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DISAPPEARING GOD GAP:

RELIGION'S ROLE IN THE 2008

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND BEYOND

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. GALSTON: Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to begin by introducing myself and then saying a little bit about this event before introducing our speakers and our commentator. I'm Bill Galston, a senior fellow in Governance Studies here at Brookings. And I would like to welcome you to the latest episode of our long-running hit series, "Governing Ideas." If we get renewed for one more year we go into reruns and that's when the real money starts flowing in.

But slightly more seriously, let me say a word about the idea behind governing ideas. As you know, we're in the belly of a city that is obsessed and not improperly with politics and policy. And we've been known to focus on those matters here at Brookings ourselves. But it occurred to a few of us in the Governance Studies program a few years ago that there is a larger sea within which politics and policy dwell. It is a sea constituted by political institutions, by political history, by culture, values, large philosophic ideas, and not the least, by religion. Indeed, sociologists have argued since the beginning of sociology that religion is at the very heart of what we think of as culture. And certainly in the United States, the most religious of the advanced industrialized nations, it is close to the heart if it is not at the heart of our public culture.

And so the question whether politics in America is inextricably linked to the question whether religion on America. There's just no way of performing surgery and separating those questions.

So the issue -- the specific issue before us this morning, as we examine the continuing impact of religion on American politics, can be formulated this way. What is the balance between continuity and change? How do we construe that relationship? To put it in the language of 2004, which is also the language of the title of this book, "Is the God Gap

Shrinking or Mutating?"

Well, to help us explore these questions, I can't imagine three better people than the people represented on this panel. We will begin with two of the many co-authors of this splendid book entitled "The Disappearing God Gap?" -- note the question mark -- "Religion in the 2008 Presidential Election." They are, in order in which they'll be speaking, Corwin Smidt, who is professor of political science and director of the Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity in Politics at Calvin College; a most remarkable institution, by the way, that is well-known, but deserves to be even better known than it is. And Corwin Smidt has taught there for the past 30 years. I guess that makes him a Calvin lifer. As a defrocked academic myself I have great respect for institutional lifers without which academic institutions would collapse.

And second, Kevin den Dulk, who is associate professor of political science and honors faculty in residence at Grand Valley State University. These two gentlemen are the authors of many books and articles. If you want details, they are available in the handout that you picked up at the door.

And then we have our peerless commentator and my irreplaceable colleague in government studies, E.J. Dionne, who is a senior fellow here at Brookings, a syndicated columnist for the Washington Post, and university professor in the foundations of democracy and culture at Georgetown University where he's been known to explore religious themes himself from time to time.

So gentlemen, without further ado, let's proceed to the presentations and on with the discussion.

MR. SMIDT: Well, it is indeed a pleasure to be here, and thank you for coming and hearing about our work.

In the aftermath of the 2004 Presidential Elections, a number of studies

revealed that religion was one of the strongest predictors of the 2004 presidential vote. More specifically, it was found that as voters attend worship services more regularly, the less likely they were to vote Democratic. Based on this pattern then, some journalists began to talk about a "God gap" in American politics.

And following the 2004 elections, a series of polls revealed that only a small percentage of Americans thought the Democratic Party was "friendly towards religion." This perception was no small matter. Consistently throughout the decade, polls have revealed that Americans desire their president to be religious. For example, in 2004, 70 percent reported agreement with the statement that "it is important that the president have strong religious beliefs." In fact, even after 9-11 more Americans indicated that they were willing to vote for a Muslim as president than for an atheist.

In other words, American cultural values create certain parameters within which presidential campaigns must compete. And it is likely, therefore, that religion shapes the presidential election process from the very beginning of the campaign. Our book is based on the premise that to fully understand the role of religion in American presidential elections, one cannot simply focus on the votes cast on Election Day. We do not, however, contend that religion is necessarily the only factor to shape election outcome. But we do contend that it is an important factor and that to ignore its role is to miss a significant element that helps to shape election outcomes.

Our book is organized largely in a chronological fashion. After our introduction, our first chapter discusses religion and presidential campaigns from both a historical and a cultural pattern seeking to delineate some of the different ways in which religion has historically come into play within presidential election campaigns, as well as the subtle and complex ways in which it serves culturally to shape and color perceptions of presidential candidates.

The second chapter then provides an overview of the American political landscape at the advent of the 2008 presidential election, particularly in terms of how political differences were evident religiously.

The third chapter examines religion and the 2008 presidential primaries. The next chapter discusses the religious faith of the two eventual nominees that emerge from the primary process, as well as the campaign activity related to religion during the summer months, including a discussion of the religious faith of the running mates selected by the two nominees. And perhaps some of the political motivations for selecting these people based on their religion.

The fifth chapter addresses religion during the fall campaign, focusing in part on the religious activities at the National Conventions, religion and campaign themes and issues, and the ways in which the two campaign organizations sought to reach out and mobilize religious voters.

The next chapter analyzes the extent to which members of different religious groups turned out to cast their votes on Election Day. The seventh chapter then examines then how these different religious groups reported casting their votes. And then the final chapter is our conclusion.

My comments today will be drawn largely from the seventh chapter, which looks at how these different religious groups voted.

Perhaps I should say something about the data which we employ. The book employs data from across a variety of different surveys, but the comparisons that are made between 2008 and 2004 are based on part gathered through the Henry Institute's National Survey on Religion and Public Life. This is a poll of about 3,002 Americans conducted in April of 2008, with surveys conducted in English and Spanish. These particular respondents then were re-interviewed following the election.

Data for the 2004 Election are drawn from the Fourth National Service of Religion and Politics conducted by the University of Akron Survey Research Center. These surveys are unique in terms of the number of respondents involved -- 3,000 for 2008 and 4,000 for 2004 -- for the detailed questions that they asked with regard to the respondent's religious affiliation, religious beliefs, religious activities, and religious identities, coupled with a number of political questions which are also asked.

I would note, however, that some of our findings await confirmation from the release of the more massive exit poll data that was collected on Election Day. In particular, our findings related to younger voters are based on relatively small ends, and are more suggestive than conclusive at this point. However, the exit poll data for 2008 have not been released at this point and there's no way for us, at this point, to at least confirm whether our findings held any accuracy.

A major question addressed by our book then is the so-called "God gap" and whether it was as evident in the 2008 election as it was in the 2004 election. Did the God gap disappear in 2008? Well, certainly from the lack of post-election commentary related to religion one might be led to think so. Of course, there were important differences between the two elections, which suggested that the God gap may, in fact, be much less prevalent in the 2008 election.

Let me mention just a few. First, there were new efforts by the Democratic Party to reach out to religious voters. Secondly, the major Democratic candidates, and particularly Obama, employed a religious strategy along with staff to mobilize religious voters from the very beginning of the campaign. Third, the organizational strength of the Christian right, particularly the Christian Coalition, continued to dissipate. And finally, economic issues were much more prevalent in the 2008 election than social issues. This was also a major change across the election campaigns.

On the other hand, there were also a number of reasons to anticipate that perhaps the God gap would be just as prevalent in 2008 as in 2004. The relative size of the major social groups, along with their distinctive partisan and loyalties, do not change markedly from one election to the next nor do cultural expectations related to presidential candidates. For example, about their religion and the importance of religion in their lives. Neither do those cultural expectations change markedly from one election to the next.

