



HOW WOULD GOD VOTE? AN INTRODUCTION

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OF COURSE NO ONE knows whom God would vote for, though most religious people do think—or at least hope—that the Almighty would come down on the side of their party, their cause, their candidates. With the growing popularity of “God bless you, and God bless America” as the standard close for political speeches, it seems that an increasing number of candidates are devoutly wishing for divine endorsement and assistance.

But the fact that God’s political intentions are not easily discerned does not stop mere mortals from speaking with great certainty about the meaning of religion in politics—and holding a great many prejudices on the subject. Consider 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 invoke the scriptures. Whenever religious people get involved in politics, all they care about are abortion, homosexuality and “family values.”

Then consider the following, from a president who found Saint Paul’s letter to the Ephesians an excellent guide to public policy. “Ephesians says we should speak the truth with our neighbors for we are members one of another,” the president said. “I believe that. I think that is the single most important political insight, or social insight, in the Bible. And I think it is what should drive us as we behave together.” Then he got to the compassionate God talk. “Is my destiny caught up in yours?” he asked. “Are we part of the same family of God? It is not enough to say we are all equal in the

eyes of God. We are all also connected in the eyes of God.” And the crowd applauded.

Does it bother you that our president talks that way? If it does, consider this: The speech quoted here was not given by President George W. Bush. It was given at Washington’s Metropolitan Baptist Church in December 1997 by a president named William Jefferson Clinton. Bush is not the first president to invoke God and the scriptures, nor will he be the last.

There are many reasons to cheer the dialogue that Mario Cuomo and Mark Souder kick off in this book—and to thank the many distinguished thinkers who have generously added their voices here. The most important may be the contribution they collectively make to exploding prejudices about religion’s role in politics. Religious voices are not confined to the Right—or to 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, it can be argued that religious faith, properly understood—yes, that is a dangerous phrase—is usually a sign of contradiction, an invitation to paradox, a reminder of the ironies of the human condition.

Richard Fox captures this sense of irony when he notes in these pages that the twentieth century’s great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr knew 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, Fox continues, insists that “a consciousness of one’s own inveterate sinfulness is a basic component of a religious person’s public responsibility.” And Fox argues that “awareness of sin—of their often 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 can only wish that this were consistently true.

This volume is part of the Pew Forum Dialogues on Religion and Public Life. The series is based on a simple proposition, one that its editors see as obvious but that others might see as controversial: Religious voices and insights rooted in faith have a great deal to contribute to our public deliberations about politics and public policy. As our coeditor Jean Bethke Elsh-tain puts it in her essay here, “American politics is indecipherable if it is severed from the interplay and panoply of America’s religions.”

The series is also rooted in the idea that religious people—including people who share the same faith and live the same religious tradition—can disagree fundamentally on political questions not only because they see the facts differently but also because they read and experience their traditions differently. The series emphatically rejects the idea that faith commitments render the messy facts about politics and policy irrelevant. On the contrary, we have sought out people of faith who respect the facts and have genuine knowledge about the issues about which they speak.

The first volume of the series, *Lifting up the Poor: A Dialogue on Religion, Poverty, and Welfare Reform*, brings together in dialogue Mary Jo Bane and Larry Mead, two of the nation's premier experts on poverty and welfare policy. Both care profoundly about the facts—and their faith. In *Is the Market Moral? A Dialogue on Religion, Economics, and Justice*, Rebecca Blank and William McGurn show how their reflections on economics, rooted in years of engagement with the subject, interact with their moral commitments rooted in faith. Bane and Mead, Blank and McGurn all perform a service in demonstrating that faith speaks to questions that are not easily pigeon-holed as “religious issues.” And they provide a model in demonstrating the obligations of the person of faith in the public realm: They make arguments accessible and engaging to those who may not share their particular brands of faith, their specific approaches to theology.

The inspiration behind the series is reflected well by Martha Minow, a professor at Harvard Law School who notes in these pages that “religiously inflected arguments and perspectives bring critical and prophetic insight and energy to politics and public affairs.” Minow writes, “There is something woefully lacking in any view that excludes religion entirely from the public sphere.” 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.” Figuring out how a polity can be open to religious insights without succumbing to the temptation to impose specific religious beliefs through the state might be said to describe the fundamental challenge of religious freedom.

As Representative David Price, a North Carolina Democrat, writes here: “There are compelling reasons, rooted in the theology of divine transcendence, 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 also means that it is 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. As Jeffrey Stout, a professor of religion at Princeton University, argues in these pages: "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."

This volume differs from the earlier ones in form because it differs in content. Where the earlier volumes discuss specific issues, this one deals with the broader question of what faith has to say about politics. In tribute to the broad range of religious voices that jostle with and inspire each other in the United States, it includes many contributors, representing a wide range of traditions, political points of view, and experiences. In these pages are practicing politicians and theologians, preachers, pollsters, and intellectuals. There are voices from the trade union movement, the law, history, sociology, journalism, and the clergy. The essays go back and forth from Left to Center to Right, from Catholic and Jew to Protestant and Muslim.

We do not pretend that this collection in any way exhausts the possibilities for this discussion, but we do believe that this unusually diverse and thoughtful group of writers has much to contribute to the public discussion of religion and public life. In their diversity, they challenge the stereotypes that insist that when religion enters the public square civility inevitably gives way, tolerance disappears, and rational argument becomes impossible. On the contrary, these writers can only strengthen the hope that when religion's relationship to politics is discussed openly, civility, tolerance, and rationality are advanced.

The anchor of this collection is a dialogue between Mario Cuomo, a Democrat who served three terms as governor of New York, and Mark Souder, an experienced Republican member of the House of Representatives from Indiana. Cuomo and Souder first came together at an event sponsored by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington on October 2, 2002. Cuomo, a Catholic and a liberal, and Souder, an Evangelical Protestant and a conservative, were asked to offer their reflections on faith and politics.

