Discussion

One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics

Wednesday, July 21, 2004
10:30am-Noon
Mayflower Hotel, The State Room
1127 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

This campaign season, experts are touting the "religion gap" as the most fundamental divide in the political landscape. Pollsters have found that an individual's level of religious commitment is a more significant indicator of voting behavior than education, income level or gender. This helps explain why both President Bush and Senator John Kerry are reaching out to religious voters. Most political observers had expected that embryonic stem cell research, gay marriage and other issues at the intersection of religion and public life would figure prominently in Campaign 2004. What is perhaps surprising is the degree to which the race also has centered on the personal faiths of the candidates.

At a time of increased interest in the connections between personal faith and voting behavior, and between politicians' religious convictions and their careers as public servants, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Brookings Institution invite you to a discussion of the increasingly complex relationship between religion and politics. The event will feature Rep. Mark Souder (R-Ind.), Rep. David Price (D-N.C.) and other contributors to the latest Pew Forum Dialogue from the Brookings Institution Press, One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics. Read about the book

Speakers:
Congressman David Price (D-NC)
Congressman Mark Souder (R-IN)
David Brooks, columnist, The New York Times; Contributing Editor, Newsweek
E.J. Dionne, Jr., Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution; columnist, Washington Post Writers Group

Moderator:
Luis Lugo, Director, The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

EVENT TRANSCRIPT

LUIS LUGO: Good morning, and thank you all for coming. My name is Luis Lugo and I am the director of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. The Forum, as most of you know, is a nonpartisan organization and we do not take positions on policy issues –

never mind the upcoming election.

It is my pleasure to welcome you to what we believe will be a very thought-provoking discussion of faith and politics in a pluralistic society. This discussion is a follow-up to a book entitled *One Electorate Under God? A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics*. And we are privileged to have several contributors to that volume as panelists today. This volume is the third in the Pew Forum Dialogue Series, which seeks to address the moral and religious dimensions of important public questions. For you busy Washington types, we do have an executive summary of the book on the table out front. We also of course have plenty of copies of this volume for sale and order forms for the other volumes in the series. They make excellent beach reading. (Laughter.)

The impetus for this particular volume was a public debate the Forum hosted back in the fall of 2002 between former New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Indiana Congressman Mark Souder, where they discussed how their respective faith traditions informed their careers as public servants. We found that discussion so interesting and provocative that with E.J.'s great help – and Jean Bethke Elshtain and Kayla Drogosz, the editors – we decided to invite a lot of other folks to get in on the conversation, and that's really what's reflected in this volume.

One of our recent polls at the Pew Forum highlights the public's great interest in, but also ambivalence about, politicians' religious beliefs and expressions. For every American, for instance, who told us there has been too much reference to religious faith and prayer by politicians, there were two who said there has been too little reference to religion by politicians. At the same time, many of those same respondents expressed considerable discomfort when we exposed them to actual religious statements by politicians. These conflicting attitudes highlight the ambivalence of the American public on these issues, and that is a theme that is explored from a variety of angles in *One Electorate Under God*.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce you to our four panelists, each of whom has been asked to speak for 10 to 12 minutes, and in the interest of time I will keep my introductions short.

I will introduce them in the order in which they'll be coming up to the podium. Mark Souder, as I mentioned, was present at the creation of this project almost two years ago. He is a member of the House of Representatives serving the Third Congressional District of Indiana. "Had he not been elected to Congress" – and I'm quoting this from his Web site – "perhaps his most significant achievement would have been his involvement, while he was student body president at Indiana University at Fort Wayne, in choosing the name of the school's mascot." Anybody know – for those sports fans – this stumped even me – anybody know it?

MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: The Mastodons.

MR. LUGO: The Mastodons. There you go. That's tremendous. We draw such learned crowds here. That's great. (Laughter.)

Representative Souder is chairman of the Government Reform Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. Again, it's a pleasure to have you back with us, Congressman Souder.

Congressman David Price is, like me, a recovering academic. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1986 after teaching political science and public policy at Duke University. He holds a divinity degree and a Ph.D. in political science from Yale University. Again, great to have you with us, Congressman.

David Brooks, as I'm sure most of you know, is a columnist for the *New York Times*. He has been senior editor of the *Weekly Standard* and a contributing editor at *Newsweek* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. David's most recent book is entitled *On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now and Always Have (in the Future Tense)*.

Was that focus-group tested, David, that title? I'm just curious.

DAVID BROOKS: No, my editor – (laughter).

MR. LUGO: And I often introduce our last speaker, E.J. Dionne, as the illustrious co-chair of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. However, today he joins us merely as a columnist for the *Washington Post*, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and a distinguished professor at Georgetown University. In other words, no special privileges for you today, E.J. E.J. is the author of another eye-catching title: *Stand Up, Fight Back: Republican Toughs, Democratic Wimps, and the Politics of Revenge*. Very, very interesting.

Again, it's great to have these four contributors to the volume with us, and we'll begin with Congressman Souder.

(Applause.)

REP. MARK SOUDER (R-IN): And I have to point out that Mastodons is the only school nickname cited in a positive way in a Federal Court decision saying, why can't other universities pick nicknames that aren't controversial, like the Mastodons? (Laughter.)

This continuing dialogue has been a fascinating discussion of faith in the public arena. One of the insights I appreciated most was John Green's about universalists – all the great religions of the world are equally true and good – as opposed to particularists like me. What is evident from this dialogue, whether respondents are considered conservatives or liberals in the political world, and regardless of religious background, is

that they were overwhelmingly universalists. They believe the debate in the public arena should be consensus-driven because consensus can be achieved. Furthermore, almost all did not understand that they were actually advocating a religious view representing, at most, half of America. Universalists often intimidate, mock, and at the very least, condescend to particularists. Universalists assume and assert that education, science and reason back their positions.

Even the whole idea of faith is misunderstood in the public arena. Faith is not identical to the word "religion." Faith is relying upon God's spirit for direction, not reason. If I were to say, "I was reading the Bible this morning and prayed to Jesus about my concerns and he revealed to me through the Holy Spirit how to proceed" – my lands, you're likely to worry that I have a poisonous snake in the crowd here that I'm about to pass around.

In fact, we are a challenge to the whole theory of constantly positive evolution of man. Yet millions and millions of Americans do this every day, but if they say so in the public arena they are mocked. No wonder a gulf is appearing between an increasingly religious minority and an establishment opinion in this nation. And, just for the record, we do read books.

By the way, on the right and within the Republican Party we also have this problem. Libertarians are appalled by religious conservatives. Those whose religion is capitalism first are uncomfortable at best. Intellectual conservatives know the votes of the "religious rabble" are the only reason they can gain power or access to power, but they find us like their embarrassing aunt or uncle; they acknowledge we are part of the family but hope we stay over in the corner.

Let me give several examples of universalist bias. Governor Cuomo maintains that views on abortion are religious and personal by nature, thus they don't belong in the public arena. But that is his religious bias, his worldview that he seeks to impose on particularists like me. He just states that abortion is a religious issue. It most certainly is not. It is a life issue. We can disagree about when life begins; that is a scientific debate, but it is not a religious debate. The response to the scientific facts may be moral: should life be protected? Is a mother's right to choice about having a baby superior to the life of the baby? But just to assert that it is not a scientific debate, but rather a religious one, is an unjustified moral leap.