And finally, there's the old political adage that elections are won at the margins. In other words, substantial changes in elections can result from very small changes in the electorate itself.

So the question is whether or not the so-called God gap was as evident in 2008 as it was in 2004. And this particular question is related to a deeper theoretical question, which is, "Is the way in which religion serves to undergird American politics also changing?" In particular, in the past much of the way in which religion related to American politics was based on what we call sort of an ethno-cultural or an ethno-religious basis in which people of different religious groups tended to align with different political parties. So in this perspective then, Catholics might align largely on one side of the political side; evangelical Protestants on the other. Jews might align on one side of the political divide and black Protestants might align, theoretically, on another side of the political divide.

But the point here is that highly religious people would be found in both political parties because of the way in which these different groups aligned with the political parties. However, beginning in the 1990s, scholars began to discuss the emergence of a new pattern of religious voting. While seemingly new to American politics, this pattern was more reflective of a religious secular divide that long-shaped European politics. Here it was religious traditionalists across all religious traditions that were aligning together on one side of the political divide, while religious modernists, regardless of their religious tradition, were

aligning on the other side of the political divide with secularists then tending to align with the modernists to form a more religious secular divide in American politics. And the God gap reflects this more second way in which religion might relate to politics.

So while our book analyzes the role of religion throughout the campaign, I will limit my discussion today to how religion shaped voting decision in the past two elections. And I will briefly advance seven interpretive findings related to the analysis of our survey results. Now, hopefully you have some tables with you. I asked that they be handed out at the table when you came in, and my comments here are going to be reflective of these tables. I'm not going to go into detail; I'm just going to try to give you a snapshot of how I would interpret these particular tables. Of course, you can look at these tables and find something different and perhaps may disagree with our interpretations. That's fine, but I will advance the way in which we interpreted these tables here.

As seen in Table 1, the pattern of voting by those affiliated with different religious traditions hardly changed between the 2004 and 2008 elections. You can see, for example, evangelical Protestants cast their vote for McCain at approximately the same level that they had for Bush in 2004. If you look at non-Latino Catholics, for example, you also would find a relatively similar pattern. There is some shifting -- now here's where some polls revealed somewhat different results. Our data suggests a shifting of mainline Protestants to the Democratic side. Some earlier results produced by John Green would not show that kind of shift.

So it's a shift of 6 percentage points here. His findings would suggest perhaps a greater level of stability, but, nevertheless, it's in the general pattern that we are interpreting.

Table 2, when you look at religion in terms of this traditionalist-modernist divide, looking at traditionalists within the evangelical Protestant tradition or traditionalists

within mainline Protestant tradition, again you see a greater pattern of stability than change I would argue. Exceptions here again are modernist evangelicals and centrist mainline Protestants, but still overall I think the pattern suggests greater levels of continuity than change across the two elections.

Tables 3 and 4 simply try to change the way in which you analyze this rather than looking at how groups voted for a particular candidate. Here you're looking at what is the religious composition of the people who voted for a particular candidate: what percentage do evangelical Protestants comprise of all the McCain voters; what percentage do black Protestants comprise of all the Obama voters or whatever. And what you find here then is that, again, a fair amount of continuity. What is the difference, particularly with regard to finding our third finding, is that there was a larger turnout among black Protestants and Hispanic Catholics, which increased their proportion of the vote total for Obama in the 2008 election. The vote of Hispanic Catholics was not more Democratic; there were just more of them casting votes. And given their Democratic inclinations, this aided Obama more in 2008 than it did Kerry in 2004.

So I think our third finding is that what has changed in the 2008 election is largely the increased turnout among minority voters, particularly black Protestants and Hispanics, and that given their generally greater Democratic inclinations, and for black Protestants in 2008 even greater Democratic inclinations than in 2004, that it was these -- the mobilization of these particular groups that helped to swell then the support for Obama and his eventual election.

Finding number 4, which can be seen from Table 5, tries to examine the relative influence of religion in shaping vote choice in 2008. This is kind of what we call multivaried analysis where you're trying to assess the impact of one variable while controlling for the other variables. And if you look at the impact of religion across these

elections you can see that really religious tradition continues to play a very prominent role in shaping voter decisions. Now, in 2008, race also comes up in importance in shaping voting decisions, but the basis of religion for shaping votes does not really change markedly.

And then in Table 6 we add both religious tradition and religious traditionalism together. So now we have two religion variables. It somewhat then moderates the effects of religious traditions, but it's the religious traditionalism remember that reflects the God gap aspect of the way in which religion undergirds politics. And here you can see, yes, there is a slight decline. In 2004, the God gap for religious traditionalism is very strong, and then it drops in 2008 somewhat, but hardly disappears. It is still there.

And then finally, with regards to Table 7 and 8, this is where we're a little bit more tentative. There seems to be little, if any, generational differences in voting patterns among religious groups in 2008. For example, younger evangelicals were just as likely to vote for McCain as were older evangelicals. Age was a factor, but it related more to voting among the religiously unaffiliated. If you look at those who were religiously unaffiliated and look at the patterns in terms of age, you see this young, almost unanimously, of the unaffiliated voted for Obama.

And finally, while I don't show it here, analysis was revealed that partisan differences in voting patterns previously shown by religious tradition and by religious traditionalism are also rooted in the partisan identifications of these respondents. Hence, given their partisan identifications which are likely to retain from one election to the next, coupled with the lack of generational differences in terms of voting patterns -- at least as what our data suggests -- means that it's unlikely that we will see a disappearance of the God gap in American politics at least for the near future.

Thank you.

MR. DEN DULK: Well, at the end Corwin hinted at what I'm going to talk

about, which is the future. So if the God gap did persist in this election, what does that tell us about future elections and to address that question is an unenviable assignment. Social scientists are generally much more comfortable with predicting the past than the future and were a lot better at it. Still, I want to make some tentative conclusions about 2012 and beyond.

Let me begin with where Corwin ended, and that is the results on Election Day 2008. First, while there were some hints of a narrowing God gap in 2008, we find that the religious structure as Corwin has noted of the presidential vote remain virtually unchanged from 2004 -- unchanged in the 2004 and 2008 elections. What's more, the association of religious traditionalism, as Corwin notes, with party identification, remains firmly rooted in the American electorate. And we see no real indications that the issue agenda or nature of party mobilization would change sufficiently before 2012 to alter those findings in significant ways.

Why did we come to that conclusion? Well, first, party loyalties, of course, rarely change dramatically at a mass level over a short period of time. We simply don't foresee an imminent shock in a political system or dramatic change to the issue agenda that would realign those loyalties among different types of religionists. If 2008 wouldn't do it, it's hard to imagine in the short-term what would realign those loyalties.

Moreover, the religious differences in partisan attachments and voting behavior remain largely untouched by generational differences, as Corwin just pointed out. And, in fact, if you look at that very high percentage -- 98 percent or so of unaffiliated younger people who voted for Obama -- that might, in fact, suggest a strengthening God gap in the future when you compare that group to even younger evangelicals, mainline Protestants and Catholics. So that's one of our considerations.

