figure--we're getting there. We have a younger generation in Northern Ireland whose experience of religion in public life has been so negative that they're completely turned off. And for those of us who are people of faith, that's a sad thing. But the reality is, for Northern Ireland's society at the moment, that's probably quite a good thing.

Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much, sir.

[Applause.]

QUESTION: My name is Jim Dickerson. I'm a pastor of a church not too far from here and a good friend of people up on that--Jim Wallis and others, the Sojourners. We work together.

My comments I'd like to direct to Dr. Land, if I may. Dr. Land, I've been at this forty years. I had a religious awakening at age 22. I'm from Arkansas. It's interesting that you talk about Dr. King, because obviously my personal life and my rebirth as a person came at a time when this whole society was being reborn, and he was leading that and that was great.

The only white man in Arkansas, where I was born and raised in segregation, as you were, that I ever saw stand up in the midst of other white men who were segregationists and were in favor of keeping it that way, was my grandfather, who was a Lincoln and Eisenhower Republican and was not a religious man. But he stood up in 1958, when they were integrating, in the midst of white men who were all religious, who went to primarily Southern Baptist churches--I was raised in that--and said this is wrong; we have to do this, it's the law. He was the only person I ever heard say that, the only white man in that culture where I grew up I ever heard say that. It wasn't a religious person that did that. And when I became of age, I did not see conservative religious Southern Baptists on the lines fighting the civil rights battles. I found other types of Christians, but not them. In fact, I found them opposed to it.

Now, since that time, for 40 years I've been engaged in this and my religion has informed all of this. Okay? And all my activism. And it's been great. I have never, never, ever been suppressed because of my religion. I went to--I was involved with the faith-based movement. I was asked to come and be with them in the beginning. And I wanted to help shape that. And what I found was it was simply a ploy by the Republicans to get more minorities in the Republican Party and to get money to their friends. It was not really a faith-based effort in the sense of trying to do more for poverty in this country.

So I don't see--I haven't experienced that, what you're talking about, even though I've been in it, in terms of religion being suppressed and people with religious backgrounds not being able to be in that arena.

Now, here's the question. Your mission statement says we are for biblical values. Will you stand with us in opposing this administration and its budget cuts

unfairly to the poor as a religious principle? Will you stand with us opposing this war as a religious principle? Will you critique this administration and this government prophetically, biblically, equally as supported with your religious values? That's the question I have for you. And will you join with us in that critique and in that opposition?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, sir. I hate to say what I'm about to say after two very moving statements, but we could include more voices if everybody could compress themselves a little bit, out of charity for the others. And I don't say that as a critique of both of you, who were very, very powerful.

Why don't we go to Jim and Richard and anyone else who wants to respond to both of those statements. And then let's get a mike over to David Saperstien. We've got two voices over here. David's in the corner there.

DR. LAND: What order do you want us to respond to those?

MR. DIONNE: Either--whichever--why don't we go to Jim and you, and then--

MR. WALLIS: I'll respond to the Northern Ireland question. I've been to Northern Ireland. And I think something that should be said in this context, in this discussion is something like this. Richard Peterson, who did the message--he's the Biblical paraphraser--in his opening to the Book of Amos--and he's an evangelical theologian--and he says this: The worst things done in history to people, the worst things done to people in human history have been done in the name of religion. Religious people must be the first to say religion can be, has been divisive, oppressive, violent. And there's no worse violence than the violence done in the name of God, which makes it even worse.

Now, there's a temptation there to say the answer to bad religion is secularism. That is a big temptation that I understand. But what I'm trying to say and what we're trying to say, I think, is the answer to bad religion is not secularism but is better religion. That's where Amos comes to play for Peterson, that prophetic commission, he says, always critiques oppressive, divisive, patriarchal religion. That prophetic tradition in all of our faith traditions is what saves us. The slave owners gave that Bible to the slaves to keep their minds on heaven and keep their eyes off their plight on this earth. In that same book, those same slaves found Moses and Jesus, who became a foundation for their liberation struggle. The tension is there. We must always acknowledge and live with it. Bad religion, good religion, it's always before us and, I would say, it's within us as well, not just out there [inaudible].