The result, at least we think, was dazzling because two men from profoundly different political and religious traditions were able to illuminate such a large portion of our nation's cultural and moral landscape. (Cuomo also showed how very particular the relationship between religion and pol-

itics can be. He told the story of Fishhooks McCarthy from Albany, N.Y., a city that was long the home of a legendary political machine. Fishhooks, Cuomo reported, “would start every day of his political life the same way, in Saint Mary’s Church . . . on his knees, uttering the same prayer: ‘Oh, Lord, give me health and strength; I’ll steal the rest.’”)

Readers themselves will enter into the dialogue between Cuomo and Souder—and think through the ways in which these two men, who have profound differences, may also share significant areas of common ground. But it is worth offering here a taste of what is to come.

At the heart of Cuomo’s view—it can be fairly described as a liberal religious view—is an emphasis on what our traditions have in common. Cuomo speaks of two principles “shared by most if not all of our nation’s religions, whether they include God or not.”

“Look at the earliest monotheistic religion, Judaism,” Cuomo writes. “Two of Judaism’s basic principles, as I understand it, are *tzedakkah* and *tikkun olam*. *Tzedakkah* is the obligation of righteousness and common sense that binds all human beings to treat one another charitably and with respect and dignity.”

“The second principle, *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. *Tikkun olam*.”

“Well,” Cuomo continues, “that is also 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, for the love of me. And I am Truth. And the truth is, God made the world but did not complete it, and you are to be collaborators in creation.”

“Would it not be nice,” Cuomo asks, “to find a way simply to announce at once to the whole world that before we argue about the things that we differ on we concentrate on the two things we believe in? We are supposed to love one another, and we are supposed to work together to clean up this mess we are in, because that is the mission that was left to us. I cannot think of any better guidance.”

Souder by no means disagrees with all of this. But his emphasis is different. “Conservative faiths, even sects within these faiths, differ on how involved the City of God should be with the City of Man,” he says. “But this much is true: Conservative Christians as individuals do not separate their lives into a private sphere 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. Either I am a Christian or I am not. Either I reflect His glory or I do not.”

Souder says, and one doubts that Cuomo disagrees, that “most political issues are moral issues.”

“When you serve in government, as I do, every day, every hour you make moral decisions—like making new laws to restrict cheaters like Enron executives. Why restrict cheating? Because it is a moral premise of society. When we deal with rape, with child support enforcement, with juveniles in trouble with the law, why do we not let both sides fight it out and let the strongest win? Because of certain moral premises that society shares.”

“But I find that I am allowed to use these Christian values in speaking out for national parks and in speaking out against spouse abuse,” Souder continues, “but not when I speak out against homosexual marriage, pornography, abortion, gambling, or evolution across species.”

He continues: “Faith institutions are the key to developing a personal moral foundation. The government may foster these institutions, encourage them, nurture them; or it may discriminate against them, harass them, undermine them. But it is not the job of government to replace these institutions as the primary moral agents of society. The Founding Fathers clearly wanted no part of an official sectarian religion.” On that last point, all might agree.

Souder’s conclusion is that it is “unfair” to ask believers to “check those beliefs at the public door. It is not going to happen. The challenge is to find ways to continue to allow personal religious freedom in America, as guaranteed by our Constitution, while working through the differences.”

To build on the Cuomo-Souder dialogue, we invited others to join in, and it was exciting to discover how many thoughtful people were eager to share in this discussion. It would be foolhardy to try to summarize so many thoughtful essays here, but it is worth pointing to the essential themes that will inevitably inform any discussion of religion and politics.

One theme that emerges repeatedly is how complicated it is in a free and pluralist 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 *and* its prohibitions on the establishment through government of any particular

religion? In our time, this debate is often expressed in less constitutional terms. How much should religion enter our public debate? How can we guarantee the rights of religious people in the public sphere 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 the religious commitments and beliefs of political candidates? As M. A. Muqtedar Khan argues in these pages: “Today, as all religions experience revivals, we must find ways to guarantee religious freedom without proscribing the scope of religion.” And, yes, that is not easy.

Robert Bellah, one of our country’s premier interpreters of religious and ethical questions, is acutely aware of the difficulties. It is, he writes, “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.” 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 own faith in making a political decision.”

And Bellah knows perfectly well that matters get more complicated still. “But if public action is legitimately, and perhaps inevitably, based in significant part on the religious beliefs of public persons, as both Cuomo and Souder seem to agree,” he writes, “then the nature of those religious beliefs is also legitimately part of the public discussion.” In other words, the public square cannot be bathed in any particular religion, and it cannot avoid religion.

The many conservative voices gathered in this volume help explode stereotypes on this question, specifically the idea that religious conservatives simply want to impose their beliefs on the willing and unwilling alike. It is striking how many of our conservative contributors emphasize the importance of respecting our country’s religious diversity. Many of the voices gathered here suggest that it is possible to share the hope of one of our contributors, Republican Representative Amory Houghton of New York, that our destiny is to be a special nation that “could draw strength from its religious pluralism.”

Michael Cromartie of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, for example, argues forcefully 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.”

Terry Eastland, the publisher of the *Weekly Standard*, is just as clear. “Were I an officeholder or candidate for office,” he writes, “. . . 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 drawn from a religiously pluralist society.”

And Stephen Monsma, a professor of political science at Pepperdine University, also insists that “there are . . . proper and improper uses of religion in the public realm.”

“One way that religion is sometimes improperly used in the public realm is as a symbol to garner votes,” he writes. “Another improper use of religion is to seek a preeminent place for one’s own religion in the public policy realm . . . an improper goal in a religiously pluralist society.”

Liberals in these pages also operate against stereotype. Michael Kazin, a professor at Georgetown University who is working on a biography of William Jennings Bryan, uses Bryan’s example to show how important religious commitment is—and has been—to social progress. “Bryan transformed his party from a bulwark of conservatism—the defender of states’ rights and laissez-faire economics—into a bastion of anticorporate Progressivism that favored federal intervention to help workers and small businesses,” Kazin writes. “Undergirding [his] stand was a simple, pragmatic gospel: Only mobilized citizens, imbued with Christian morality, could save the nation from ‘predatory’ interests and the individuals who did their bidding.”

“The Left,” Kazin declares in an insightful sentence that will provoke much debate, “has never advanced without a moral awakening entangled with notions about what the Lord would have us do.”