Second, elections, as Corwin says, are often won at the margins. And that

was the case in 2008. We note particularly that Obama clearly benefitted from high turnout by two ethno-religious groups: black Protestants, Latinos. But two things about that turnout. First, it's an open question whether this is religion-based religion turnout based in race and ethnicity or some combination of the two. It's notoriously difficult to disentangle race and religion and we might want to have a conversation about that. It's likely that this, in addition, that this level of turnout won't be sustained in 2012 given the unique circumstances of the 2008 election.

So in looking just at our survey data we argue that the patterns of religious voting in the first three presidential elections of this century are likely to continue over the course of the next several elections. And generally, those elections we expect will look more like 2000, 2004, than 2008. But having said that, as we point out in the book and spend most of our time in the book talking about, presidential elections culminate on a Tuesday in November, but they are not merely defined by that moment in time. It is a process. There's sifting and winnowing. And in fact, much of our book is devoted to explaining the religious dimensions of that process. So are there features of that process in 2008 that might suggest changes, if not wholesale restructuring, of the religious bases of voting and partisanship in the future.

One place to look is efforts by campaign organizations -- parties to craft new mobilization strategies that exploit potential religious sources of support. And here we do find some challenges to the conventional wisdom about faith-based electoral mobilization. Republicans did not display the same skill at targeting religious conservatives in 2008 as in past years, partly because there were fewer resources to do so. As Corwin mentioned, there's simply no question that some of the Christian right organizations that played key roles in GOP victories throughout the 1990s had declined by 2008. They still had a presence state-by-state, sometimes an important presence, but they did not exert the

same influence on primary voters and in the general election as in past elections.

And the selection of Palin notwithstanding, McCain's campaign itself seemed both less comfortable with and less able to turn out voting blocks based on religious appeals. Instead, we found, in fact, that his campaign deliberately chose a tactic of casting a wide net for social conservatives as a monolithic group, as an undifferentiated group. They didn't use the kind of inventive micro-targeting of messages to specific religious groups that Carl Rove and the Bush campaign developed in 2004.

In contrast, the Obama campaign and some center left religious groups were more intentional about faith-based appeals than previous campaigns. The very fact that Obama's campaign had a serious internal infrastructure for faith-based mobilization with real staff and resources and already in the primaries was a considerable improvement over the Kerry campaign four years prior. Still, despite this contrast, we did not find that the Obama camp used the most sophisticated tactics of micro-targeting pioneered during the Bush campaigns, partly because the religious groups Obama might target are not as easily identifiable and unified as Bush's traditionalist base. Those progressive religious groups in recent history have been fractured, disconnected from electoral politics; are probably, and this is speculative, but probably moving too slowly toward greater unity and clarity of purpose to ease mobilization toward the Democrats in 2012. But time will tell. That's where I'm trying to predict the future.

A second place to look is in the mix of issue areas that are especially salient to religious voters. Issues are perceived as religious only if framed in specific faith-based terms for an audience that is motivated to act. While we found that the mix of religious issues in 2008 remained largely consistent with 2004, we also discussed the considerable effort and innovation, and even traction in the primaries with defining a broader range of issues as religious. From the environment to debt reduction, there was a whole

range of things.

In terms of defining and pushing an issue agenda, it may be the central left religious groups are at a point now that Christian right groups were in the late 1970s: well on their way to reframing the issue agenda, but just beginning to determine how to organize themselves to advance the agenda.

And what to make of religious divisions themselves or religious traditions. Is religious traditionalism changing? In 2008, as we note, some ethno-religious groups emerged as serious electoral players, most notably Latinos. But also there was intraparty conflict among Republicans about Romney's LDS membership, Giuliani's uneasy religiosity, Palin's Pentecostalism. Yet these aspects of the campaign do not suggest fundamental changes in religion gaps and of the electorate. On the contrary, we see that intraparty conflict is reflecting and reinforcing the God gap. Palin, for example, is widely perceived as a way for McCain to shore up his wavering evangelical base tactic that worked for that base, but also arguably resulted in greater polarization more broadly.

So in any case, these and other hints that changes in religion-based cleavages are generally incremental. The changes are almost imperceptible over short spans of time. Something like a landscape in geologic time. In the short term then we see a familiar and resilient, and in some respects polarizing God gap, but in the long-term there is potential for slow erosion and perhaps new gaps altogether.

Thank you.

MR. DIONNE: Thank you. And welcome to everyone. I'm very -- first of all, we should note that Corwin Smidt is at the Paul Henry Institute, and we might pause to remember Paul Henry, who was an extraordinary member of Congress, a moderate Republican of deep religious conviction. And he could talk about religion that in a way -- in public life in a way I think we would welcome it, this particular moment in our history.

And I'm so glad that Bill has organized this session because this is a very useful book, chock full of immensely revealing information. So I'm happy to be here.

I want to register -- and this is not a critique of the authors -- my longstanding objection to the term "God gap." I have always, and I don't fault them for it because "The Disappearing God Gap?" is far better than any title I could think of for this book. Question mark, by the way. And I probably even let the phrase slip myself. But I've always thought we should leave God out of it and talk about religion and faith because, except perhaps in the Book of Exodus, God has been rather ambiguous in expressing political views. But I'll leave it at that. But this is a great book and I'm happy we're doing this.

I want to do three things here. First, I want to offer a hypothesis on the gradual decline of cultural and religious politics and suggest that one era is ending and a new era is beginning. And I believe there is some evidence in the book for this. And I will sort of talk about that. I think the era that is beginning is going to be more religious than the long relatively secular period that followed FDR's election. It's hard to imagine certainly a Democrat giving a speech quite as relentlessly secular as John Kennedy's Houston speech in 1960. But compared with the period that's just ending, the new period will, I believe, be more secular, more pluralistic, and more focused on issues outside the cultural realm.

Second, as I say, I want to suggest that the data in this book offers some evidence for this view.

And third, I want to challenge the assumption that religion is as much of an explanation for voting as the authors suggest. I think if we went through a period in which we underestimated religion's role in politics, we may be coming out of a period in which we overestimated religion's specific role. I want to argue in particular that conservative voting behavior ascribed to religion is often -- has at least as much to do with race, region, and

ideology, and that many of the voters who have supported conservative Republicans for the last 40 years or so did so for reasons having little to do with religion, even if their religious convictions may have reinforced this orientation in the first place.

I also just want to raise a couple of quick questions about the data. On the whole this is a very good and useful survey, as I say. But my friend Bill Galston pointed out a couple of anomalies to me which I'll just share with you. And Bill may want to talk to them -- talk about them more.

The survey suggests that the share of the vote cast by Jews was cut in half. Now, I don't think the authors believe that with a group making up either three percent or two percent of the electorate, it's very hard to get that number right. If you under poll New York, New Jersey, and California just a little bit you can really cut that number.

The more significant sort of anomaly is on younger voters where there's a lot of evidence already available that both younger -- the younger evangelicals were more inclined to support Obama than older evangelicals. They still voted for McCain, but a survey by Religion and Ethics News Weekly -- I'm glad to welcome Missy Daniel from Religion and Ethics News Weekly, who is here today -- done right before the election showed that young evangelicals, or about 30 percent of them if I remember the numbers right, were inclined to vote for Obama compared to 15 percent of older evangelicals. The same numbers on young Catholics where I think it's almost certainly true that the actual number is higher. That's what the exit poll suggests. These are just a couple of anomalies worth taking into account. They by no means undermine the value of the survey as a whole.