Similar summary judgments are made about the debate over the origins of man. Universalists want to maintain that science has proven that man has evolved cross-species. But like it or not, they have to make leaps of faith at least as great as the seven-day creationists. People with distinguished academic backgrounds and training make scientific arguments on both sides. It is, in fact, a debate over how to resolve scientific gaps. But when we advocates of intelligent design raise our voices, we are often ignored or, at the very least, not treated with any respect and are assumed to be ignorant and backward. Where is the dialogue? Why aren't both theories debated in schools? What

consensus determined that evolutionary theory would be the only one taught in the schools? Certainly not majority opinion, because a majority of Americans still overwhelmingly believe in intelligent design.

If I accomplish nothing else in this dialogue, I hope I can clearly communicate that the consensus power structure is so blindly universalist that they aren't even aware of their behavior. Even the rise of FOX News baffles them. They can't understand that to millions of people, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, and Dan Rather, as well as CNN and other cousins, all espouse a breathtakingly uniform universalist view of the world. When Janet Jackson and Howard Stern insult the moral standards of most Americans – and if you doubt that it's most, look at how the politicians of both parties responded to the Upton Bill, which would fine those who air such material – the power structure universalists, almost to a person, responded in unison: "No one made anyone watch the show – turn it off or switch the channel." Their prejudice is so deeply engrained that it apparently didn't occur to them that if the behavior offends the majority, why should the majority be the ones to take the action? Why not say to the minority, if they want to watch simulated rape and Howard Stern's foul-mouthed sexist trash, then subscribe to that channel through pay TV or go buy it on video?

This isn't a matter of free speech; it's a question to be resolved in the public arena peacefully and lawfully as to which group should have to take a particular action. The standard establishment critique would be that those of us who object have interjected religion and morals into the public arena. But so have those who opposed us. Their religion is universalist. It is their opinion that the issue is a personal moral issue and not able to generate consensus; that it's wrong to be legislated, like abortion. In other words, they take a universalist moral position, which is also a religious view.

Congressman Price makes the point that those of us who believe that there are clear moral absolutes that can be determined through the Bible but not shared in common consensus lack humility. But so does the assertion that truth does not exist. If standing up for what you believe to be truth is to be avoided, then all we have left is mush.

This is probably a slightly unfair view that we particularists – fundamentalists – have of the universalists. Certainly all of us, including fundamentalists like me, could use more humility. The Bible is hardly a politically explicit guidebook. But I would maintain that first it is the inerrant, perfect, revealed Word of God and is our number-one guidebook. That's why I'm a fundamentalist. Secondly, the Bible is crystal clear on some matters, clear on others, clear through logical deductibility on others, and somewhat less clear on the Patriot Act and broadband fees. (Laughter.)

While we probably don't agree on many political issues of the day, I have tremendous respect for Ron Sider's consistent advocacy for the poor within the evangelical movement. His comment/question related to natural law in the book hit upon a major subject largely ignored by everyone in the natural law discussion. And many of the writers that talked about natural law were particularly upset at my comments.

Universalists and particularists have profoundly different worldviews which impact our natural law debate.

Governor Cuomo said as a side point, "We are going from a big bang to gas to liquid to fish to humans, who reflect, who get brighter and brighter, who become ever more civil." To which people who share my worldview would respond, "Are we on the same planet?" A biblical literalist believes that because Adam sinned, all man is fallen. We may at times do good but our nature is sinful. When man repents of sin and accepts Christ as savior, sin is forgiven. Bible-believing Christians believe in a literal heaven and hell. We believe life here is short; eternal life is forever. Therefore, all these current debates are important, but they pale in importance to the question of salvation. We also believe that the Holy Spirit is given to each believer. That means to the degree we seek to conform to God's will, we can avoid sin, but inevitably we all fail, and through repentance, because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we are forgiven – forgiven 90 times nine if we acknowledge Christ.

This has tremendous public policy implications. We see no steady progression of human life. There are ups and downs, periods of honoring God and periods of failure throughout history. We believe human history, over the long haul, is headed downhill, not uphill, and in the end, Jesus returns. We believe man is sinful and thus must be retrained by laws. We are not libertarians. We believe government can be too powerful – as an institution of man, not God – and thus needs to be constrained and have countervailing forces. We believe that a moral nation is blessed by God. Governments reflect the morality of the people. While they can influence moral behavior, governments don't create it. When people are not moral, governments probably also reflect that failure.

We believe the church is an agent for moral change – not the government. Ironically, the less consensus about personal morality, the more pressure there is for public laws on morality. For example, the breakdown of sexual morality leads to more rape, more spouse abuse, more child abuse. So we have more laws, because the church, defined broadly, has failed to salt the Earth.

One presidential candidate recently said that his personal faith is private. He implied that what matters is action, not faith. He said, "Remember, faith without works is dead." Obviously faith without works is dead; it's a biblical truth. That is, if a fruit tree bears no fruit, is it a fruit tree? At the very least it is a non-fruit bearing fruit tree and not as valuable as one that bears fruit, but faith is the premise. But without faith there is not eternal life. We can argue about works and whether spending other people's money is what is meant by the verse, but if you are unwilling to discuss faith, you are missing the whole point.

That is why those of us who believe that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has saved us from hell obviously will continue to follow the biblical command to speak out about our faith. It is not about show, or gaining votes. If it is, then God will hold that individual

accountable, and usually the voters will as well. In fact, for a politician to speak for moral standards is the ultimate risk because everyone is a sinner. Not a single person is perfect and without sin. Those who speak out for truth need to be cautious about arrogance and condemnation and need to also preach redemption and forgiveness.

Leaders will talk about their personal faith because those of us who believe that salvation is the number-one point of our life on Earth happen to believe that hearing one's personal testimony, understanding their struggles to follow God's will, and watching to see if they apply their words to their actions, even if imperfectly, is as important, if not more so, than how they currently stand on Iraq, tax cuts, and energy policy. In the public arena, we want to know a candidate's worldview. We want to know how candidates approach issues because we can't know or understand every issue about which they will have to make decisions. But quite bluntly, if they are going to park those religious views at the curb and not have their faith be part of the decision-making process, who cares what their faith or personal beliefs are? If their beliefs are irrelevant to their behavior, you might as well not have any religious views as far as the public debate is concerned.

This forum has again made obvious that one's worldview shapes not only the policies themselves but how one believes these issues should be worked out in the public sphere. The United States secular arena more or less presupposed a nation anchored in Judeo-Christian principles, so things like "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance or posting the Ten Commandments were not even debated. But as we become more diverse, the challenges become greater because the underlying framework has changed. These issues are not easily resolvable.

But as I hope I have made clear, asking people to check one's faith at the door is unacceptable. Secularism is also a religion. If universalists, who dominate Washington and our establishment institutions, want to engage those of us who aren't about to abandon our core beliefs, we need to have a framework that isn't by definition biased in favor of the universalist worldview.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. LUGO: Thank you. Congressman Price.

REP. DAVID PRICE (D-NC): Good morning. This has been a productive discussion. I'm happy to be able to be a part of taking it to the next stage today. And I'm impressed with the turnout, with the diversity and interest of the group here, and I'm looking forward to the morning.

There's a basic assumption that underlies the exchange between Mark Souder and Mario Cuomo and the interlocutors. The basic assumption is that religious faith will and should

shape political action. And there really isn't any serious dispute to that proposition, at least in my perception. Religion – our faith, our traditions – are central to the motivations that draw us into politics and central to the shape that our political advocacy assumes once we're in politics.