DR. LAND: And I would respond by saying that the worst things that have been done to human beings by other beings in the 20th century were done in the name of secularism and secular ideologies, not religious ideologies. So let's be--religion has done some terrible things in the past and most religions in the world have renounced those. But Auschwitz and Dachau and Buchenwald and the Gulag and the killing fields of Cambodia were brought to us by godless secularism. And a society in which nothing is always wrong, based upon religion conviction, is a society in which anything is possible, which the Third Reich certainly showed us.

I need to--the Southern Baptist record on race has not been a real good one, but it's better than you may have experienced. Within weeks of the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the Southern Baptist Convention, which makes these decisions by democratic vote, the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1954 passed a resolution calling on Southern Baptists as a matter of Christian conscience to comply

with the Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education. And we have passed--or started in the 1940s strong resolutions in favor of racial justice. Unfortunately, for many of our churches, those were honored more in the breach than in the observance, and of that we have repented. And as I said, we now have 20 percent of Southern Baptists who are ethnic, and 750,000 of them are African Americans. And we're delighted to have every one of them and are looking forward to having more as we help start churches in predominantly black communities in the inner city all across the country every week.

I would not characterize--first of all, I supported the war. I don't think war is a good thing. I don't think it was the first choice and I don't think it's a good thing. I think sometimes war is the least bad thing. And I just would point to the people lined up getting ready to vote in the first free election in Iraq and the people who voted in Afghanistan. I don't think, coming to a place where you say we are going to try to do everything we can to establish freedom and democracy in the Middle East, and you have a president who has said the way we've done business in the Middle East under Democrat and Republican presidents over the last 60 years is wrong and it has helped to breed terrorism because we have supported oligarchical, fascist regimes that have abused their people and terrorized their people, first in the name of anticommunism and then in the name of stability and of stable oil supplies, and the only way that we're going to finally alleviate this problem, this violence is to help foster democracy and to help foster freedom in the Middle East. Democracies don't attack other democracies. Stop and think about it. When was the last time that a democracy attacked another democracy? When you have a world in which most of the governments are accountable

to their people, you will have far less aggression and you will have far less governmental abuse of people.

And concerning the president's budget cuts, I wouldn't characterize them that way. We could have a long discussion about that. One thing you do need to understand, and I suspect most of the people in this room don't, is Bushism--what I call the policies of George W. Bush--Bushism is not Reaganism. Reagan saw government as an enemy, an enemy of freedom. He really believed that the least government, the less government, the better off you were, the freer you were. I think President Bush has demonstrated in his speeches, in his actions, and in his acceptance speech at the Republican Convention that he sees government as a good force to empower people to make more choices for themselves. Not the government making choices for them, but empowering people to make good choices for themselves, the choices they decide to make. And the No Child Left Behind initiative, for instance, Reagan wanted to do away with the Department of Education. George W. Bush wants to strengthen it. You may disagree with the way he's doing it, but those are questions of prudence, the question of the best way to do it, not not-doing it versus doing it. He sees a role for government in empowering people, and that's a very different public policy impulse than the public policy impulse of the Reagan Republican Party.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Just one small point I want to make on Nazism. Nazism is clearly a secular ideology, but there were plenty of Christians in Germany who were Nazis, and the church was split. And it's something I think Christians need to think of with some humility, because there were a lot of Christians who went over to the other side. I think if we keep that in the back of our heads, we might avoid the mistake again--at least I pray we would.

What I'd like to do is bring in a whole lot of voices together because we started 15 minutes late. I'm going to let us run a little late. But I also know that there are people that have schedules that they have to worry about, so I want to try to get as many voices in as I can.

Rabbi David Saperstein, thanks for being with us.

QUESTION: What an extraordinary panel. Since there's no one perceived as an overt separationist, let me ask each of you to just lay out where you are concerned through the action of the administration, courts, or Congress. We see real dangers to the Establishment Clause, where it may go too far, where the python may be released, Richard. Where are you most concerned we go too far?

Related to that, Richard and Bryan, what is appropriate and constructive for an elected official, a public figure in a public capacity to use religious speech as opposed to moral speech? Is it never appropriate? Is it appropriate, under what circumstances? Not do they have a right to do it; when is it constructive and appropriate, when is it inappropriate?

QUESTION: Mark Farr [ph] from the Points of Light Foundation.