So first I want to suggest that this is the beginning of a new era. Now, if you were looking for a cultural and religious election, you wouldn't actually go to 2004; you'd actually go to 1928. Now, that's an election where religion and culture really mattered. The two central issues in that election were -- or two of the central issues were whether we

should elect the first catholic president, Al Smith, and whether we should repeal Prohibition. And the voters decided, no, we would not elect our first Catholic president in that election, and we should continue with Prohibition.

Now, it's also true that the prosperity of the 1920s helped Herbert Hoover win that election. "We shall soon, with the help of God, be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from this nation," Hoover declared before the 1928 election. And a funny thing happened on the way to that prosperity. October 29, 1929, happened and suddenly the country was transformed. A Democrat from Missouri wrote a delightful note to Jim Farley in the Roosevelt Operation saying, "I don't understand why wet Democrats are arguing -- a wet Democrat would argue with a dry Democrat over liquor when neither of them can afford the price of a drink."

And by 1932, a lot of the cultural issues that had dominated politics and religious politics disappeared. And we entered into what I would argue is a long relatively secular period that you could date 1932 to 1980. Now, this was not by any means an entirely secular period. It's almost certainly true as Mike Gerson, President Bush's speechwriter, has argued, that FDR quoted God even more -- cited God even more than George W. Bush did, particularly in the speeches and sermons during World War II. One of my proudest possessions is my dad's Catholic prayer book that he got when he was in the Army in World War II, which has a lovely introduction by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. I don't know what people -- Brett Walker is here. He's an ardent church-state separationist. I don't know what he'd make of that intro to a Bible by FDR, but there it was.

It's not that we push religion aside, but politics was not defined by religion and culture; it was defined far more by class and region with a little bit of a hangover of those cultural fights with urban areas being somewhat more Democratic than rural areas. And so in that sense I do believe there will be some endurance of these alignments that are

suggested in this book, but they won't be as strong.

A couple of points of evidence from their book. First, there is, as they note, a substantial decline in the share of the electorate represented by people who attended church -- religious services more than weekly from 16 to 12 percent of the electorate. I think that tells us something about this, but also I would note there's a table which they didn't reproduce. It is on page 194 of the book. Voters who mention economic or foreign policy issues did not vote for Obama in a larger share than they voted for John Kerry. If anything, there was a slight decline. I think that decline comes from the fact that many different kinds of voters suddenly mentioned the economy in that election.

But among voters who cited cultural issues, Obama's share of the vote went from 30 percent for Kerry in 2004 -- the Democratic share went from 30 percent for Kerry to 44 percent for Barack Obama. That strikes me as an indication that the cultural divides that you had present in 2004 had abated some, if only because the economy was such a central issue.

I would also -- I'm sorry?

SPEAKER: (Off mic)

MR. DIONNE: Oh, is there a sound problem?

SPEAKER: (Off mic)

MR. DIONNE: See, I'm very loud. I hope people can hear me in the back.

There's another table in the book, some of which is reproduced. It does strike me as very interesting that among evangelical Protestants who their methodology characterizes as modernist, the Democratic share rose substantially from 41 percent for Kerry, 58 percent for Obama. That does suggest to me that some of the organizing -- Shawn Casey is here, who did some of that work -- some of the organizing that the Obama campaign was doing among religious voters did have some payoff. And it was among

modernist evangelical Protestants where the payoff seemed especially large. And so these are just a few bits of data that I think suggest we may be at the beginning of entering a new period in our politics.

Now, the third one I want to make -- and here's where I do want to take issue with the authors -- page 187 of the book, they refer to black Protestants, Hispanic Protestants, and Hispanic Catholics as ethno-religious traditions. Now, I would argue that by that definition, white evangelical Protestants are just as much of an ethno-religious tradition as African Americans or Hispanics. And the reason I think that's important is because they don't break out in their analysis traditionalist, centralist, or modernist African-American Protestants. They don't do so because the data wouldn't be all that interesting because African Americans voted so overwhelming for Barack Obama. But if that's the case, then it suggests that race is actually a more important variable than religion because many African Americans are very traditionalist in their religious views.

I did some work on this with John Green, and you occasionally find some minor shifts that traditionalists -- African Americans might be a couple of points more Republican, but it's really not a major shift. And I'd like to argue that many of the people we call religious conservatives are just plain conservatives who happen to be religious. And in particular, the white evangelical vote is really in many ways a Southern conservative vote. And that the white evangelicals began in the South, began converting to the Republican Party in the Civil Rights Era, the big shift happening in 1964. And with the distinct exception of Jimmy Carter's 1976 election, you've had basically a steady trend of white southerners to the Republican Party. And that happens to be -- a lot of them happened to be evangelical.

I went through the exit polls, which CNN kindly makes available in great detail, and they asked a question -- an imperfect question, but it was a useful question -- if people identified themselves as white evangelical born agains. Forty-seven percent of the

Alabama electorate identified itself that way, 46 percent of the Mississippi electorate, but only 17 percent of the California electorate, 9 percent of the New York electorate, and only 7 percent in my native Massachusetts called themselves white evangelical born again Protestants.

Now, in defense of their thesis, there were still differences within states where white evangelical born agains do not loom large. But in those states they were still more likely to be Democratic. In Alabama and Mississippi, Obama got only 8 percent and 6 percent, respectively, as a share of their votes. Basically, Barack Obama in those states got a very small share of the white vote, period, but it was slightly lower in this group.

In California and New York, Obama's share of the white born agains was 27 or 20. So there's still a religious connection, but I do believe that this ethno-cultural fact -- the importance of region and race -- cannot be denied. And that what we're talking here is about a conservativism that predated the rise of religious issues in our politics, and I would suspect will continue after, even if there's a slight decline in religious connection to voting.

So in sum, I'd argue that with the United States turning its attention again to very large issues after 9-11 and after the economic crash, just as our forbearers did during the Depression and World War II and the Cold War, we will certainly be asking for God's blessing and God's help. But the questions that will engage us will be more about survival and prosperity than about religion and culture.

John Kennedy said a very interesting thing at his inaugural address. He said, "Here on Earth, God's work must truly be our own." There is an intriguing ambiguity about that statement if you think about it carefully, and I think that ambiguity is going to characterize the next era in politics and in the relationship of politics to religious commitment.

And again, I just want to close by commending the authors for providing such a -- for offering us such a provocative and helpful book.

Thank you very much.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. While our panelists are getting mic'd up for the more stationary portion of this event, let me just tell you what is to come for the remainder of the event.

I'm going to give Corwin and Kevin the opportunity to reply to anything they may want to reply to in what their distinguished commentator has just said. Then, I will pose a question or perhaps two to the panel. And then we will have about a half an hour for questions from the audience. So we're right on schedule by the grace of God. And also more than usual self-restraint. You know who you are.

Okay. Corwin and Kevin first.

SPEAKER: He was talking about me (inaudible).

MR. SMIDT: Okay. Well, first of all, thank you for your comments, E.J. And certainly, I think they offer some challenge to some of the things that we have said.