Now, beyond that basic proposition there are substantial differences, and I want to just highlight a few of those this morning. First, I want to address this leading question, which is at the heart of the Cuomo-Souder exchange, and that is not whether our religious faith should shape our political advocacy, but exactly when and how should it do so? When and how should we attempt to translate religiously grounded precepts into civil law, to be more specific?

Now, Governor Cuomo has a suggestion. He says that we should attempt to do this when those religious precepts connect with broader and more universal values. When should we not try? His answer is, when the religious precept is largely confined to a specific tradition or specific traditions and/or enacting it would violate the spirit if not the letter of the Establishment Clause. In my essay I suggested another condition: that our religiously grounded approval or disapproval of certain behaviors, when it comes to translations into civil law, needs to respect democratic values; that religiously inspired disapproval of certain behaviors, for example, shouldn't be translated into laws that violate basic democratic values such as civil liberty, nondiscrimination, and equal opportunity.

Now, you may have conditions of your own. Those are some suggestions. What I'm afraid is missing from Mark Souder's presentation is any indication of where he would draw the line. Is there any area of religious belief and religious conviction that it's inappropriate to translate into civil law? Is there any example that can be given of an establishment of religion that would be inappropriate? I'm sure there is, but we do need to talk about that and talk about those limits, because those limits, in our republic, do exist and should exist.

Now, Mark and Roberto Suro, and other interlocutors in this discussion, bridle at the kind of limitations that I'm proposing and that Governor Cuomo is proposing. They don't necessarily tell us where they would draw the line in legislating religiously based precepts. They scoff at attempts to find common ground, dismissing such beliefs as least common denominators or watered-down precepts. Well, I'd suggest to you that our founders, the founders of this country, would have been astounded at that notion.

My daughter, a few years ago, was asked to write an essay for her college application asking, "What's the most politically powerful idea of the 20th century?" And I've gotten a lot of mileage out of this – I actually thought she did a really good job – (laughter) – because what she wrote was, the most politically powerful idea of the 20th century is exactly the most politically powerful idea of the 18th century and the 19th century, namely the idea of the American founding: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as the basic human values around which a society is to be organized. Wasn't that a good

answer? And remember, the appeal was to nature and nature's God. The appeal was to universalistic values which were shared across traditions.

Wouldn't it come as news to Frederick Douglass, who appealed to precisely those universalistic values in making the case against slavery – wouldn't it come as news to him that that's a least common denominator, that it's watered down, that it's impotent? Wouldn't it come as news to Martin Luther King? Since when have these universal human values around which the American experience has been organized represented some kind of pale reflection of the values we're committed to that give us no convincing basis for political action, or for that matter for political argument?

Now, a lot of this discussion does focus on the issue of abortion, and I would grant at the outset that abortion is a complicated borderline case. Some of the opposition to abortion is not necessarily based on distinctive theological doctrines. I would grant that. The essay that most directly addresses this is Robert George's essay on "Cuomological" fallacies in the book. (Laughter.) I've also observed that very few people talk about, reason about, argue about what he calls "prenatal homicide" and "postnatal homicide" in equivalent terms (in fact, if he does this, he would be the first I've ever observed to do it). If for no other reason, they seem to always propose different punishments for the two.

Now, Governor Cuomo is saying that in his view, abortion is a sufficiently problematic issue, in terms of it mainly proceeding from theologically grounded premises, that he prefers in this area not to translate convictions into civil law, including his own convictions, but to leave individual conscience free. Now, I suggest to you that that's a defensible position, but it's not the only legitimate position. We can and we should debate this issue in broader terms. I would say, though, if we're going to do that, that neither side should treat theological assertions and theological beliefs as a conversation stopper. There needs to some engagement on the broader grounds of the presence of life. And I would suggest to my friend Mark that, yes, that's a scientific issue; it also is a theological issue. There are many ways in which that issue needs to be engaged, including the competing personal liberties. So while I think Governor Cuomo is on solid ground in demurring on that issue, it's certainly not the only position that could be taken, so I would readily grant that point.

Secondly, I hope we can attend here in this ongoing discussion to the peculiar phenomenon that we see of competing agendas. If you haven't noticed, people of faith seem to have very different lists of what issues they think should be brought into the public arena with the benefit of religious conviction, the backing of religious conviction. Mark's list in his essay is abortion, same-sex relationships, gambling, pornography, evolution across species. Other people have other lists: questions of war and peace, capital punishment, world hunger, American hunger, poverty, inequalities and abuses of wealth and power, and on and on.

I think most of us would grant that religious faith can and should speak to this full gamut

of issues. I assume we would also think that people of faith can disagree on these issues, that your argument is not predisposed by the agenda you latch onto, but that in religious terms we can have profound disagreements, for example, about the question of same-sex relationships that's currently before the Congress. The religious arguments don't all point in one direction.

But I think the fact that we seem so selective in the agendas we put forward ought to be occasion for some soul-searching. We need to be honest with ourselves and with each other that maybe the selection of an agenda is itself a matter of religious conviction, but maybe not entirely. Maybe there are other factors, other interests, some element of political comfort or discomfort, that are entering into that choice, leading us not only to 'lead with our strength,' you might say, but also to put some other issues on the back burner. If so, that's a matter of concern, and I think in this discussion it's a matter of honesty with ourselves and with each other as to how these agendas get formed and what we are willing to address.

Thirdly and finally, I do believe that there are some theologically grounded counsels of restraint that should inform this debate. I called it humility in my essay, picking up on Brent Walker's comment in the original discussion. But in any event, I'm talking – and I want to underscore this – I'm talking here not about some kind of secularly based view that this has no business in the public arena – these religiously grounded views, whether or not they're expressed in explicitly religious terms. That's not what I'm saying at all. I'm saying there are theologically grounded reasons for humility, for refusing to identify our own power, our own program – or anyone else's –with God's will.

I think those theological foundations are two-fold. The first is the voluntaristic character of religious obedience. This discussion goes, of course, way, way back, perhaps most famously in Thomas Aquinas: is it the business of law to make men good? We know the answer to that is complicated. We also know ultimately that in Christian and Jewish teaching, goodness is the product of a clean heart, of a good will. There is not the slightest hint in the teachings of Jesus that goodness can be externally imposed. He taught by inspiration and example. Religious obedience is voluntary. We all know the old arguments saying you can't legislate morality. I don't accept that; I didn't accept it in the civil rights years and I don't accept it now. There are useful things that the law can do. There are times when widely shared values, many of them religiously grounded, should be translated into civil law. But we need to always have that sense, I believe, that ultimately religious faithfulness is not a matter of obeying civil law, or indeed of obeying a law of any sort. It's a matter of good will, good faith, and that creates an inherent limitation to whatever we attempt to do in politics and whatever we claim for politics.

And then finally, there is that matter of human sinfulness – not just that it's hard to understand what scripture dictates, not just that we're fallible, but that we're sinful. And goodness knows, there ought to be enough human history to convince us that it is a very, very dangerous thing for any group or any individual to claim the divine mantle, to

identify his own program or policy or power with God's will. The American statesman who best understood this was Abraham Lincoln in that wonderful Second Inaugural. You'll notice in this volume many quotations of Abraham Lincoln, and of Reinhold Niebuhr, both of whom made this a central part of their view, of their presentation to the American people, of the kind of role religious faith should play in politics, and also the counsel of humility, the kind of warning that our religious faith should give to any attempt to institutionalize religious values in political life.