Jim, one of the many things about King was not only his attention to preaching, but his attention to action. And he not only had the values, but he had the Edmund Pettus Bridge and the Memphis garbage workers. For those of us who buy your ideas, what, beyond voting our conscience, beyond holding the right values, would you actually have us do, would be my question. What would you actually want us to do?

QUESTION: Hi. My name is Antonio. I am from Puerto Rico, and I grew up Catholic. But 14 years ago, I moved to the United States. Now I am a Southern Baptist.

Before the war started, the Southern Baptist Convention was very openly in support of this war in Iraq. You, too, Mr. Land. In the past, in the '60s, the Convention opposed the civil rights movements, but later apologized for it. Don't you think it's time for the Southern Baptist Convention to apologize now for its support of the war--

DR. LAND: No.

QUESTION: --where a hundred thousand lives have been killed, including women, pregnant women with unborn children in there. That's life, too. If you think it's life, it's time for the Convention to apologize for it.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. Was there somebody else right in this vicinity. Sir?

QUESTION: Well, in case you're not already on Baptist overload, I'm Robert Marus from Associated Baptist Press. And my question is along the same lines, but more specific.

You did justify the war as a just war. You thought it, Dr. Land, met just war criteria. Lots of other evangelical conservatives did as well. Evangelicals haven't hastened to criticize President Bush and the Republican Party when they think he's being too soft, as we saw this weekend, on social issues like gay marriage and abortion rights. But I haven't seen anyone offering a prophetic critique of the president in the post-war era.

Do you still think this is a just war? And why that silence among your fellow conservative evangelicals?

MR. DIONNE: Can I start at the end with Bryan, because--especially on David Saperstein's question--and take all those together. And I appreciate the question, all right, what do we do about all this? We'll just go from Bryan to Jim to--

REV: HEHIR: Well, David, I think, began by saying there's no overtly separationist on the panel. I believe in the institutional separation--

DR. LAND: So do I.

REV: HEHIR: --of the organs of government and the organs of religion. I mean, I hold that as a basic proposition.

Secondly, I do not think that proposition should be translated into the separation of religion from civil society, which I think at times, in some discussions, it does sound like people feel you must be silent in civil society. I've tried to make the point that it is precisely that dividing line that, for me, is the dividing line between using legitimate religious discourse in civil society but having to make the case morally when you're trying to affect the power of the state.

I think, thirdly, I wouldn't go to case analysis for my worries. My worries--Jim reflected some of them in his book--my worries are primarily in the area of foreign policy, where there does seem to me to be an indiscriminate invocation of religious blessing on policies that I think, on moral grounds, are without merit. And the war, for me, is the principal example of a policy without moral merit in its purpose, in its method, in its style, and in its outcome.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Jim.

MR. WALLIS: Just on David's question, I would agree with Bryan's comment about the separation of church and state is something that I feel committed to per se, as such, but not the segregation of discourse from public life. But I think the

lines get crossed. I am more concerned these days, David, not about particular instances but about theology, official theology or a national theology. There's a statement done by a number of theologians--mostly evangelical theologians, by the way--before the election. It's in the book. It says they're concerned about three things: a theology of war emanating from the highest circles of political power in the United States, theology of war; 2) a language of righteous empire more and more out of the closet in this nation; 3) an appeal to a sense of mission, divine mission and calling, in a war on terrorism and even the president's role in that war on terrorism.

I do think--and Mike Gerson tried to clarify some of this a few weeks back, citing Lincoln and not saying God is on our side. But I do think this administration has crossed the line on too many occasions, where I am nervous about the--if you can't see evil in the face of September 11th, you're suffering from some kind of post-modern relativism. But to say they are evil and we are good is bad theology and leads to bad foreign policy.

So I'm concerned about the theology that I see in the conversation now. It's almost what Bryan was saying, a theological discourse in official circles, that I think crosses that line.

Very quickly, on Mark's question. I think what changes history are social movements that have moral foundation. That's what always changes history. So this book, really, is calling people, young people especially, to join movements, to join those movements that really transform things. So this book tour is really almost kind of a movement-building tour. We're going to campuses and church and schools getting young people to join the kind of movement that will change our history. Voting is

important, elections are important, but the most important thing is committing ourselves to movements that are in fact the change agents in history.