And Paul Begala, an architect of Bill Clinton’s victories in the 1990s and the staunch liberal of *Crossfire* fame, is uneasy with how progressives treat religion—and how everyone treats those who are religious and liberal. “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, even antireligious.”

We offer here just a modest hint of what is to come. In his powerful 1973 book *The Seduction of the Spirit*, Harvey Cox, one of our contributors, speaks

of the importance of respecting the religious beliefs of individuals and communities in their specificity.¹ There is no such thing as generic religion, which is why conflicts between those who hold deeply conflicting views are inevitable in a democracy and why religion's engagement with politics will always be vexing. Cox also discusses how religion can be used and misused. Religion can certainly be both used and misused in politics. But secular political ideologies are also subject to use and misuse. If those of strong views, whether secular or religious, are ruled out of the public discussion, then democracy will only be impoverished.

Jeffrey Stout poses an excellent question in his recent book *Democracy and Tradition*: "Is religion a conversation stopper?" At the risk of reducing Stout's elegant argument to a single word, it seems fair to conclude that he believes the answer is no. Stout insists that "it is possible to build democratic coalitions including people who differ religiously and to explore those differences deeply and respectfully without losing one's integrity as a critical intellect."²

This book is offered in the hope and belief 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, our democracy is in very deep trouble. If they can, our democratic conversation will be decidedly enriched.

Notes

1. Harvey Cox, *The Seduction of the Spirit* (Simon and Schuster, 1973).
2. Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 91.



PART I

FAITH AND POLITICS
IN PUBLIC OFFICE



IN THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC TRADITION OF REALISM

MARIO CUOMO

I HAVE BEEN ASKED to share with you my reflections upon the experience of elected officials who try to reconcile personal religious conviction with a pluralist constituency.

In discussing the matter, I do not pretend to be a theologian or a philosopher. I speak only as a former elected official and as a Roman Catholic baptized and raised in the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church. I am attached to the church both by birth and by decision.

In the interest of space constraints, I will try to keep my reflections plain.

Catholicism is a religion of the head as well as of the heart. To be a Catholic is to commit to certain dogmas. It also means a commitment to practice the faith day to day. The practice can be difficult. Today's America, as we all know, is a consumer-driven society, filled with distractions and temptations for people struggling to live by spiritual impulses as well as material ones. Catholics who also hold political office have an additional responsibility. They have to try to create conditions under which all citizens are reasonably free to act according to their own religious beliefs, even when those acts conflict with Roman Catholic dogma regarding divorce, birth control, abortion, stem cell research, and even the existence of God.

Catholic public officials, like all public officials, take an oath to preserve the United States Constitution, which guarantees this freedom. And they do so gladly, not because they love what others do with their freedom but because they realize that, in guaranteeing freedom for others, they guarantee their own right to live their personal lives as Catholics, with the right to

reject birth control, to reject abortions, and to refuse to participate in or contribute to removing stem cells from embryos.

This freedom is perhaps the greatest strength of America's uniquely successful experiment in government, and so it must be a dominant concern of every public official. There are other general legal principles that affect the official's decisions operating at the same time. The First Amendment, of course, which forbids the official preference of one religion over others, also affirms one's right to argue that his or her religious belief would serve well as an article of universal public morality, that this belief is not narrowly sectarian but fulfills a universal human desire for order or peace or justice or kindness or love or all of those things—values most of us agree are desirable, even apart from their specific religious priority.

So I can, if I choose, argue—even as a public official—that the state should not fund the use of contraceptive devices, not because the pope or my bishop demands it but because I think that for the good of the whole community we should not sever sex from an openness to the creation of life. And surely I, as a public official, can, if I am so inclined, demand a law to prevent abortions or stem cell retrieval from embryos, not just because my bishop says it is wrong but also because I think that the whole community, regardless of its religious beliefs, should agree on the importance of protecting life, including life in the womb, which is, at the very least, potentially human and should not be extinguished casually. I, even as a public official, have the right to do all of that.

The Constitution, which guarantees your right not to have to practice my religion, guarantees my right to try to convince you to adopt my religion's tenet as public law whenever that opportunity is presented. And it is presented often.

The question for the religious public official, then, is not, Do I have the *right* to try to make public law match my religious belief? but, *Should* I try? Would the effort produce harmony and understanding? Or might it instead be divisive, weakening our ability to function as a pluralist community? For me, as a Catholic official, the question created by my oath of office, by the Constitution, and by personal inclination was, When should I argue to make my religious value your morality, my rule of conduct your limitation? As I understood my own religion, it required me to accept the restraints it imposed in my own life, but it did not require that I seek to impose all of them on all New Yorkers. For example, although the pope, while I was in office, renewed the Roman Catholic Church's ban on birth control devices,

I was not therefore required to veto the funding of contraceptive programs in my state if I did not believe that to be in the interest of the whole community I was sworn to serve. My church understands that. My church understands that our public morality depends on a consensus view of right and wrong. Religious values will not be accepted as part of the public morality unless they are shared by the community at large. The plausibility of achieving that consensus is a relevant consideration in deciding whether or not to make the effort to impose those values officially.

Catholics have lived with these truths of our democratic society fairly comfortably over the years. There is an American Catholic tradition of political realism, which has always made prudent, practical judgments with respect to its attempts to inject Catholic principles into civil law. That was true of slavery in the late nineteenth century. It is true of contraceptives today. And it certainly appears to be true of stem cell retrieval. I have not heard any proposal from either the Roman Catholic Church or President Bush, who took such a hard stance on this subject, that there should be a law condemning stem cell retrieval as murder. As I understood the president's position, we cannot take stem cells from embryos because the embryo is human life; this is the Catholic position as well.

Religion's place in our government is dependent on legal precedents and social attitudes, which are complex, shifting, and sometimes contradictory. Even trying to define the basic words can be an adventure. Most non-lawyers, maybe even most lawyers, would assume that religion necessarily implies belief in a god, perhaps even implies monotheism. Not so. The word *religion* has been defined by the Supreme Court to include belief systems like secular humanism, Buddhism, ethical culture—belief systems that by and large reject the notion of God. The term *God* is even more difficult. *Black's Law Dictionary* does not even attempt a definition.