So there is a religious humility that our faith traditions counsel, grounded in awareness of human sinfulness and divine transcendence. That, I believe, should be central to this debate, as well as the conscientious effort to translate our deeply held values into public policy. The power of the Lincoln example is how he combined this humility on the one hand – this recognition that ultimate judgment belongs to God alone – with, on the other hand, the strength and the determination to pursue the right as he saw the right. It is a remarkable combination. And it is absolutely, I think, integral to our religious traditions, and it's almost miraculously embodied in that Second Inaugural uttered while the war was still going on. That, I think, is a text in American history that should inspire us and warn us – counsel of restraint – as we pursue this debate.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. LUGO: Thank you, David.

The mention of Reinhold Niebuhr's name is a good segue to David Brooks's presentation. His contribution in this volume is entitled "How Niebuhr Helps Us Kick the Secularist Habit: A Six-Step Program." (Laughter.)

David.

DAVID BROOKS: Thank you. These are not your normal Congresspeople. (Laughter.)

George Bush the elder was running for president in 1988 and he was asked, when he was shot down from his plane over the Pacific, what he was thinking about, floating there in the water. And he said, "Well, I was thinking about my family and God." And then the little politician thing clicked in his head and he realized he'd mentioned God, which was dangerous, so he added, "And the separation of church and state." (Laughter.) So if you're ever in a life-threatening situation I hope you'll think about that.

And so what that story illustrates is what Congressman Price says: there's a line here somewhere; the question is where that line is. Congressman Souder draws it in one place. And I agree with Congressman Souder on most public policy issues, but I come from an entirely different line of inquiry, a different way of thinking about this problem. He divided us using John Green's formulation between universalists and particularists,

and I would just leave a category for idiots. (Laughter.) And I think I come at it from that tradition. And being an idiot I come at it – and this is not insignificant – I come at it historically. I believe we're historical creatures. And I'd like to tell you a little about the ebb and flow of that line between faith and politics, which I think has changed over time.

I'd like to start with the founding of one of my favorite magazines called the *Public Interest*, which was founded in the early '60s by Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Daniel Bell and others. It was founded on the presupposition that the big ideological debates of the age were over, that they had been settled and all that was left now was social science. As Keynes and other people said in the early Kennedy administration: We know how to make a modern economy work, we know how to solve problems; we just have to carefully define the policies that will work, and thereby we can solve poverty, we can end the business cycle, presumably we can end war and peace.

This was the heyday of social science. People in this period were still wasting enormous amounts of time thinking about Freud. The *New Republic*, by the way, had a weekly Freudian columnist who would describe the penile obsession of France and how that was shaping foreign policy. (Laughter.) Now it's America, I guess. But this was a period of high social science. Also around this time, Gunnar Myrdal was coming to this country and writing about the civil rights movement. His answer to the civil rights problem, especially in the South, was that what we needed was more education and more economic development. Americans would see how discrimination so completely contradicted their creed that with a little consciousness raising, a little economic development and a little education, the thing could get better and that therefore we should work gradually toward ending discrimination.

So this is the social science model. This is the model that people are basically rational, basically evenly spirited, will basically follow their own self-interest. And I think this really was predominant in the early '60s and maybe the late '50s, along with the idea that faith was withering away as science advanced.

Along comes Martin Luther King, growing out of an entirely different tradition – out of the prophetic religious tradition, reading Reinhold Niebuhr, and disagreeing with Myrdal, saying that human beings are capable of incredible cruelty, and that therefore it's not enough to wait for people to gradually see the better angels of their nature and end discrimination in the South. He saw that man is capable of the most monstrous cruelties and that this was endemic in human nature, and therefore it was important to take more dramatic action. There's a book called *The Stone of Hope*, which, if anybody hasn't read it, enumerates the distinction between the Myrdal approach and the King approach, the prophetic religious approach.

And I think, looking back on history, we see that regardless of what King's faith was, he was smarter about the problem than Myrdal. He was smarter about how to act practically in the world because he had access to a certain sort of wisdom that Myrdal and the social

scientists had shut themselves off from. And if you look at the *Public Interest* magazine, James Q. Wilson surveyed the history a few years ago, and he looked at those early periods when it was all social science, and he said, "The one thing we got wrong and the one thing I've learned in my career is that what matters to solving problems like poverty and crime and other social problems is character and morality. We did not pay enough attention to the moral nature of all these problems. We were too interested in data and evidence."

And so, the *Public Interest*, which was born in a fit that all the great ideological fights are over, has shifted and has now become an engine of thinking about morality and ideology. And I think that's the tradition I come from when I think about faith and politics. I'm Jewish. I come from a tradition where we interrupt our services to have a little seminar. (Laughter.) And I think it's that biblical wisdom that I look to – that I can read Niebuhr, Heschel or King, or anybody else – and what you find there are explanations about human nature that are simply more accurate than the explanations about human nature you might find in a social science textbook, in an economics textbook, in a political science doctrine.

And so people like me, regardless of our faith, are living off the capital of other people's faith and the wisdom that they acquire though their faith, through the study of the Bible, and we're trying to just solve practical problems by living off that capital. And one of the things we're learning is that if you just think about humans as self-interested, materialistic, social science creatures you can't really solve the problems that confront us. You can't really understand terrorism. You can't really understand crime and poverty. But if you read Niebuhr, if you read the Bible, if you read Leon Kass, you get a deeper understanding. Maybe you could get this understanding another way by reading literature or philosophy, but, let's face it, novels no longer really inform public debate the way they used to. So theology is sitting out there, and theology is just useful to people like me. It explains that people aren't only looking for more money in their lives; they have an innate yearning for righteous rule. They're willing to die for that vision, that moral vision, which is not self-interested. They are inherently transcendent creatures, and you can't understand that unless you seek and look to biblical wisdom. They believe and are guided by moral language like sin and evil. These concepts actually exist. And you can't understand the world, and biblical wisdom explains that to you; theology explains that to you in a way that secular teaching does not.

So people like me are not quite where Congressman Souder is, but we're learning from people like Congressman Souder just to solve the problems that confront us every day. I think where I would draw the distinction and where I would use biblical wisdom is to inform what really are political debates – not debates about the just life, not debates about what will get you into heaven. And where I will draw the line – and, again, I'll talk historically – in how we should use biblical wisdom in public policy, is that I would say that faith and religious doctrine, applied to public policy problems, is both too grand and too sectarian to work.

You look at the faith-based initiatives that George Bush tried to apply. On the one hand, that was taking advantage of exactly what I'm talking about – the idea that poverty is a problem of character, faith, morals, habits, behavior – and trying to apply the wisdom of some religious traditions to that problem. On the other hand, we found over the past three or four years that many religious people did not want politics mucking up with their religious institutions, and many other people did not want religious institutions mucking up with their politics. In the sectarian world, religious, faith-based institutions were simply too grand and too sectarian to work practically.

And so to me, between the materialistic individual posited by social science and the religious absolutist worldview posited in the Bible, there is a middle source of transcendence. That middle source of transcendence, which combines the two, is the nation. To me a political creed, unlike a religious creed, is restricted to a nation, to a community, to a political community. It's above the individual but it's below God, and it is the nation. It's the national creed – and specifically the American creed – which involves transcendent elements, which involves religious thinking, but which rises above sheer materialism and combines the two. That's the realm that should guide us. It shouldn't be, what does God ordain for our policy? It should be, what is consistent with the American creed? What is consistent with the guiding principles of our community? And I think that gives you some of the transcendence, some of the wisdom without leaving you in the muck of the social science.

So, thanks.