I do think the whole debate of culture versus economic issues and their role in the future is likely to be an important issue, certainly. And I think our assessment would be that you need a certain level of economic stability or an economic security in one's own family life before you begin to consider perhaps some cultural issues. So, I mean, putting bread on the table can be obviously much more important at a point in time than, say, whether or not you're going to fight gay marriage, that type of thing.

So I think there is a level of economic stability, economic prosperity, that enables cultural politics to be present. I don't want to say it will totally disappear, but certainly it would abate I think if economic issues become much more central in terms of family survival, that type of thing.

I do think though that there are alternative ways of looking at the data. For example, you point out, rightfully, that our -- with regard to social issues, for example, that

those that cited social issues, that Obama captured a much larger percentage than was true.

Can you hear me back there? Okay. That Obama captured a larger percentage of these people who cited social issues than Kerry did in 2004.

However, you can bring different reasons to bear with regard to social issues. So it may very well be, for example, that if social conservatives are opposing gay marriage that those who favor gay marriage would cite social issues as a basis for why they would vote for Obama. And so I think, in part, it's somewhat a counter-mobilization of people who are concerned about the same issues, but perhaps on a different side of that particular issue that brought them into the forefront.

It is true with regard to the -- sort of this traditionalist-centrist-modernist divide that when you bring it into the categories of African Americans or Latinos, that you have greater difficulties in seeing these patterns. Now, there are a couple of reasons why we don't do that. It isn't simply to try to conceal differences. Part of the problem is that when you're operating with surveys of this size and you get 10 percent of the electorate -- so you have 3,000 people in your survey and 10 percent are African Americans, so now you're down to 300, and then you have, let's say not all of them voted, although many more did in this time, so now you have to reduce them in certain numbers -- that when you begin to sort of divide these people into these three categories your ends get so small that you really have difficulty interpreting what they mean.

Having said that, it is true, regardless of the divisions that you would find, you would find that they would be much more uniform in their voting patterns. However, among Hispanics I think you would find a greater difference. So this sort of traditionalist-modernist divide I think is more evident among Hispanics, particularly when you start to compare Hispanic Catholics and Hispanic Protestants.

And finally, this is not a major argument, but I would say you need to be

careful in how you identify evangelical voters. We do it on the basis of denominational affiliation. Many pollsters prefer not to do that because it takes up a lot of time and you need very accurate denominational affiliation measures. So to revert to white born again evangelical as an identity captures a different segment. They overlap to some extent, but it's a different segment of the electorate. So to a certain extent you are comparing apples and oranges, but I don't want to make too big a difference in that.

I'll leave it at that.

MR. DEN DULK: Well, as Corwin often does, he's stolen a lot of my thunder. But I -- what little thunder I had. But let me just say a couple of things about this thesis, especially about the role of region and race. As I mentioned in my presentation, you know, disentangling religion and race is notoriously difficult. And one way of doing that is to try to break out different types of religious traditions by race, like we do. But one of the questions that I would have about distinguishing these sociodemographic characteristics, like region, race, and religion -- which is essentially what you're doing by saying region and race matters more than religion -- is the extent to which religion actually reinforces and leads people to sort themselves regionally and by race. I mean, you know, Sunday mornings are the most segregated -- as sometimes said -- segregated hours of the week.

And so, you know, in many respects religion is cutting across race and even region. And so I don't think it's terribly easy to disentangle those things.

Having said that, we do try that. And I believe in the last two tables that you have in front of you there's an effort to break out different characteristics like race, age, and so forth, and to compare the effects of those characteristics to the effects of religion -- religious tradition and religious traditionalism. And when we break out those effects, it turns out race does matter. But religion, religious tradition, religious traditionalism matter nearly at the same level.

So to the extent that we can break these things out, you know, religion continues to be this rival as an explanatory factor to something like race. But as I say, very difficult to disentangle.

MR. DIONNE: I'll just go ahead and say very quickly, first, I want to make very clear I wasn't accusing you in any way of concealing this. And you're right, on some of these groups it's very difficult. You don't get enough end to break them up that way. So I wasn't saying that you were concealing anything -- it's a very honest book -- but that I do think if you did show that data, it would show what I argued that it show.

I agree with you on Hispanics. I think one of the most interesting differences that's developed in the electorate is between Hispanic Catholics and Hispanic Protestants. There's some evidence in other surveys that that difference narrowed in 2008, partly because of what happened with the immigration issue in Congress. But there's clearly a real difference there.

And, you know, I think two quick points. One, do cultural issues still matter? Well, yes. One of the issues that's hanging up passage of the Health Care Bill is abortion. Now, that's interesting in both in favor of your thesis and in favor of my thesis. In favor of yours because obviously that issue is still there. In favor of mine because you're really talking about a dozen Democrats out of 256. Most Republicans are not against this bill primarily because of abortion. And you know, in this case you're talking about a very specific universe -- mostly Catholic, old-fashioned, pro-labor Democrats who happen to be pro-life on abortion. So it's not clear that this -- sort of the rise of this issue reflects on sort of the post-1980 evangelical -- post-1980 religious politics are a mixture of that and an earlier period of religious politics.

The last point I'd make is I do think that there's another sign of a certain kind of secularism, and that's the Tea Party Movement. And I think that if you look at the

Tea Party you see a largely secular, kind of populous libertarian movement. And I think the energy of the Tea Party has, at least for now, replaced the energy of the Christian conservatives inside the Republican Party.

On the other hand, you have in the Democratic Party a more important presence of religious activists, of religious progressives. I think so that what you may have is a declining difference over time between the Republicans and the Democrats in the presence of religion. And I think Barack Obama is doing everything he can to diminish the importance of cultural and religious warfare, and we'll see how successful he is.

MR. GALSTON: Well, thanks to all of you. I'm going to make a quick comment, pose a quick question, and then turn everything over to you.

My observation is that, you know, that the book it seems to be is particularly useful in exploring the historical dimensions of traditionalism, you know, which is the academic word for what's come to be called the God gap. And two things jump out at you.

First of all, 2004 was an outlier. Right? 2008 is a lot like 1996 and 2000. 2004, by brute force and relentless focus, the traditionalism as a factor was ginned up way above what I think its normal level is. And so I think what you saw in 2008 was closer to what you're going to get going forward.

But now looking back it is stunning to compare 2008 to the 1960, 1964 baseline. You guys worked as hard as you could to find evidence of traditionalism as opposed to affiliation and tradition back then. It's basically zero. So that is a statistical demonstration of a huge transformation in American politics in our lifetime. And I think I would underscore that even more than you did.

Now, here is my question, and this is a question that has intrigued me for a long time and I can't think of a better threesome to put the question to. Starting in the 2008 Democratic primaries you saw evidence of white Catholic resistance to Barack Obama.

That resistance persisted through the general election where John McCain did just as well among white Catholics as George Bush did. And there's continuing evidence of that if you look at the states where Obama's support has dropped particularly far since he took office. They tend to be disproportionately Catholic states in the Midwest. Query: Why don't white Catholics like Barack Obama?

SPEAKER: It's not a rhetorical question.