And some authorities say that the concept of God is too big to be literally embodied. The word *God* implies an infinite power, infinitely effectual. The human race is only a couple of hundred thousand years old, just learning to reflect, struggling to understand large concepts with tiny intellects. It is therefore no surprise that the word *God* appears nowhere in the Constitution. Even in the Declaration of Independence, which is not a law and therefore not subject to legal interpretation and enforcement, the word appears only in reference to the laws of nature and nature's God.

As I understand it, natural law is law derived from human nature and human reason without the benefit of revelation or a willing suspension of

disbelief. It is the law, as I perceive it, that would occur to us if we were only 500,000 people on an island without books, without education, without rabbis or priests or history, and we had to figure out who and what we were. We can figure out two of the most basic principles of natural law just by looking around at our world. We see that although some creatures are similar to us, we seem to be different from all other creatures in our ability to communicate. That is the first principle. The second is that we should use our abilities to make the place as useful and as good as we can make it.

These two principles are shared by most if not all of our nation's religions, whether they include God or not. Look at the earliest monotheistic religion, Judaism. Two of Judaism's basic principles, as I understand it, are *tzedakkah* and *tikkun olam*. *Tzedakkah* is the obligation of righteousness and common sense that binds all human beings to treat one another charitably and with respect and dignity. Of course. What else would you conclude if you are on a desert island, and you saw other like kinds, and you knew you had to protect yourself against the beasts, and you knew that you had to raise children, and you knew you had to produce crops so you could eat? You would say that we should treat one another with respect. You would not need a whole lot of influence from on high or anywhere else to conclude that.

The second principle, *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. *Tikkun olam*. Well, that is also 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, for the love of me. And I am Truth. And the truth is, God made the world but did not complete it, and you are to be collaborators in creation. That is the message. Judaism describes it as the whole law, without need of ornamentation or elaboration. And on a desert island, it would work. Incidentally, it would work on this island, the globe, before we make it a desert.

All the religions that I am aware of share those two principles. The Koran, I am informed, honors them. It seems to me, as it did to Tocqueville and to many others, that these two principles are of great benefit to our nation and could be even more beneficial if encouraged. Would it not be nice to find a way simply to announce at once to the whole world that before we argue about the things that we differ on we concentrate on the two things we believe in? We are supposed to love one another, and we are

supposed to work together to clean up this mess we are in, because that is the mission that was left to us. I cannot think of any better guidance. Nor do I think it is difficult to apply these two grand, natural law, religious principles to day-to-day affairs, even in a world with the competing virtues of individuality and community.

Abraham Lincoln provides the simplest and most useful instruction in how to reconcile these two virtues. He said that people should collaborate through government to do for one another collectively what they could not do as well or at all individually. This instruction implies that there is a simple way to know whether the responsibility rests with the individual or with the government. Do not ask me if I am a conservative, if I am a liberal. All I have to do is apply this instruction to each set of facts as they occur—and that is not hard. We may argue about it, we may differ about it, we might even fight about it, but it is not intellectually complicated.

Education? You want to do it all privately? Terrific. We did that for a long time. I do not think it works. I think we need to do it collectively, because some people will not be able to pay, and we have to educate everybody. That is why we have free public schools.

Health care? It was not until 1965 that we had Medicare and Medicaid, and so before that we had decided, according to Lincoln's prescription, that we did not need collectivity here.

Unemployment insurance? Worker's compensation? When my mother and father came to the United States from Italy and ran into the Depression there were none of these things. And so the decision we made for the first hundred years or so was, We do not need any, we are fine. Not complicated. Maybe primitively stupid, but not complicated. And it is still not. To answer the question of whether society or the government should be involved in the reaping of stem cells, for example, all we have to do is apply the simple test of the facts of a changing world as they confront us.

What our religious principles urge upon us comes down to this: We need to love one another, to come together to create a good society, and to use that mutuality discretely in order to gain the benefits of community without sacrificing individual freedom and responsibility. In these concededly broad terms, that would be good government. This construction is also, frankly, inviting to people who think of themselves, or want to think of themselves, as religious, who want to believe in something bigger than they are, which is the basis of all of this. I know I do; I know I do desperately

want to believe in something better than I am. If all there is is me in this society, then I have wasted an awful lot of time, because I am not worth it.

I conclude that religious convictions, at least mine, are not a serious impediment to efficient and proper service by a public official in today's America. In fact I am convinced that some of the fundamental propositions common to all religious convictions actually enrich, instead of inhibit, public service, and they make public service especially inviting to people who are trying to be religious.



A CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN'S VIEW ON PUBLIC LIFE

MARK SOUDER

IT IS CLEAR that Mario Cuomo and I agree on one thing, and that is that most political issues are moral issues. If taxes are a moral issue, then we have a pretty wide berth to include just about any public issue.

We are to many degrees products of our background. I would like to lay out a little bit of the background that might shape a conservative Christian's view on how to approach public life. I begin with a quotation from John Adams: "Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people; it is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."¹ That was once an uncontroversial statement. It is a little more controversial today.

Faith institutions are the key to developing a personal moral foundation. The government may foster these institutions, encourage them, nurture them; or it may discriminate against them, harass them, undermine them. But it is not the job of government to replace these institutions as the primary moral agents of society. The Founding Fathers clearly wanted no part of an official sectarian religion.

But a moment of silence in the classroom, the posting in the schoolroom of the Ten Commandments (as long as other expressions are also posted), and a Bible on a teacher's desk are not indications of state-sponsored religion. Quite frankly, extrapolations from these practices to accusations of a government-sponsored religion are downright ridiculous, particularly when these accusations are anchored in the so-called wall-of-separation argument. This argument stems from a court opinion about Evangelical revivalists who did not want to pay for Virginia's state church.

It is not an argument of the Founding Fathers, nor was the argument about religious views.