(Applause.)

E.J. DIONNE: I love David Brooks. I think I identify with his sort of "idiots group," and we can be the left and the right wings of that group. David is that rare person who has encountered Heschel, Niebuhr and King on Paradise Drive – (laughter) – and it's what makes his views so powerful.

I bet, by the way, that Representative Price's daughter got into every college she applied to. (Laughter.) And I was inspired by Mark Souder. We should arrange a debate, Luis, between the mastodons and the troglodytes. (Laughter.) We could find a lot of people around town who could work on that.

Before I begin I just want to say a special thanks to my co-editor Kayla Drogosz, who I hope will join this conversation. Somebody suggested I say that this is her last event with the Pew Forum and she is moving on to some other things, but I don't believe that. What I actually think is that when she's finished with her graduate work we will all be moderating panels on Kayla Drogosz's work. And I just want to thank Kayla very much, as well as our interns, Dan Treglia and Rachel Kreinces. And also Katherine Moore. When Kayla went off to help her mom during surgery – Kayla's mom is fine – Katherine just did extraordinary work that allowed 300 people to show up in this room. So bless you, bless you, Katherine.

This is a very hard subject. And I was thinking, listening to our speakers, how difficult it is for people even to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. There's the old story told of the person sitting in Oklahoma – a rather devout, religious person – looking in his television at people drinking, dancing at 2 a.m., dressed very provocatively and saying, "Those people are crazy." They were probably in New York City or my native Boston. And then there's somebody sitting in New York looking at people in an evangelical church speaking in tongues, being fully immersed at baptism and saying, "Those people are crazy." And I think one of the difficulties in this dialogue is how deeply held these beliefs are and how difficult it is for one side or the other to conclude either that, no, those people aren't crazy, or alternatively, maybe we are all a little bit crazy or we're crazy in different ways.

The other story that reminds me of how difficult this is is that one of our great contributors, Mike Cromartie, once arranged a debate, and I got to debate Ralph Reed. And I said to Ralph, "I will absolutely defend your right to base your political conclusions on your religious beliefs. But I would be very grateful if you showed me where it is in the Gospels that Jesus endorses a cut in the capital gains tax." (Laughter.)

Of course nobody knows whom God would vote for, though most religious people do think, or at least hope, that the Almighty will come down on the side of their candidates. After all, with the growing popularity of "God bless you and God bless America" as the standard close for our political speeches, it seems that an increasing number of candidates on all sides are devoutly wishing for divine endorsement and assistance; or at least for the endorsement and assistance of God's followers.

But the fact that God's political intentions are not easily discerned does not stop us from talking – we mere mortals – with great certainty about the meaning of religion in politics. One of the reasons I'm grateful to the two Davids, Mark Souder and the other contributors to this book is that they all help us in one way or another explode stereotypes.

Consider the claims that are made all the time. Religious people are conservative. Liberals are hostile to religion. President Bush talks about religion far more than other politicians. Democrats just do not know how to talk about God or to invoke the scriptures. Wherever religious people get involved in politics all they care about are abortion, homosexuality, and "family values."

Now then, consider the following from a president who found St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians an excellent guide to public policy. The president said, "Is my destiny caught up in yours? Are we part of the same family of God? Is it not enough to say that we are all equal in the eyes of God? It is not enough to say we are all equal in the eyes of God. We are also connected in the eyes of God." And the crowd applauded.

Now does it bother you that our president talks this way? If it does, I would remind you

that the speech I just quoted was given not by President George W. Bush. It was given by William Jefferson Clinton at Washington's Metropolitan Baptist Church in December of 1997. Bush is not the first president to invoke God and the scriptures, and he will not be the last.

There are many reasons to cheer this dialogue that Mark Souder and Mario Cuomo kicked off and all the folks who joined the book. The most important, as I said, may be that the stereotypes are proven wrong. Religious voices are not confined to the Right or the Left or the Center. Worries about improper entanglements between religion and government are not confined to liberals. Moral passion rooted in faith is not limited to the ranks of religious conservatives. Religious politicians and intellectuals are perfectly capable of "doing" and living with nuance. They also understand contradiction, paradox and irony.

Indeed, I would argue that religious faith properly understood – and yes, that is a dangerous phrase – is usually a sign of contradiction, an invitation to paradox, and a reminder of the ironies of the human conditions.

It is notable that three distinguished essays in this book by Richard Fox, David Brooks and David Price all invoke Reinhold Niebuhr. Fox captures Niebuhr's sense of irony when he notes in the book that Niebuhr knew – and I quote Fox – that "politics needed religion to keep itself pointed toward justice. But he also knew that the struggle for justice was threatened by the power of religion." Niebuhr insisted that – and I quote Fox again – "a consciousness of one's own inveterate sinfulness is a basic component of a religious person's public responsibility." Fox concluded that "an awareness of sin – of their own hidden desire for fame, power, privilege and other kinds of self-aggrandizement – can counteract religious people's temptation to see themselves as chosen instruments for divinely sponsored action." One could hope that this spirit of humility affected us all – yes, including newspaper columnists.

Now the inspiration behind this book was reflected well by Martha Minow, another of our contributors. And I want to base my comments on the book because I'd like to sort of introduce some of the other characters in it. Martha Minow, a professor at Harvard Law School, notes that "religiously inflected arguments and perspectives bring critical and prophetic insight and energy to politics and public affairs." David was absolutely right about Martin Luther King in this context. "There is something woefully lacking," Martha Minow goes on, "in any view that excludes religion entirely from the public sphere." But one can believe this, she notes, and still accept that "difficulties arise if government actions cross over from reflecting religious sources of vision and energy to preferring one kind of religion over others."

I'm not sure that it's pluralistic or universalist; I think in some ways it is both. Figuring out how a policy can be open to religious insight without succumbing to the temptation to impose specific religious beliefs through the state might be said, I think, at least to describe the fundamental challenge of religious freedom.

And then there is Congressman Price. He writes in the book – and some of this was reflected in his comments – that "there are compelling reasons, rooted in the theology of divine, transcendent human freedom and responsibility and the pervasiveness of sin and pride, for refusing to identify any particular ideology or political agenda with the will of God and for rebuking those who presume to do so." This means it's far better that those who bring their religious beliefs to the public square be explicit about what they are doing and not be intimidated into muting or hiding their religious commitments.

There are many things the authors in this book disagree upon. I think if there is anything close to consensus, it is that this is a legitimate and necessary task. Jeffrey Stout, a professor of religion at Princeton University, writes, "If a large segment of the citizenry is in fact relying on religious premises when making political decisions, it behooves all of us to know what those premises are. Premises left unexpressed are often premises left unchallenged." And that's one of the many reasons I have saluted a number of times Mark Souder's very explicit and honest commentary on the role of religion in his political life.

The anchor of our collection is the dialogue between Mario Cuomo and Mark Souder, and we've already sort of gone through that, and I don't want to go on at too much length, although I can't resist mentioning that Governor Cuomo, in our session, showed how truly complicated this issue is. He told the story of Fishhooks McCarthy, from Albany, New York, a city that was home to a legendary Democratic political machine. Fishhooks, Cuomo said, would start every day of his political life the same way – in St. Mary's Church, on his knees, uttering the same prayer: "Oh, Lord, give me health and strength. I'll steal the rest." (Laughter.) It's a very interesting approach to religion and politics.