DR. LAND: First of all, I think the greatest danger--I agree that we ought to have separation of church and state. I'm a Baptist. I believe that there ought to be absolute separation between the institution of the church and the institution of the state. But I do not believe, as Jim has said, in the segregation of spiritually informed moral values from public policy. And we can disagree about how those values are applied and what the hierarchy is. For instance, most African American evangelicals that I know are pro-life. But the vast majority of them voted for John Kerry because, in their hierarchy of values, there were other values that took precedence in this election. I respect that. I disagree with it, but I respect that. And I think that people of faith are going to come down on different sides of a lot of these issues. But I think we've reached a place in this country where we're no longer going to allow those who would intimidate us and say you don't have any right to be on the field if your values are religiously informed. That day has come to an end.

I happen to think that the greatest dangers of violation of the First Amendment are government suppression of the Free Exercise Clause. I have felt that, I continue to feel that.

Concerning the war, yes, I did believe it was a just war, I continue to believe it was a just war. And talking about thousands of Iraqis being killed--who's killing them? Iraqi fascists. They don't have a vision for the future of Iraq. At least the Viet Cong had a vision of the future. Some of us may have disagreed with it, but at least they had a vision of hope. This is nihilism, this is death, this is taking people out in the

street who are election officials and shooting them, it is saying we're going to execute anyone who wants--

[Change tape.]

DR. LAND: --what's going on here. This is a battle between--right now, whether we should have gone in or not is another question. Right now, it's a battle between civilization and barbarism. The polls show us that over 90 percent of the Iraqis want to vote. And if they are allowed to vote and are not murdered and intimidated into not voting, they will elect something, a government that looks a whole lot like sort of the Muslim Democrats. Like the Christian Democrats in Germany. Only about 20 percent of the Iraqi people want an Islamic republic like Iran. And if the Iranians had a free vote, they wouldn't have an Islamic republic either.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I love to think of unfair headlines that will grow out of something somebody said, and I just thought "Conservative Baptist Leader Praises Viet Cong."

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Dr. Land--all right, a last quick round here, and then what I'm going to do is go to Richard, Bryan and Jim, and I'm going to let Jim do the invocation and closing.

Can we go all the way to the back to David? Oh, you've got the mike.
Perfect.

QUESTION: Thank you, E.J. David Sandalow. I'm here at Brookings.

For the panel, do you think that religious voices today are a powerful force for protecting the natural environment, for addressing global warming and species extinction? And if not, should they be, and what would it take?

MR. DIONNE: And that lady over there. Ma'am? Sorry, I don't know your name.

QUESTION: Hello. Jill Coleman, ABC-TV Australia. Directly to Dr. Land. To respond to concerns raised by Reverend Wallis in his books, specifically that the President had allowed the religious right to influence his policies in the White House too much, that he has confused nationalism with religion, and that this President appears to believe his is a divine appointment by God, and his foreign policy is part of a religiously-inspired mission.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Could we do--let's see. If you could all be quick, we'll take all four of those voices. Pass the mike down that way. And I apologize to everybody else who couldn't get in.

QUESTION: Yeah. I have a quick comment since Dr. Land said about voting, Iraq and Afghanistan, to prove that Democracy prevails there. I just want to tell one thing from Asia myself, and I still have connection there with a lot of people in that part of the world, that the way the Americans conducted this war has probably damaged and disserved the very fundamental ideas of democracy, and that is a searing experience for many in the Third World countries, among many of those countries who are democracies.

I just want to ask you one thing. In your last Baptist Convention, you passed three, I guess, among other resolutions. One is against gay marriage. Another is abortion, against abortion, and a third is for the war. As somebody who is not a Christian, not even a religious person, I would say that [unintelligible]. I can, for example, agree that if I'm a Christian I could probably derive from Bible that I will not agree with abortion, I guess. And also I probably could agree with you that as a

Christian or even as a non-Christian, I could agree that there probably should not be gay marriage, but because you said you derived all those from the Bible. But the third one is the one that really bothers me a lot, and where did you derive that from Bible? And that is a problem. I just think that I hope you can think a little bit out of your box in thinking about things.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. And if you can all be very brief. I'm sorry. Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: Eric Sterling. I'm one of the founders of the Interfaith Drug Policy Initiative. We haven't discussed at all one of the spiritual crises that face America, which is the problem of substance abuse, and the unjust war on drugs is the response. Yet there are enormous unexamined values that underlie drug prohibition and our response, and a real failure to meet the spiritual needs of substance abusers. I'm not sure that we have the time to get into that, but I am concerned that in our conversation as a society about this issue, that sort of very glib ideas, drug abuse is wrong, end of discussion, seems to be about the extent of it, and that there's not a role yet for multiple views to raise issues that it's simply sort of happy hippies dancing in the park on one side favoring legalization or a status quo of prohibition. We have not thought about the values here very well.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