SPEAKER: I think I'd challenge the premise of the question a little bit for starters, which is that, you know, I am struck by that map that the New York Times ran a few days after the election which showed which counties Obama gained votes over Kerry in and which counties he lost votes in compared to Kerry in '04. And a conservative friend of mine -- Obama gained in I think it was 87 percent of American counties. And a conservative friend of mine said the New York Times printed that map so they could paint almost the whole country blue, he said. And that if you look at the swath of counties in which Kerry ran ahead of Obama, they tended not to be Catholic counties with the exception of a few counties in Massachusetts where some of that can be explained by the fact that Kerry is from Massachusetts. Some of it may be explained by what you're talking about. There were scattered counties elsewhere.

But mostly it's a swath that goes from -- across Appalachia and down through the deep South, kind of starting in Western Pennsylvania going down through Eastern Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, into Arkansas and Louisiana. It's not clear to me that those counties -- there were some Catholic counties in there in Western Pennsylvania perhaps, but it doesn't strike me that that is primarily a Catholic phenomenon.

The other thing that may explain some of what you are describing -- I'm not denying that there isn't something going on here -- is perhaps a recrudescence of the kind of politics that we saw in the late 1960s where Nixon -- they were then Catholic -- we Catholics

were then called “peripheral urban ethnics.” And there was clearly some combination of backlash politics on race and socially conservative politics on crime, which are not necessarily -- there was overlap, but they’re not necessarily the same thing on crime and values. Nixon famously accused McGovern of supporting acid, amnesty, and abortion. And so I think you still have some of that politics operating. Barack Obama appeared -- a piece of it is race and a piece of it is Barack Obama really does look like a modernist to a lot of these people.

Lastly, with all this talk about traditionalism, I cannot resist reminding everyone of Jaroslav Pelikan’s great line that “Tradition is the living religion of the dead, and traditionalism is the dead religion of the living.” It’s a very useful statement I’ve always thought.

MR. GALSTON: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: I have to write that down.

SPEAKER: It sounds like a good lunch seminar with Calvin.

SPEAKER: I really don’t have a good explanation for it. I mean, part of it happens to be that we would sort of use the language of traditionalism and it would be consummate with some of the religious values of these white Catholics that would move them in this direction. But if you were to just try to look at Catholics as a whole, I cannot really give a good answer as to what prompts that.

SPEAKER: I think, I mean, to the extent that we’re talking about the role that religion played here, traditionalism, dead or alive, helps to explain it. Right? But there are these other factors, including economics, including ethnicity. Maybe I’m falling into your thesis, but, you know, we don’t have good evidence about those other characteristics and their impact on why white Catholics are moving away to the extent they are from Obama. So that’s the unsatisfying answer.

SPEAKER: But it is an interesting fact that the white Catholics went for Bush 53-47 and they went for McCain 53-47, according to your numbers. So counties or no counties, in the aggregate they didn't go for Obama.

SPEAKER: By the way, I believe, but I can't remember precisely, that the exit polling suggested a slight bump up for Obama among white Catholics, but I wouldn't swear to that. Somebody should look it up after this meeting. Shawn might know that.

MR. GALSTON: Okay, folks. The next half-hour is yours and I have three pleas. First of all, wait for the roving microphone. Secondly, state your name before you go any farther. And third, please ask a question.

I'll start with Father Tom Reese.

FATHER REESE: Tom Reese from Georgetown University.

I guess the numbers here that bother me the most are the Hispanic Catholics. You're saying basically there was no change between the two elections: 31 percent for Bush and 31 percent for McCain. I mean, I don't have the exit poll data, but I was under the impression that, you know, one of the biggest groups to move during the -- from the two elections was among Hispanics. I mean, somebody has got bad data here, either you or the exit polls. And I don't know how we resolve that question, I think, unless I'm wrong about what the exit polls say.

SPEAKER: No. I think you're right. In fact, my question was how big is your sample of Hispanics because I do believe those are some of the anomalies you run into with smaller groups where I think there is a contradiction. And I think the evidence is pretty clear that the Hispanic defection from -- of the Republicans to Democrats started in '06 and continued in '08. And that was true of Catholics and Protestants.

SPEAKER: Yeah. Our data suggests it's primarily true of Protestants. But again, the point being when you have a survey of this size, and you're talking about let's say

10 percent, you're talking 300 people of Hispanics of the total survey. So you try to acknowledge that kind of difference. I'm just -- what I found interesting was that basically it was a pattern of stability given our data, but it could very well be given exit poll data you'll find that there would be somewhat of a greater shift. But I'm just reporting what our survey indicated.

SPEAKER: It's also worth pointing out the distinction between persuasion and mobilization. I mean, one of the most stunning figures was the surge in Hispanic Catholics as a percentage of the overall electorate and as a percentage of Obama's winning coalition over Kerry. And so a substantial portion of what we felt right after 2008 may be a consequence of the surgery of a fundamental -- of an almost 70 percent pro-Obama group into the electorate as opposed to a shift in the overall balance within that enlarged portion of the electorate. Both could be going on. But if your numbers are right the mobilization phenomenon was more important than the persuasion phenomenon.

SPEAKER: I'm quite certain from the exit polling that there was a shift towards the Hispanic -- a shift towards the Democrats among Hispanics. I think the answer to that is clear. I think this survey is most useful for comparisons among groups, not necessarily for the bottom-line numbers on some of these groups.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. This young woman right in the front.

SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Tuda Tipa and I want to ask about the racialization of religion. The relationship between -- you talked about race and you talked about religion, but Hillary ran the famous campaign against Obama with Reverend Wright, where he had to distance himself from Reverend Wright to kind of neutralize his race. And then Palin and the conservative talking heads talked a lot about Obama's relationship to Islam as another way of racializing him. So I want to hear about the relationship between those two and the way that religion can be a substitute for race in these conversations or

was used as a substitute for race.

SPEAKER: Well, yeah, in some ways, you know, one response, are we seeing religion or are we seeing race and how do we know the difference? I don't know that as social scientists we've really come up with a good way of knowing the difference. Quite often, you know, interestingly, in the whole issue with Jeremiah Wright it turned out that in the wake of that controversy Obama benefitted in polls after that experience. It turned out that he got a bump among those folks who said they would be likely to vote for him and that seemed to be the result of just getting some press. Interestingly.

But having said that, you know, it was still in some respects an effort by a variety of folks to use the combination of race and religion as a campaign tactic. But, you know, religion clearly, I mean, race clearly persists as something that cuts across religion in a variety of ways to the extent that, you know, even in what we've done where we break out African-American Protestants, for example, from white evangelical Protestants. As someone mentioned earlier, you know, in many respects from a religious perspective, those two groups look very similar in terms of commitments -- evangelical commitments essentially. And so you might say, well, then it is all about race, isn't it? Given the fact that they look very similar in terms of religious beliefs, yet they vote remarkably differently -- white evangelicals and black Protestants -- it must be about race and not about religion.

Well, that assumes that, in fact, the experience of both groups -- evangelicalism -- is similar. And in many respects the kinds of emphases and, you know, patterns among black Protestants in terms of how black Protestants might understand evangelical beliefs is different. You know, emphasis on liberation and other kinds of things along those lines. So that's, to my way of thinking, an example of how religion quite often -- or race will often shape two sets of beliefs that on the surface look very, very similar.