Conservative faiths, even sects within these faiths, differ on how involved the City of God should be with the City of Man. But this much is true: Conservative Christians as individuals do not separate their lives into a private sphere and a public sphere. Chuck Colson and Nancy Pearcey, in their important book *How Now Shall We Live*, clarify a key basis of the Christian worldview: “Creation, Fall, Redemption. There is no Salvation if there is no Fall. There is no Fall if there is no intelligent design. Those who believe in intelligent design and order, rather than some sort of random chaos and the survival of the fittest, have a fundamentally different view of the world.”²

Let me give you another quotation: “Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is allowed to invade public life.”³ That is what Lord Melbourne said in response to the efforts of William Wilberforce and others to abolish the slave trade in America. Melbourne was interpreting the efforts of Wilberforce as religious and was arguing that religion should not be part of public discussion. However, devoutly religious individuals like Wilberforce have led almost every major social reform.

Here is what the famous Evangelist John Wesley wrote to William Wilberforce after Wilberforce’s second or third defeat on the slavery argument:

Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them together stronger than God? Oh, be not weary of well doing. Go on in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery, the vilest that ever saw the sun, shall vanish away before it, that He has created you from your youth that you may continue strengthening in this and all things.⁴

If you believe you are specifically designed—if you believe in fact that you are not part of some random, inevitable progression of life—then you believe not only that you can change things, you believe also that you have an obligation to change things.

When you serve in government, as I do, every day, every hour you make moral decisions—like making new laws to restrict cheaters like Enron executives. Why restrict cheating? Because it is a moral premise of society.

When we deal with rape, with child support enforcement, with juveniles in trouble with the law, why do we not let both sides fight it out and let the strongest win? Because of certain moral premises that society shares.

I serve on the National Parks Committee. If I should be asked, Why preserve the national parks? Why do we want to preserve our heritage? I might answer, Because there is a logical order and a moral order to what we are preserving. But 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 when I speak out against homosexual marriage, pornography, abortion, gambling, or evolution across species. Then, it seems, I am supposed to check my religious beliefs at the public door. In other words, some moral views seem to be okay in the public arena but other moral views, no matter how deeply held, are not okay.

To again quote Colson and Pearcey, "Genuine Christianity is more than a relationship with Jesus, as expressed in personal piety, church attendance, Bible study, and works of charity. It is more than discipleship, more than believing in a system of doctrines about God. Genuine Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending all reality. It is a worldview."⁵

To ask me to check my Christian beliefs at the public door is to ask me to expel the Holy Spirit from my life when I serve as a congressman, and that I will not do. Either I am a Christian or I am not. Either I reflect His glory or I do not.

Some time ago, a trendy Evangelical expression was WWJD—What would Jesus do? A better question, given that we are not God, would be: To the best of my limited capability to understand, what do I believe Jesus would have me, as a humble sinner, do? That is a legitimate question.

All this said, we might ask, How in a pluralist society do we implement our own deeply held beliefs? It is not easy. How should we, for instance, handle defeat in the public arena? How do we react to official decisions regarding abortion, for example. Do we resort to violence, or do we take up civil disobedience, or do we work to elect different decisionmakers? Do we respect those with whom we deeply disagree? Can there, for example, be a civil debate on abortion or not?

Few decisions were ever as hard for me as voting against three of the counts of impeachment of Bill Clinton. I was the only conservative in Congress to do so. I found Clinton's moral behavior abominable; I cannot tell you how disgusted I was at a personal level. But I also had sworn to uphold the Constitution. Based on how I interpreted the Constitution, having

studied all the arguments looking for a way to vote yes, I concluded I could not do that on three of the counts. Chuck Colson did not agree with my position, but the night before I voted he advised me that if I did not vote my conscience, if I caved in to the political pressure from my base in my district, then I would be committing perjury, just like the allegation against Clinton. So I had a choice either to resign or to vote my conscience.

The only more difficult question than a constitutional one is a question about war. I come from an Anabaptist background, which espouses nonresistance. The Book of Romans, however, clearly states that although individual Christians have a responsibility for peace, it is the job of government to punish the evildoers. Opposition to war is the reason that many Anabaptists do not work in government. So, for me, a vote to support even a necessary and just war will never, ever, be easy because of my fundamental beliefs. I believe that such a vote should be exercised with grave caution.

Sometimes we who are members of a minority church behave as though being a minority is terrible, especially for children. The church in which I grew up did not believe in attending movies, for example. When the school I went to decided to take the students to see the movie *The Sound of Music*, I spent that time in a classroom all by myself. The ACLU did not come to defend me. On this and other issues the school did not try to accommodate my moral views.

Mind you, I was not persecuted, I was not intimidated. In fact, at the time, it did not even particularly bother me that I alone did not attend the movie. But what bothers me is that, in the public arena today, if I as a Christian am offended, I have to be the one to leave. If a liberal—or anyone of a different view from that of a conservative Christian—objects, then the conservative Christians are supposed to stop their objectionable action. Minority views are not given the same representation as majority views.

For example, a liberal may argue that debates about evolution are about science versus religion. But they are not about religion. They are about differing scientific viewpoints, anchored in differing views of how the world came to be. It is not a science versus religion debate, and it is unfair to describe it that way. It is unfair to claim that other people's views are based on religion and therefore do not belong in the arena of public debate.

Thus I believe that society discriminates against the moral views of conservatives. In my case, such discrimination had a side benefit: It without a doubt built the character that enabled me to be able to dissent from the

accepted view and to make my views heard. That is one of the benefits of learning to defend your belief.

America is clearly becoming more religiously diverse: More religions are represented and membership in these religions is growing. A significant percentage of this country is Evangelical, charismatic, fundamentalist, or conservative Catholic, or conservative Lutheran, or Orthodox Jewish, or fundamentalist Muslim, and these people hold passionate views, views that are essential to their very being. These believers will not—and it is unfair to ask them to—check those beliefs at the public door. It is not going to happen. The challenge is to find ways to continue to allow personal religious freedom in America, as guaranteed by our Constitution, while working through the differences.

In a republic, disagreements are decided in the public arena. At different times in American history, different moral views may prevail. Abortion may be legal in some periods and illegal in other periods. Will dissenters resort to violence or will they confine their protest to the ballot box? Sex with minors? The use of marijuana? Date rape? The spanking of children? The way we judge these depends on our moral view, on our worldview. The way society judges these depends on the worldview of legislators, of the president, and of the courts.