At the heart of Cuomo's view is an emphasis on what religions have in common. He draws a lot from two of Judaism's basic principles, as he calls them: *tzedakkah* and *tikkun olam*. *Tzedakkah* is the obligation of righteousness and common sense that binds all human beings to treat each other charitably and with respect and dignity. *Tikkun olam* says that having accepted the notion that we should treat one another with respect and dignity, we come together as human beings in comity and cooperation to repair and improve the world around us. That, Cuomo argues, is the essence of Christianity, founded by a Jew and built on precisely that principle. Jesus' words approximately were "love one another as you love yourself."

Now what's interesting is that Mark Souder and Mario Cuomo may disagree – though I doubt that on that particular Mark Souder has any difference with Mario Cuomo. But his emphasis is quite different. "Conservative faiths, even sects within these faiths, differ on how involved the City of God should be with the City of Man," Souder writes. "But this much is true: Conservative Christians, as individuals, do not separate their lives into a private and a public sphere. To ask me to check my Christian beliefs at the public door," he goes on, "is to ask me to expel the Holy Spirit from my life when I serve as a

congressman, and that I will not do." Souder concludes, "Either I am a Christian or I am not; either I reflect His glory or I do not."

And again Souder says, "When you serve in government, as I do every day, every hour you make moral decisions – like making laws to restrict cheaters, like Enron executives. Why do we not let both sides fight it out and let the strongest win? Because of certain moral principles that society shares." And then he goes on – and this is a rebuke to liberals – "I find that I am allowed to use these Christian values in speaking out for national parks and in speaking out against spouse abuse, but not" – and David Price referred to this – "when I speak out against homosexual marriage, pornography, gambling or evolution." And Souder says, "It's unfair to ask believers to check these beliefs at the public door," and he says, I think correctly, "it's not going to happen."

Now we thought that Mark Souder and Mario Cuomo laid out this debate extremely well, but we wanted all these other voices, and again, we were heartened at how many people wanted to join. One theme that emerges repeatedly is how complicated it is in a free and pluralistic society to find the right balance between the two halves of the First Amendment to our Constitution. How should we as a people properly interpret the amendment's guarantees of the free expression of religion, on the one side, and its prohibitions on the establishment through government of any particular religion? How much religion should enter our public debate is an ancillary question to this. How can we guarantee the rights of religious people in the public square without threatening the rights of those who are not religious? More simply, how much in any given political argument or campaign do we want to hear about religious commitments and beliefs of particular candidates?

Robert Bellah, one of our premier interpreters of religious and ethical questions, is acutely aware of these difficulties. He writes that it is "perfectly appropriate to base one's political stand on the particular faith tradition to which one is committed and to explain that tradition in arguing one's case" – the openness to religion again. But he continues, "The only caveat is that one's argument must appeal to general moral principles in persuading others. One does not have the right to demand that others accept the tenets of one's faith in making a political decision."

I could go on in citing the book. What I do want to emphasize is that this did not break down neatly along ideological lines, as you heard from David Brooks. Mike Cromartie, for example, from a conservative point of view argues that conservative Christians "would be more effective if they developed a public language, a public philosophy and a public posture that communicates a concern for the common good of all and not just of fellow believers." That sounds a little bit universalist to me.

Terry Eastland, the publisher of the *Weekly Standard*, said "Were I an office holder or a candidate for office…I would be willing to state what my faith is, though I would not want to use my faith as an instrument of politics, something to hold up before certain audiences to gain their support…I would want to be persuasive, and on most issues

arguments from explicit doctrine…are not likely to persuade majorities in a religiously pluralist society."

And lastly, we have in this book voices from the religious Left, which is too often overlooked. Michael Kazin writes very powerfully about the witness of William Jennings Bryan, and he notes that "the Left has never advanced without a moral awakening entangled with notions about what the Lord would have us do."

I want to close with two other quotations. I cannot resist quoting Paul Begala, whom many of you know – an architect of Bill Clinton's political victories in the '90s. "My friends in what the media calls the religious Right sure know how to fight," Begala writes. "But too many religious progressives do not. And what is worse, the very phrase 'religious progressive' is seen as an oxymoron like 'jumbo shrimp' or 'compassionate conservative' because much of the Left is far too secular and anti-religious."

There is no way to summarize all the jostling thoughts of our contributors, but I do think that Alan Wolfe, in the closing essay of the book, suggests that we as a country have been reasonably successful over a long period of time in balancing the demands of religious freedom and religious toleration. "Americans believe in God and they believe in freedom," Wolfe writes. "They take religion seriously, but unlike many other societies in history that have also given a prominent place to God, they do not enshrine any one religion as the official religion of their society. They also take freedom seriously, but unlike many other countries in the world that also do, they have not used their freedom to create a society in which faith plays no especially visible role. It is never easy to balance faith and freedom, which is one of the reasons why our courts and legislatures revisit these issues so often. That balance can only come if believers and nonbelievers act out of toleration for each other. Some on both sides of the divide never will, but the great majority find ways to live together. And as long as they do, we need fear neither the triumph of secular humanism nor the establishment of a theocracy."

If there is any agreement in this book, as I say, it is that it is possible for religious people to join our democratic conversation and to explore each other's views deeply, respectfully and constructively. If they cannot do this, our democracy is in very deep trouble; if they can, our democratic conversation will be enriched. And I thank all of our contributors, both those seen here today and unseen, for enriching this conversation.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. LUGO: Thank you very, very much.

I will forgo the chair's prerogative of asking the first question in order to give Congressmen Souder and Price an opportunity, before they get whisked away on a vote, to respond to something of what they've heard.

So, Congressman Souder, did you have any comments you wanted to make, or did you want to pose a question to another of the panelists?

REP. SOUDER: I just briefly want to say that while we have different visions, clearly we have to reconcile and figure out how they're going to interact in the public arena. And it's not like we're not doing this right now. When I was in Baghdad in January and met with the governing council, one of the questions I kept asking – because to anybody who has any familiarity with Iraq, there are multiple variations of the Muslim faith and cultural questions there – and my question was simple: if you have a democratic election, are the Wahhabis going to win, and are you going to take women's rights away, and are you going to eliminate religious liberty? And their basic answer, after fencing around for a long time, was, "We have no clue; we've never had elections." It is a huge question in Iraq, and we went in with kind of this – in my belief – Pollyanna view that somehow everybody is going to sit down, get along, and after thousands of years, suddenly they're going to decide that democracy, rights for women, everything, are going to be wonderful.

Now that doesn't mean it was wrong to go into Iraq. I went in. It doesn't mean it's not a goal we shouldn't strive for, but we have to be realistic – not only in the United States, but in other countries – that these religiously anchored views are strongly held. I got personally involved in the debate over since we put so much money into Iraq, do we have a right in at least the first draft of the constitution to require religious liberty in that constitution? The answer was yes, but the governing council very quietly came along and has more or less tossed it out.