SPEAKER: Could I say very quickly, in fairness to Hillary, she didn't really

have to do anything and she didn't do anything. Reverend Wright did all her work for her. I think Shawn, who was working on the campaign, would agree with that.

I'll tell you, the one good thing about the Reverend Wright coming along is that he proved conclusively that Barack Obama is not a Muslim. And then all of a sudden he belonged to a defective wing of Christianity. So to your point, I think you are entirely right that there was an effort made to turn Barack Obama into "the other" in a whole variety of ways. He was Indonesian. Allegedly he went to a madrasah, which he didn't. You know, he didn't have a birth certificate. You know, he was a Muslim and then he belonged to Reverend Wright's church. Now, Reverend Wright said a lot of things that were genuinely offensive to a lot of people, including African Americans, and he had to distance himself from some of those things.

And I think the most interesting thing was the trajectory of Obama's own response. He really didn't want to break with Reverend Wright. And it took him a long time to do that. And finally, when the Reverend Wright put on a performance at the national press club that many found particularly offensive, it was only then that Obama broke with him. Some people criticize Obama for taking his time about breaking with him; some criticized him for throwing him under the bus, to use the phrase used at the time. I kind of respected him for trying to hang on to somebody and then finally saying this is untenable. That depends on your point of view.

But I think at the heart of your question is an insight that's true, which is religion, among other things, was used to try to make Obama into the other. And it worked for some voters, but it didn't work for a majority.

MR. GALSTON: I see in the back David Saperstein's hand, I believe.

MR. SAPERSTEIN: Thanks. Ninety seconds, three very quick questions. E.J., you contrasted race and religion in explaining the South. That same era of civil rights

movement saw the Supreme Court sweepingly force religion out of the public schools, reduced it in public life, alienating those factors. I wonder how you weigh that out.

To the other two, Sam Brownback. One would think he would have been an ideal candidate for the Religious Right in terms of his activism, his religiosity, except for the fact that he was a Catholic. How much do you think that was a factor in his failure to gather?

And finally, you identify the issue of in the beginning, Corwin, of the past polls about generic attitudes about Republican versus Democrats. That's also a factor in the God gap, not just how they vote on a particular candidate that can be more anomalous. I'm wondering in 2008 -- 2006, 2008 -- what is the direction of the findings as to the attitudes between the two parties? Which is friendlier, more supportive of religion?

SPEAKER: Do you want me to --

SPEAKER: Fire away.

SPEAKER: You're right about the timing of the court decisions, but I think it was a two-step process. I think when people looked at the shift of the deep South to Barry Goldwater -- the white deep South -- you go back to contemporary accounts. Goldwater played the cultural issues and the religious issues a little bit, but almost everyone who looked at it at the time, on whatever side of politics, you ascribed it to a reaction to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. And I think those other court decisions didn't begin to kick in -- the reaction to the collection of court decisions. Also, to the Bob Jones University ruling really didn't begin to kick in until the '70s. And the Republican operatives, like Morton Blackwell, who saw potential in the evangelical movement, didn't really start doing their organizing and discovering Jerry Falwell until the late 1970s.

I can't resist the one quick thing on your second question. Mike Huckabee out-organized Senator Brownback in Iowa early on. I don't think it was Brownback's

Catholicism that hurt him. I think Huckabee just proved to be a more interesting candidate for a lot of people. But where I think religion played a huge role and we have not discussed this enough, or at least I think so, is that I think Mormonism -- the prejudice against Mormons really hurt Mitt Romney. And I think that, you know, he had some real difficulty responding to that. He gave his famous speech on religion, half of which was John Kennedy's speech, "Don't judge me by religion." The other half was, "By the way, I believe in Jesus Christ." And he was stuck because he needed evangelical votes in the Iowa caucuses so he had to give the second half of that speech. So I think the whole issue of prejudice against Mormons is an under-, you know, studied and under-discussed factor in that election.

SPEAKER: Let me just piggyback about Brownback and just highlight the fact in the book we talk a little bit about what happened in Iowa. And in particular, the fact that in the absence of what had in previous years been very strong Christian Right mobilization and organizational support for Republican-favored candidates, we had a little less of that this year, except in Iowa we saw some organization, including among what, to my knowledge, is a relatively new sort of phenomena, which is networks of homeschooling groups. And so that became important in Iowa and really went to the benefit of Huckabee and not to Brownback.

SPEAKER: Let me just pick up on the -- what part is more sympathetic towards religion or polls as to which party is viewed as being friendly towards religion.

The data were that in 2004, the Republican Party was viewed as much more favorable towards religion. That gap narrowed considerably over time. And I don't have the exact figures in my mind right now, but I know the Democratic Party approach if not equaled the level of Republicans at some point, I think in 2008. Now, I saw some recent results that suggested that it's reverting back the other way, but I don't know the exact levels. But apparently there is a greater gap once again.

SPEAKER: By the way, the homeschoolers, that was a great organizational innovation on Huckabee's part. It's a great (inaudible) thesis for somebody because he really did do something different and effective.

SPEAKER: And we do address the Mormon question in one of the chapters and show how the fact that Mitt Romney was a Mormon did work to his disadvantage in terms of --

SPEAKER: There's clearly an expectation that the candidate for the presidency will be religious, but there's also a hierarchy of preferred religions. And Mormons are low on the hierarchy.

SPEAKER: Well, let me just make a historical note here before I turn to Shawn Casey, and that is that if you look at the frontispiece of the platform of the very first Republican Party Convention in 1856, you will see --

SPEAKER: Bill and I attended together.

MR. GALSTON: Yes.

SPEAKER: You will see a denunciation of what were called on the very cover the "twin relics of barbarism." One of them was slavery. What was the other one? Mormon polygamy. And so this, you know, anti-Mormon -- the Republican Party hounded the Mormon church to extinction. Literally legal extinction between 1856 and 1896, before a sudden relevation eliminated polygamy, at least as an official practice of the Mormon Church.

Shawn?

MR. CASEY: Thank you. Shawn Casey, Wesley (inaudible). Thank you all for some very stimulating discussion.

Two quick questions. One is can you find another conceptual label besides modernist? Because there are no modernist evangelicals. And as somebody who is trying

to organize those folks in the campaign, it was tough to sell Barack Obama by calling them modernists. It didn't work very well.

Secondly, and maybe more importantly, part of the God gap has to do with measuring worship attendance. And I actually think that's conceptually incoherent in the sense you know there's a lot of research that shows people over-report their actual worship attendance. When you look at the sociologists who go to parking lots and encounter cars, like Mark Chavez, you find a much lower actual rate of attendance across all religious categories.

So what you were dealing with, really self-reporting worship attendance, but that seldom gets interpreted correctly by media. Can you, in fact, document that there are different social acceptability pressures on reporting worship attendance across this grid of religious groups? Number one.

And number two, could you not, in fact, actually go into the field to document the degree of distortion by religious groups? In other words, could it be the case that, in fact, some conservatives across the board maybe over-report their worship attendance to a higher degree than, in fact, your modernists do?

SPEAKER: Yes. There is this debate as to the level of over-reporting. And I would suggest that -- well, first of all, if you look at the reported levels of church attendance over the last 50 years -- now, it'll vary by survey organization as to what the level is, but let's just use one and say it was 40 percent in 1950, weekly church attendance. You will find that today it's 40 percent of weekly church attendance. There's no dip in reporting of weekly church attendance.