Notes

1. Charles Francis Adams, ed., *John Adams, The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, vol. IX, October 11, 1798 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), p. 229.

2. Chuck W. Colson and Nancy Pearcey *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999).

3. Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 504.

4. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Life* (Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 56.

5. Colson and Pearcey, pp. 14–15.



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN TO MARIO CUOMO In the course of your presentation you note concerns about making an individual's religious faith the value of the wider community, and you also indicate that in attempting to do that, rather than creating or sustaining civic harmony, it might do quite the opposite. Do you believe there are times when a public official, who is also a deeply committed person of faith, should deepen divisions that may exist in the community for the sake of furthering values that may be religiously based? When is it your job to deepen that debate and to extend the debate in a direction that is consistent both with your religious values and with what you hope will be the values of the wider community at some point?

MARIO CUOMO RESPONDS What you are asking for is examples—for me to tell you under what circumstances I would risk rejection for a greater good. That question should not be limited to religious issues. My position on the death penalty, for example, confuses a lot of people. In debating it against Ed Koch, which I did for years, he would say, “Mario is against the death penalty because he thinks it is a sin,” which is a deprecating way to characterize my position. I have been against the death penalty all of my adult life. For most of my adult life the Catholic Church did not express an opinion against the death penalty. Notwithstanding, I wrote to the Vatican when I was governor and said, “Please, please, please, speak on this subject.”

When I speak against the death penalty I never suggest that I consider it a moral issue. I seldom talk in terms of moral issues. I am against the death penalty because I think it is bad and unfair. It is debasing. It is degenerate. It kills innocent people. It eclipses other more significant issues that we should be addressing when we talk about murder and how to do away with it.

My position on the death penalty is based on reasons that are not religious nor it is based on questions of morality. My reasons are perfectly appropriate in this pluralist society. The question is, What is good for us, what is fair, what is reasonable? What works, what does not work? I have made a strong case for my position on the death penalty, but I got—pardon me—murdered at the polls, especially in 1994, when I lost 7.5 percent of the votes because of my position on the death penalty. And considering that I lost the election by only 2.5 or 3 points, that meant a lost election. But I believe it was better to make the point as insistently as I could than to walk away from it.

Why? Because it is an issue that goes way beyond executing somebody at Sing Sing. I pushed the issue because it goes far beyond the death penalty itself. It is a question of how one views human beings. It is a question of how one deals with anger. People favor the death penalty, to my understanding, because they are angry and because they want revenge. There is no other reason that I can find. And anger is corrosive. I think that the death penalty is bad and that it has to be objected to. And so I did.

So when do we take a potentially unpopular stand for a greater good? When we think we should. Should we take a stand against stem cell research? Should Catholics be arguing that there should be a law that declares that anybody who withdraws a stem cell from an embryo is a murderer? Should the government forbid it? Make the issue part of penal law? That seems to be the logic of those who object.

That is the logic of the argument against abortion. If we say that the fetus is a person, we should also say that there should be a law punishing abortion as murder. But, no—I do not think so. Why? I think such a law would be divisive. It would not work. People would not understand it, and we would not make our point.

I tried to make the point at Notre Dame in 1984 as a Catholic. I said, look, if we want to convince people that our position on abortion demonstrates a respect for life that would be good for all of us, let us start by

example. At that time the statistics available to us showed that Catholics were having abortions to the same extent that everybody else was. How can we expect to convert this community to our point of view unless we lead the way by example and with love?

One of my disappointments with the Democratic Party is that, although it often talks in terms of morality on both Iraq and the tax cut, it has basically declined to take a stand on these issues. The tax cut was passed when we had the largest surplus in American history. The tax cut was passed with the rationale that we do not need the money. They gave us the money; we should give it back. And so most of it will go back to the rich people who gave us most of it.

Over the next few years, \$500 billion will go to 1,120,000 taxpayers, more or less. The richest people in America will get \$500 billion. This will happen in spite of the deficits that threaten states and local government, which means increases in real estate taxes and property taxes. These are regressive taxes, the taxes that hurt most of all working people and poor people.

Now, with all of that—with the lack of money for prescription drugs, with a war looming that they say will cost \$200 billion, with Social Security money being used up in this process—should we go forward with a \$500 billion distribution of money to people who are so rich they cannot reasonably be said to need it? When it would not even be invested in the economy? Are we going to switch our rationale now to say, Well, we had a great surplus then, we had a powerful economy then. Now we have a lousy economy. Now we want the tax cut because it will stimulate the economy.

But tax cuts for, say, my clients at Willkie, Farr, and Gallagher are not going to stimulate the economy. My clients are not going to buy automobiles with the money; they are going to invest it. Give the money to people who are going to spend it right away. Take half of the \$500 billion and give it to state and local governments so as to avoid raising state and local taxes for poor people. Tell the rich people to wait four years. Tell me why that is not a totally moral position and fairer than our current position, which is, If it seems that we are raising taxes we will lose an election.

Now consider Iraq. Imagine Iraq without 9/11; just for a moment try to imagine there was, if only it could be so, no 9/11. And imagine that a year and a half or so into the presidency, without 9/11, the president announces that America is going to attack Iraq. What would have happened? Well,

after the laughter stopped, people would have said to Bush, You have to be kidding. Make the case. You did not say this in the 2000 campaign. You have not said it for a year and a half. Why are you saying it now? What has happened? Did you learn something? Maybe you know something; maybe you found something; maybe the Israelis found something.

The Iraq issue was shoved into the draft of that great surging current of emotion created by 9/11. We did not even ask questions. But now we are coming to our senses, and we are asking questions. We say of Saddam Hussein, Look, he is a bad guy, he is Adolf Hitler. We want to get rid of him. We understand that. But is there a way to do it without sending 200,000 or 300,000 people to Iraq, some of whom will be killed, and without killing lots of innocent people? Is there another way to do it?