Similarly, as one member of Congress said to me when my friend, the head of Afghanistan, whom I've worked with for an extended period of time here on a number of issues – when we passed out his address, it says the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and he said, probably correctly, that our constitution bans us from directly giving them money because they are a religious state. Probably if you really sorted through, the founding fathers weren't really planning for foreign aid in their founding, but to the degree that they did, it certainly is a violation to be giving it to an overtly religious state. But they are called the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Now the trouble we have as we work through this in the United States is our premise was that we were a Judeo-Christian nation (I don't maintain we're a Christian nation; I agree with Francis Schafer that we have remnants of a Christian nation, but our laws were anchored in a common tradition). And the question is, how are we going to resolve this as we become more diverse? It is not an easy question, but to act like this isn't going to be a critical part of the debate or that somehow I can't let my religion be part of the debate on every single issue to some degree, to different derivations, or that it lacks humility, or somehow I am this absolutely confident agent of God who believes that my way is the only way and therefore we all have to be tentative, indecisive, unsure – Martin Luther King, in his crusade, didn't say, "Well, I think that maybe Jesus would

have believed that this is wrong." He said it definitively because he believed it to the best of his knowledge, knowing full well that maybe he's wrong, but he has read the scriptures, he has prayed, and he believes passionately that he's correct. And we have to have a way to accommodate this in the public arena, understanding that it's going to be difficult, it's going to be hard, and we have to figure out where the basic liberties are defined.

MR. LUGO: Thank you. Congressman Price.

REP. PRICE: Just a couple of quick comments – one very narrowly gauged; one a little broader. I appreciate David Brooks's comments on the faith-based initiative and some of the practical as well as theoretical problems that he had run up against.

I do think it's worth underscoring that there is a whole lot of faith-based activity going on in the public sphere already, and that does include housing for the elderly, it includes Meals-on-Wheels, it includes just a full range of activity.

It kind of came as news, actually, to my congressional district that we needed somehow to get this started because it has already been underway for so many years. These groups, though, do typically set themselves up as 501(c)(3) organizations to clarify some of the Establishment Clause-type issues, and that seems to be a particularly workable arrangement.

So I think the reaction to President Bush's initiative was not that this was too muddled to work. I think it was that there were substantial questions about discrimination in whom it served, discrimination in whom it hired, the subsidization of sectarian activity. There were a number of questions that were legitimately raised, and we already had legal arrangements that were letting faith-based groups perform all kinds of social functions without getting into those dilemmas. And so I think the faith-based sector, in all sorts of areas of social service and public life, is alive and well, and I would hope we could find ways to make it thrive without raising some of these other issues.

Secondly, when we get to the kind of standards we repair to, I think it's hard to improve on the First Amendment. I know the metaphor of a wall of separation between the church and state is frequently invoked, and I think we all have our own ways of defending that or discussing it, but the dual provision of the First Amendment prohibiting the establishment of religion while also protecting the free exercise thereof – that's hard to improve on, although various constitutional proposals from time to time have attempted to do that.

It also has the advantage, I think, of frankly posing a tension, and there is a tension between those two clauses. Neither one is an absolute principle that can be defined in the absence of the other, and that, I hope, would be what we would repair to in these debates. Actually, I think most of the essays in this volume do just that.

MR. LUGO: Thank you very much. I know that there are some other contributors to the volume who are here. I know I saw Michael Cromartie, Reverend Cheryl Sanders, and Terry Eastland. I want to give you folks the opportunity, if you want, to ask some questions of the panelists – a question each, please. I would be delighted to have you go first before I call on members of the press. Is that –

MR. DIONNE: Cheryl, do you want to – Reverend Sanders? Or Terry or Mike, do you want to jump in? Do we have any other contributors in the audience? This is a small convention, this book of ours.

MR. LUGO: That's right, it is. Okay. All right, let me go then next to members of the press who may like to put some questions to our panelists. Yes, sir. Please identify yourselves.

ROB MARUS: I'm Rob Marus for the Associated Baptist Press, and while the Congressmen are still here, I'd like to talk a little bit more about sort of the specific part of this – the electorate – and whether it is actually under God, particularly in this election year.

Getting back to what Congressman Souder referred to – Senator Kerry's recent speech where he referenced the Epistle of James and accused the Bush administration of having essentially faith without works – I think this relates to the dichotomy you set up between particularists and universalists, which might reflect what is the difference between your Protestant worldview and maybe a Catholic way of understanding Christianity. Protestantism is very word-based, very based – particularly evangelicalism – on talking about your own faith, as President Bush does, whereas Catholicism is very sacramental and emphasizes works and action in living out your faith.

And I would think that a lot of people would argue with your assertion that Kerry is leaving his faith at the door by asserting something like that. I think Kerry would probably say, "My faith is what motivates me to say, 'Listen, unless you're concerned with the social justice side of Christianity rather than the moralism aspects of it, then your faith is dead.'" So I would like for you to respond to the assertion that maybe you're mischaracterizing what Senator Kerry would say about his own faith.

REP. SOUDER: I agree somewhat with the dichotomy between Catholic and Protestant faith, and I do not put myself forward as a theological authority. I attended the University of Notre Dame graduate school but obviously didn't go there for theology. I was in business. And my mom was raised Catholic so it's not that I don't understand the Catholic tradition. But I don't believe that Senator Kerry was necessarily representing the Catholic tradition, either. I agree there are dichotomies and I agree that evangelicals in particular talk about the Bible more and personal salvation more. But I don't believe it's true that traditional Catholics don't talk about the Bible, that they don't believe in personal salvation, that they don't believe that their faith is relevant in the public realm. I also don't believe it's true that Protestants don't believe in works; in fact, if anything,

sometimes we're called too much works-oriented and believe that works save us.

In fact, I think it's completely unfair to say that President Bush isn't interested in justice. I, with Congressmen Portman and Tubbs Jones and Davis, just introduced a bill supported by the president – just like he said in his State of the Union address – on how we're going to get better housing, better job rights, better vocational training for people coming out of the prisons. You can't have a position that you're going to put people into jail for violating the law, and long-term, they're going to come back out, and if you don't have a way to get them integrated back into society, we're going to have a mess with the reentry population. We've lowered crime in the United States, but we've lowered crime by putting people in prison. Now that they're coming out of prison, what are we going to do? Obviously you have to have faith and works.

The reason I made my comments is that Senator Kerry was saying "works," but also that the works couldn't be anchored in his faith, which is the actual dispute he is having with the bishops over communion and his stance on abortion.

I agree that there is a uniform within the Catholic faith that justice, capital punishment and other things are there in addition to abortion. But he is trying to some degree to take issues where a consensus hasn't been reached – maybe that's a way to say it. We have more or less a consensus on justice – maybe how to implement it is different – but on abortion, where a consensus hasn't been reached, he is parking his faith at the door and saying, "You can't bring faith into something where consensus hasn't been reached." And to do that is to not be able to argue the debate in religious terms, and that's what I was addressing.

MR. LUGO: David, would you jump in on that – David Brooks, I mean. It's a very interesting question – it's not a matter of people bringing their religious beliefs to the public discussion; it's how they articulate those beliefs. And there are some traditions, it seems to me, like the Roman Catholic tradition, as you mentioned, and perhaps the Jewish, that tend to appeal more to broader, natural-law kinds of arguments. Whereas evangelicals tend to appeal more explicitly to the scriptures and to what some would call more particularistic kinds of sources of authority. Is there anything to that? I mean, do the former have a better shot, as it were, at being heard and not being accused of importing religion into public life because of their broader, natural-law kinds of arguments?

MR. BROOKS: I guess they do – I guess I've just noticed that the major distinction in American politics is not between one religion and another; it's between those who are religious and those who are not, and those who are just vaguely comfortable with that kind of talk and those who are vaguely uncomfortable with it. I even notice on our little panel here – I would say the distinction between the conservative center of this panel and the liberal fringes is – (Laughter.)

MR. DIONNE: Yeah, Luis set it up that way, just so you know.

MR. BROOKS: – I've noticed two differences of emphasis. The first is that my friends on the far left – and if you go all the way around the world, the farther left – (laughter) – have emphasized the spirit of humility that should come in –

MR. DIONNE: I thought you said that, David, too.