Again, real quick, and then Richard Fulton. We've got to--

QUESTION: Real quickly. As a progressive Catholic Democrat, coming out of a tradition that's given us [unintelligible] and all the anniversary encyclicals, we have, you know, a strong commitment to social justice that more or less got glossed over during the last election in favor of a couple other issues. But my question is, as a

Christian in a town that's increasingly Republican and increasingly conservative, how do I respond to family members, friends--and this is kind of for Father Hehir and Mr. Wallis--about a New Testament ethic, specifically a gospel ethic that says: sow what you own and give it to the poor. When somebody asks for your coat, give them also your tunic. It doesn't say: go around and set up a tunic agency commissioned by the local synagogue or by the local Roman jurisdiction. As someone who's very concerned with social justice, how do we respond to what seems to be a very personal ethic of the New Testament?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you very much. That goes to the heart of our discussion, thanks.

QUESTION: Richard Fulton, American Jewish Committee. A brief comment and an even briefer question. The brief comment is I was glad in this last round to see some--the fealty being pledged to the notion of separation of church and state. I just wanted to make the point that of course commitment to that is not identified solely with those that one might call secular fundamentalists, even though there is a problem of antipathy towards religion that comes from some quarters.

And that means that for some of us our concern about religious autonomy protecting religious institutions means that there are concerns about even a stricter separation of church and state than I think the folks on the panel would be committed, such as being very careful about any funding of religion, whether it's through the charitable choice or vouchers, and that comes not out of hostility toward religion, but towards concern for religious institutions. That's the comment.

The question I have is, you know, in the discussion about finding language of morality in which to frame public discourse, the question I would put is, is

that a counsel of prudence or a counsel of principle? That is, does that grow out of theological beliefs that in fact that is the language in which one must address these issues, or if there was a community in this nation or any other nation that had the votes to impose public policy without recourse to language of morality that was acceptable to other quarters, would they therefore under those circumstances not be obligated to engage in that kind of language?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. I'm sorry. We've got a very diverse group of questions, and so many of these things you could set up separate panels. We could have one on budgets, one on war and peace, one on drug policy, and then one on separation, and you've only got about a minute or so each. But you can do it. You guys all do television. So we'll--

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: We'll start with Dr. Land, go to Bryan, and then close with Jim.

DR. LAND: Well, let me start with the last question. I certainly respect differences of opinion about how you best defend separation of church and state, and as you know, we have severe qualms about faith-based initiatives for that very reason, because unless you're the National Endowment for the Arts with government shekels, sooner or later come government shackles, and we're concerned about government intrusion into the life of faith-based communities, if not now, at some future point.

I think that the question of whether you make your case and you go--you make that transform from religious convictions informing your moral values, to making them in terms of moral values and seeking the rest, or at least a critical mass of the rest of the culture that Father Hehir talks about, I think it is a principle. I think it is the right

thing to do. It's not a question of just prudence or necessity. I think you have an obligation to make your case and to try to help people to understand where you're coming from and to convince them you're right on this issue whether or not it's their religious conviction and your religious conviction.

You have the right to have your religious conviction or no religious conviction inform your moral values, and I have the right to have my religious conviction inform my moral values, and we debate, and we discuss, and we dialog, and we seek to come to consensus. It seems to me that's a principle. You shouldn't just assume if you have the power that you have the right to do something. That's illogical.

And I would be shocked if Jim didn't think that the so-called religious right had too much influence on George W. Bush. I don't think we've had enough influence on George W. Bush. As one White House adviser said to me, "Richard, you're never satisfied." And I said, "Well, that's what Southern Baptists pay me to do, to never be satisfied. We always want more."

And I understand we don't endorse candidates. We look for candidates who endorse us and our values and our beliefs and our convictions, not the other way around ever.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

Father Hehir?