We are not making that argument because many politicians believe that people will not understand. They sanctify popularity. But is this not a good example of when to go forward? The issue does not have to be religious or moral. It could be something we believe in our hearts to be absolutely wrong. Why do we say nothing about them? Because we want to stick around, to stay in public service. We tell ourselves that in the long run we will do many good things that are heavier in weight than the good thing we might accomplish if we speak out. Or we say that we cannot accomplish anything good here anyway and so as a matter of prudence and pragmatism decide to sit back and not make waves.

Is it a sin to do nothing? Well, the God I trust in, I hope, is more supple than that. I am not sure it would be called a sin. But the question comes up all the time, and we have to decide it by our own lights.

E.J. DIONNE TO MARK SOUDER Non-Christian Americans look at Christianity in general as the majority faith, and they are therefore fearful of the injection of this majority faith into not so much the public square—there should be no argument about the right of people to bring religious arguments to the public square—but into public policy. Many times political arguments do break down along such lines, so that not only secularists but also members of minority communities worry about the injection of Christianity into public policy. On the other hand, your perspective is potentially helpful because you define a group of Christians—broadly speaking, Evangelical Christians—as yet another minority. Could you talk about whether this is an apt description of your view and about the fears of non-Christian religious minorities that their rights could be violated?

MARK SOUDER RESPONDS That is a complex question, but it goes to the heart of one of the fundamental reasons that liberals and conservatives pass each other right by. It also highlights some differences inside what might be called *Christianity* or even *conservative Christianity*.

Let me first deal with the idea that some maintain that America was once considered a Christian nation. If you define America or another country as a Christian nation, you pretty well define the word out of existence, because the term *Christian* is so broad in interpretation and application that it does not really have meaning. Yet those who do not consider themselves Christian view the Christian movement as monolithic and, therefore, a danger.

I grew up in a fundamentalist church. Many people in my denomination felt that when John Kennedy got elected that there would be a direct phone line to the pope. They thought that the Catholic Church was monolithic and that every Catholic was alike. When I went to graduate school at Notre Dame, I found that no two Catholics agreed on anything. There were Sunday Catholics, daily mass Catholics, holiday Catholics, Catholics who believe in the Trinity, and those who do not. The idea that they were going to unite and crush us was absurd. It is also absurd to believe this about Christians.

Christians have in fact killed each other. I remember one time in Dan Coats's office, where I was a staffer, we were arguing about whether to fund drug-free school programs. A staffer who is Calvinist in background told me in jest that I advocated these programs because I was a dissenting, free-will Pelagian who believed that people could be changed. I argued that, in fact, people could be changed. He said, "And that is why my people killed your people 500 years ago." So the idea that Christians are going to unite on a church-state type of thing is just not even on our horizon.

MARGARET O'BRIEN STEINFELS The Catholic Church has apparently never provided, as part of its insurance coverage for its employees or for people who get insurance from Catholic companies, contraceptive coverage. The New York legislature has voted to require all insurance companies in the state, including Catholic ones, to provide contraceptive coverage. One could make a case that violating the conscience of a religious institution by requiring it to do something that is against its strictures merits discussion and further thought.

MARIO CUOMO RESPONDS The question is, How far should we go to accommodate religious liberty? There are Catholic hospitals that will not perform abortions, and we allow them the privilege of not providing abortion services, even as we give them a whole range of government services that we give to other hospitals. We do not insist that they surrender their reluctance to perform abortions.

Another question is, To what extent should we accommodate the Catholics' reluctance to cooperate materially in the distribution of contraceptives? I do not see that that would be terribly punishing to the rest of society to allow them that exemption—to allow them that conscience clause. What the courts would do with that is an entirely different matter. As you know, the law is far from clear on the question of giving people exemptions so they can practice their religion. The decision in *City of Boerne, Texas v. Flores* did not help. I am not sure there is a lot of logic at the Supreme Court level. Sometimes the Court has been more willing than at other times to decide in favor of religious groups.

MARK SOUDER RESPONDS If the hospital were purely private, there would be little dispute. The problem comes with dependence on public money, when the question moves into the realm of public debate. I believe there should be a conscience clause. There are plenty of hospital options for people who choose abortion in big cities. But it is a much more difficult question if there is only one choice of a hospital or one choice of a health care plan and if government funds pay for a portion of those services.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN Others would cast the question of Catholic hospitals being allowed the privilege of not performing abortions in a different political language and say they have a right, not simply a privilege, not to perform abortions. It is part of religious liberty, part of free exercise. That issue will be refracted in different ways, depending upon the rhetorical choices.

WILLIAM GALSTON The greatest thinker in my tradition, Moses Maimonides, worked all of his life to reduce 613 commandments to 13 articles of faith. The governor of New York, without working too hard, has taken that 13 down to 2. With more work, we can probably take it down to a single, unitary article of faith.

The issue as I understand it is how to reconcile personal religious views with the practice of politics in a pluralist democracy. Mario Cuomo gives an interesting and clear response: The God who ought to enter the public realm of a pluralist constitutional democracy is nature's God, and the religious arguments that ought to enter the discourse of a pluralist constitutional democracy are the religious arguments that are the common property not only of all religions but also of all mankind. This is the classic natural law argument.

My question to Mark Souder is whether you agree with that formulation, and if you do not, what portion of faith that is not accessible to the common reason of mankind has a legitimate role in the public realm?

RON SIDER I want to add to the natural law discussion. It would seem that simply taking the two principles (especially the second, working to repair and improve the common society) does not work because policy-makers might have very different worldviews—views about the nature of persons and so on. Different and even contradictory public policies will flow from these different worldviews. Secular humanists and fundamentalist Christians, for example, have different worldviews and espouse different policies, though both will claim to be working to improve society.

So that general principle, it seems to me, is so general that it is virtually useless. We have to move to a more specific content, which is what Mark Souder does. But then the problem on the other side is that, yes, we have the right to bring our full-blown religious views into the public debate but then we have got to convince a broad range of people. And that need forces us to use common language, which pushes us back in the direction of Cuomo's position.