MR. BROOKS: Well – well, maybe in theory. (Laughter.) But that should come in importing religion into public life. It seems to me the prime danger that E.J. and Congressman Price are worrying about is too much doctrinal hubris in introducing religion into public life. Whereas for me – and maybe for Congressman Souder – the chief problem is too much spiritual nakedness, and so we're much more forward-leaning in how we want people to talk about religion. We just want more of it because we think it informs them.

And the second difference of emphasis is the things that people draw out of religion that they think we should learn. Mario Cuomo mentioned *tzedakkah* and *tikkun olam*, which are sort of uplifting, positive, happy concepts; whereas I already know there's a lot of happiness and goodness in the world. I get Hallmark cards and I look them over – (laughter) – but what I look to religion for is the bad stuff: sin and evil. I think those are just two differences of emphasis. And I don't think sectarian differences are that important in public life; I think it's the overall differences.

MR. DIONNE: I want to reply very quickly to my theoretically humble friend from the broad progressive center here – (scattered laughter) – you know, in the first instance, I do not believe that religious progressives are simply saying we want to make no assertions whatsoever. I utterly agreed with Congressman Souder when he talked about Martin Luther King's statements. "I *might* have a dream" doesn't work. Or "Free at last, free at last, under carefully controlled circumstances" doesn't work. (Laughter.) And I don't think religious progressives are at all reluctant to make strong statements.

I think there are differences of opinion that sometimes crisscross these ideological boundaries. Congressman Souder referred to an issue – abortion – where there is not yet a consensus. Well, there are prudential judgments made on questions like that all the time. We don't prohibit alcohol anymore. We tried that. We decided as a nation that that didn't work.

Now I grant you the abortion issue is a much more profound issue in the sense that we are talking about human life, so I don't mean to trivialize the abortion issue by raising the prohibition of alcohol, but only to say that these are prudential judgments that in fact split people – both religiously and ideologically. Gambling is another area where my own views are actually rather close to Congressman Souder's. You have quite a coalition of liberal religious people and conservative religious people who are alarmed by the spread of gambling and its social effects.

So I don't think it's an excess of humility. And I think it's no accident that the book of James is popular not only among Catholics, but also among liberals and Democrats because "faith without works is dead" can be, in certain circumstances, a very powerful critique of a certain style of conservatism, and I don't think that's a sign of weakness at all. I think James is rather strong in everything he says about works.

MR. LUGO: All right, we have just a few minutes, so let me open it up to the rest of the audience. There was a gentleman in the back who had his hand up very first there, if somebody could get him a microphone, please.

CLAY SWISHER: I'm Clay Swisher. There was discussion about how appropriate religion influencing civil law here in the United States may or may not be. I'm wondering, since civil law directly affects the constituencies of a member of Congress, if a member injects religious belief into domestic policy and the constituent doesn't like the effect of that, he can not vote for him the next time around.

How would you describe the effect this has in the foreign policy/national security arena, specifically, when a member of Congress may be guided by religious conviction? Just to name an example that I'm surprised hasn't been raised, Christian evangelicals and Christian Zionists and the way they promote one-sided policies vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This of course has no immediate effect on U.S. citizens here, but it has had a long-term effect in terms of making a friction point between us in the Judeo-Christian United States and 5 billion Muslims from Malaysia to Mali.

So I'm just wondering if you think that there is a separate debate that needs to be held there on how religion affects foreign policy and national security. Thank you.

MR. LUGO: Thank you – a very good question. So this is not just about offending the highly secularized French, let's say, but over a billion Muslims in the world when we speak this language.

What about that, Congressman?

REP. SOUDER: As a practical matter, it's the same question. This question came up in my very first campaign. I represent what would basically be called an isolationist district. The long-time congressman as I was growing up used to always have at the front of his brochure, "Cut $1 billion in foreign aid." And each campaign it added up, and by his 20th year, it was $1 billion, and he bragged about that. He knew it would be an appeal.

I represent a district that was a Robert Taft area in the Eisenhower period, and they don't like any kind of foreign aid. I am 100 percent in support of Israel, and I can make secular arguments to do so: an openly democratic country, they allow Palestinians to vote and Arabs to vote, which none of the surrounding Arab countries – in a very hypocritical stance, by the way – do.

So I can make secular arguments, but I didn't waste people's time with it because, you know what? If the secular arguments changed, I still would stand with Israel. Now I know I even take that position contrary to the popular vote of my district, and probably of my party in the district. So I had a moral obligation to stand up in my district, as I did early on in every town meeting, every time I got the question, and the press has certainly reported that I even self-identified. There hasn't been a poll, but I'm probably at odds with my district. But I believe they have a right to know my position on foreign policy, and if they don't like my positions, they can vote against me. But I believe I have an obligation to be very open about what those roots are.

I believe God gave Israel the land and that whether or not we stand with Israel – a basic fundamentalist tenet – is going to partly measure whether the United States is blessed. You can't be more clear than that.

MR. BROOKS: Can I just follow with a quick question?

MR. LUGO: Please.

MR. BROOKS: If Israel was a theological dictatorship or an Iran-style theocracy led by Hassidic rabbis or anybody else, which was hostile to U.S. foreign policy, would you still support it in this way?

REP. SOUDER: You would certainly use whatever pressure you could, but I support the State of Israel not because of the particular government of Israel, but because of the fact that God granted Israel the land. Now, we would probably do different things if you took the most extreme form. But in some people's minds, things like the wall – which I believe is natural self-defense – are this extreme form. And I will stand with that government. I stood with the previous government, but within the realms of foreseeable Israeli debate and the history of the nation of Israel since '48, I can't imagine not supporting the nation of Israel.

In the extreme form I could see possibly tinkering with foreign aid, but I would still say, right or wrong, I stand with Israel.

MR. LUGO: Thank you.

Well, unfortunately our time has come to an end. E.J., I should have taken your advice and had this as a two-hour event rather than an hour and a half, so my apologies to you.

I do want to give you, E.J., a chance to wrap up what you've learned from this two-year process culminating in this event and in the publication of this volume.

MR. DIONNE: This is sort of like summarize the entire gospel in 30 seconds.

MR. LUGO: That's right.

MR. DIONNE: Well, yes, that's easy – love God and love thy neighbor.

(laughter)

The exciting thing about this process for us, and I'll just – I hate to close on a process point because I'll play into David Brooks's parody of liberals – (laughter) – but what was exciting about this is that the subject of religion and politics is supposed to intimidate people. They're the two subjects that you're not supposed to talk about over the dinner table, and I think what's striking is how many people – very distinguished people, as you see in the book – when we went to them asking them to join this dialogue, how eager they were to join it.

And if I can illustrate that with the question from the gentleman from the Associated Baptist Press, John Kerry was out there in this election defending his own liberal views using the book of James. Now I think that suggests a change in the political discussion over the last 20 years, that it is no longer confined to one part of the political spectrum. It never really was, but publicly so much of this discussion was "Religion is illegitimate because the religious Right is using it; therefore religion should be pushed off to the side."

I think we have a much broader debate and it does, as the gentleman suggested, go to foreign policy – which is the next volume in this series, if I can just mention that. We have a much broader debate where there is less reluctance to talk about the explicit links between religion and politics, and I think as a result, there is a lot more honesty. And I want to thank you all for joining this discussion today.

(Applause.)

MR. LUGO: Thank you very much.

(END)