Now, it's also true that you could make an argument that there's less social pressure today to say that you go to church weekly than there was in 1950. So I would make that part of the argument.

Having said that, it is true there is over-reporting. If you ask me, for example, did I go to church -- if you were to ask me this question do I go to church weekly? I would say yes. Was I in church two weeks ago? No. There is always going to be that kind of gap. And I think you're right that there are certain groups that are more likely to report over-reporting than others. So it's a mixed bag, but I concede some of the points that you're making.

I don't know if I fully addressed your question.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I mean, if the question is, is there a way to address what we're describing or is this social desirability effect, over-reporting, the same thing happens with voting. We see surveys 20 percent points higher. We have to make adjustments for that. The issue with voting, of course, is that we can make adjustments because we know the actual turnout, so we can weigh the evidence -- weight the data. We can't do that in the context of church attendance.

SPEAKER: Why not?

SPEAKER: Well, because we don't know the actual turnout so we can't weight it. And how could we find that out? Well, we could send a lot of graduate students out and sit at different, you know --

SPEAKER: Do you have graduate students?

SPEAKER: But now imagine how many religious institutions, houses of worship we have out there. It's fundamentally a practical problem as much as anything. It's not necessarily a methodological problem, but a practical one. Think about every storefront house of worship, every mega church. How do you do that? You could do some sampling and so forth, but that's inevitably going to be skewed. So that's a big issue.

SPEAKER: I mean, even just knowing what is the percentage of Americans who is Muslim. There is no way for us to determine that because in survey

research you can get an estimate, but if you were to try to go to mosques you might get a different estimate. But those would be two different things. We don't have religious census in the United States. We used to, but up until about 1930 we stopped doing that every 10-year religious census for a variety of reasons. And as a result, we don't have reports in this country like there are in other countries as to what percentage might be Catholics. We have to use survey research and so forth.

SPEAKER: Just on this. A French pollster and I once had a conversation on church attendance in our respective countries, and we agreed that the American number is inflated because people feel guilty when they don't go to religious services. And the French underreport because they feel guilty when they do go to religious services.

John Judas, editor of The New Republic, wrote a very interesting piece some years ago which looked at some social science research, which did seem to prove that people over-report, you know, attendance at religious services. It's worth looking that up. And in terms of that modernist label, John Green, whom I greatly admire and have worked with, I've argued with him about these labels. It's hard to figure out what you put in its place. You know, liberal, pluralist, latitudinarian probably doesn't cut it.

SPEAKER: I like that.

SPEAKER: It's not clear what you would call them. Do you have a suggestion?

SPEAKER: We call them non-traditionalists. That's not perfect, but it's better than modernists.

SPEAKER: Yeah. I mean, you know, Hunter in his book -- work on cultural wars is progressive, but that has political connotation and that makes it difficult, so.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah. He calls them progressivists, I think.

SPEAKER: Progressivists, yes, right.

MR. DIONNE: Which is an interesting distinction between progressives, I guess.

MR. GALSTON: I'm going to let the young man in the second row ask the last question before I have a concluding announcement.

MR. ROBERTS: My name is Steven Roberts. I'm the graduate fellow for Religion and Civil Society at the Heritage Foundation and a Calvin College grad. I also attended seminary and this question is going to be in light of that training.

SPEAKER: You were going to the seminary?

MR. ROBERTS: I just graduated seminary about a year ago.

SPEAKER: Oh, congratulations.

MR. ROBERTS: Thank you. But so my question is along that regard. You know, of course the distinctions between religious cleavages, like traditionalist, modernist, et cetera, are helpful. Have you tested for specific doctrinal leans? Because I've noticed that there's often a political breakdown in accordance with the one, say, Doctrine of Man, whether you believe man is inherently simple and is created in the image of God.

You know, I'm just thinking in particular, like early 20th century history when you had the big breakdown of Protestant denominations, you had theological liberals generally heading in the progressive direction; you had Confessionalists who generally were more libertarian in their lenience. I'm thinking Woodrow Wilson, J. Gresson Icham. And then on the right side you had the populist kind of social or theological conservatives, more fundamentalists, who became social conservatives, like William Jennings Bryan.

And so I'm wondering if there have been studies tracing doctrinal linkages to political behavior because I think even the Jeremiah Wright issue that represented a huge part of that issue, is the clash between theological conservativism and theological liberalism.

SPEAKER: Could I -- I want our guys to end so can I just take on the

William Jennings Bryan question? William Jennings Bryan I think is a vastly misunderstood figure. And Michael Kazin -- I recommend you Mike Kazin's book, "A Godly Hero," to look at. Bryan was not a social conservative. He was a theological conservative, but was one of the most progressive politicians in our history, and probably was influential in turning the Democratic Party from a conservative party into a progressive party on a whole range of economic issues. He left the Wilson Cabinet because he was a pacifist and opposed World War I. So Bryan is a very complicated figure.

And, in fact, one of the biggest changes in our politics is that many theological conservatives who followed Bryan much, much later became political conservatives because of some of the religious issues. But at the time -- at Bryan's time, a lot of those folks were very progressive on the issues that were at stake in the country.

SPEAKER: Do you want to go?

SPEAKER: Go ahead.

SPEAKER: I do think that there are probably doctrinal differences that you could test. The problem has been that in survey research we have relatively few questions that we can ask. The questions with regard to religion are frequently small in number. That's why we do the surveys that we do to try to get more. The real problem is identifying which are the questions that are most likely to produce the kinds of differences you're looking at. What you identify is perhaps a good one -- views of man. But then in survey research you have to give these sort of kinds of responses -- simplistic kinds of responses to try to get the differences. And it would take some work, I think, in terms of trying to create good questions.

SPEAKER: Although your own traditionalists, you do have models --

SPEAKER: Yes. We do have --

SPEAKER: -- of those questions in their models. Because I think your

point is well taken on that.

SPEAKER: Right. But we don't have all -- I mean, we have questions like, "Do you think all great religious of the world are equally good and true?" Those kinds of things that we use to try to map the difference between traditionalists and modernists, as well as some more specific doctrinal measures. But questions about the nature of man are not in there.

SPEAKER: I mean, part of it is that your question assumes a certain level of theological sophistication that, first of all, on the part of respondents, but in addition, sophistication that we could actually put into a question, which is terribly difficult, perhaps impossible to do. I think to some extent, you know, the kinds of analysis that you've seen -- the legacy -- the difference between evangelical and mainline Protestants, for example, is a legacy of some of those theological debates in the early part of the 20th century, but not quite the same thing. So, right, very difficult to get that level of sophistication.

MR. GALSTON: Very good. Two quick announcements before I will ask you to join in thanking our panel.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge with pleasure the presence of Jim Rykley, who was doing this stuff with Brookings long before anybody else.

And second, unless I've failed in my capacity as organizer, there are probably copies of this book for sale in the back. And if you're really nice and ask a friendly as opposed to a hostile question, you may even be able to get the authors to sign it as they sell it.

And in conclusion, please do join me in thanking the three panelists for a splendid morning.

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I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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