REV. HEHIR: Let me try and put together a couple of questions. First of all, the argument from ignorance. I really don't know enough about the environment or drug policy to say anything terribly illuminating. I think on the environment the religious communities have come to pay much more attention to that recently, but to be honest, it is not an area that I've worked in.

Let me take the last two questions here and try and put them together. On the question of sort of how do you read the New Testament and put it in practice, the question the gentleman raised is I think the distinction between the vocational question and what you might call the institutional question. There are, in the New Testament, very direct kind of vocational claims that are laid upon individuals. I think it takes discernment to figure out how we interpret those in our personal lives.

But I think particularly, at least in the Catholic tradition, it is not regarded as opposing those kinds of vocational statements, that we've always believed you have to create institutions if you're going to make a difference over the long term. And those institutions both ought to be in the religious community themselves--that's why we build hospitals and universities and run social service agencies--but also it is institutions in the secular realm. You can't function in a complex society unless you do have institution.

So while it is easy to criticize, saying we ought to set up a government institution to do something, I think it really doesn't flow out of the Catholic tradition to hold that position. We believe that the state has positive moral responsibility to the poor and vulnerable, and in complex states you're going to need institutions to do that well. I actually don't see as much tension there as there might be.

Secondly, what about those institutions, those religious institutions and secular institutions? My own sense is that it is possible to have not only secular institutions that are devoted to the public good, but to have religious institutions that are separate from, distinct from, but in collaboration with public institutions to do the public good.

Now, I think the religious institutions have to know how to walk and chew gum at the same time. You don't want to allow the state to pass off to you that

specific moral responsibility it has. Secondly, you don't want the state to run you. And thirdly, you have to maintain restraint in terms of how you take government funds, how you hold yourself accountable to the public for them, and you have to maintain restraint, finally, on the point that you raised about how you carry out public discord.

To the question of would we always be responsible to the whole society even if the majority of the society were of one faith, would we always be responsible to interpreting any proposal of law and policy in such a way that anyone in the society in principle could understand it and argue about it? My answer to that would be definitively yes.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

Jim, you should know that one of your colleagues handed me a note that says, "Jim has to leave here in 10 minutes"--that was about four minutes ago--"for a flight to New York City. Can we wrap up?"

[Laughter.]

MR. DIONNE: So I just don't want you to miss your plane, you have inspired such a great conversation here.

MR. WALLIS: Well, I'll be very quick. You know Rich gets principle, it's not prudential, it's principle. Religion must be disciplined by democracy. The environment, David Saperstein will tell you about the religious partnership on the environment, Jewish, mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Catholic. It's a powerful thing. And young people, this is the issue that's at the heart of faith and [inaudible] for a lot of young people.

A lot's been said about the war. Let me just say two things. One, before the war began virtually every major church body in the world, with the exception of the

American Southern Baptists, said this was not a just war. The Pope said that, the Vatican said that. I want to say every evangelical body in the rest of the world said that too. It doesn't mean Saddam wasn't a problem, but we thought there was a better way to deal with Saddam, and did not see the connection between al Qaeda and Iraq.

Now though, Rich is right, we have a real situation. I would simply say American occupation will never be the answer to the problem of terrorism. The issue now is can we find non-American, international solutions? The world is I think hungry for American leadership, but not for American domination. Too much talk of occupation and empire now for me, and I think in fact we won't have any solution until the American occupation now of Iraq comes to an end.

Finally, personal ethics, and Bryan spoke to that, look at--I'm a disciple of Dorothy Day, personalism. Works of mercy are at the heart of the gospel. You do what you say. You do what you believe. But you can't keep pulling bodies out of the river and not send somebody upstream to see what or who is throwing them in. The prophets, Hebrew prophets have a long tradition of speaking to judges and rulers and princes and employers about policies and structures and fairness, and speak in behalf of widows and orphans and those who are left out, left behind. There can't be this separation any more between doing what we say we believe and asking the society to do better at what Bryan said, fairness and justice. You win that debate though by appealing to the country's sense of moral compass.

Finally, this has been a launch of a book, but much more importantly, conversation about faith, politics and values. And I want to thank all of you for coming, and if this is any preview of what this book tour is going to be, we're going to have a

great time. This was a great start and a great conversation, so I thank you all very, very much.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

[Applause.]