MARK SOUDER RESPONDS The notion of a natural law common to all religions is in fact a worldview and a moral view that is different from a Christian worldview and moral view—and is unacceptable to me. So the question is, How do I reconcile that view with my Christian view in the public arena, since I believe that the Holy Trinity is nature's God, since I believe the Trinity is the God who created nature? I cannot relate to the idea of a generic, natural law God. My God is a particularly Christian God. If you ask, What is common to all religions? Well, what if child abuse is? What if date rape is? What if religions allow twelve-year-olds to have sex with adults? Does the law have to be common to all religions? Or just to

major religions? And what if major religions disagree on the role of women? What is nature's God? I do not believe there is a common denominator that is workable in the American political system.

The question really comes down to, How do we respect one another? How do we resolve our differences? In other words, What is in the City of God realm and what is in the City of Man realm? But that is what we work through in the public arena.

MARIO CUOMO RESPONDS If the natural law principle that says that we are all in this together is too general to be useful, well, that is of course true also of the American Constitution. Consider the Articles of Confederation—thirteen states decided they were interconnected and interdependent and ought to come together to *tikkun olam*, to repair the situation. They created a Constitution that has soaring general language about “for the common welfare,” “to create a more perfect union.” Talk about generalizations.

In the wake of 9/11, in dealing with hatred all over the planet, do we believe in a principle that says, Let us start with the proposition that we are interconnected and interdependent and that these others are part of our world? It is the first principle.

I was heartened to read President Bush's new strategy for defense. He says, “I acknowledge the importance of dealing with poverty in parts of the world where there is apparently hostility to us, and that until we help them to rid themselves of the problem of oppression and poverty, we will continue to have a problem.” That is specifically a recognition of interdependent interconnectedness.

Those, of course, were Gorbachev's greatest words. They were Vaclav Havel's greatest words. They were their contribution—that we are all in this thing together. It is the difference between isolationism and getting involved.

I do not think such a principle is too general, any more than the Constitution is too general. The Constitution says, Get together for the sake of the whole place; and you states, give up some of your power, throw it into the pot so that we have a commonality here. America has worked it out for a couple of hundred years. The first hundred years did not have a whole lot of the commonality aspect; Americans were believers in rugged individualism. Thanks to the Depression we then moved into a new phase.

Too general? I do not think so. It is the heart of the matter. We are supposed to treat one another with dignity. That means that people in Africa

who are dying from AIDS are just like people here who are dying from AIDS. We do not treat them that way, not nearly. We are not doing anything like what we would do for them if they were in our family. That is a violation of the principle I am enunciating. You have to apply it from moment to moment, as Mark Souder says. In the end it is always a matter of fashioning it to meet the practical situation. But too general? It is the whole game. It is the whole game. Unless the United States, particularly, understands that, we are finished.

We are talking about changing accounting irregularity to accounting regularity, through Sarbanes-Oxley, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and all sorts of specific rules. By 2005 the European Union will have 380 million people and its own set of accounting principles. Unless the United States also institutes new accounting regulations and an improved accounting system by 2005, the growing globalization in financing, which is important to both the European Union and the United States, will be slowed. That is a simple principle. Too general? No, of course not. We apply the principle to the situation. But in all cases, we work to cooperate.

If you take—I hate to say evolutionary—but if you take an evolutionary point of view, we are going from the slime to the sublime. 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. When we finally have perfect civility, then we are home. And the key to perfect civility is integration, not disintegration, not fragmentation. Maybe it is general, but it works very nicely for me.

ROBERT EDGAR My question has to do with a concern that is growing in me as a former congressperson, as someone who has watched as capitalism has become, in a sense, a religion that has been lifted up high and honored, particularly by the conservative tradition.

I look at the fact that 80 percent of the world's population lives in sub-standard housing, that 70 percent of the world's population cannot read or write, and that 50 percent of the world's population will go to bed tonight hungry, and I see the rise in children being placed in factories, particularly offshore, to produce products that we profit from in our society, and I wonder, given both of your perspectives on your faith statements, how might our faith statements critique capitalism in a constructive way so that an economic system can be shaped for the future that is not based on having a

percentage of our population poor? And as I understand it, all of our religious traditions fundamentally care about the least of these, our brothers and sisters.

AZIZAH Y. AL-HIBRI I speak as a Muslim. I am aware in these comments of a very rudimentary knowledge of Islam and the Muslim community. I offer examples. In some cases, I think Islam could have been included in describing positive attitudes in this country, and it was not because we just do not know enough. And in other cases, assumptions were made about Muslims that are inaccurate. I will pick one of those simply to show that just as minorities fall into the trap of talking about Christians as one lump, the same is true of minorities—that we cannot talk about all of them as one lump, that there are differences among the various minorities. For example, in talking about bringing religion to the public square, it is often assumed that minorities do not like that, because they will be the losers. In fact, Representative Souder, I wrote an article in which I said that Muslims would rather live in a Christian state than a godless state. So that might come as a surprise to you, but it was after a lot of discussion with a lot of Muslims in my community.

These are good things to say about Muslims. My concern is that since we are very concerned about people bringing their faith to the public square, we have noticed that since 9/11 some of us have been left in the class alone. In fact, a lot has been said about Muslims that renders them powerless and voiceless. If religion is brought to the public square, is there a responsibility on the part of those we view as a majority to stand up, to make sure that certain minorities, even in the most difficult of times, are not rendered voiceless and are not being condemned in unfair ways?

J. BRENT WALKER I am with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; unlike our Anabaptist cousins, who are pacifists, we Baptists like to fight with one another all the time. I want to offer something that my Baptist sister, Barbara Jordan, once said when asked the same question about how she went about integrating her faith with her public service. “You would do well to pursue your cause with vigor while realizing that you are a servant of God, not a spokesperson for God, and realizing that God may well choose to bless an opposing point of view for reasons that have not yet been revealed to you.” I think she spoke a lot of wisdom. And I would like

the governor and the congressman to comment briefly on the role of humility as exemplified by Jesus and taught by Jesus in an otherwise ego-ridden arena of politics and public service.

JOANNA ADAMS First, do our panelists sense a growing religiosity in the United States, or is the United States becoming increasingly secular in its values? And second, if the conclusion is that we are becoming increasingly religious, clearly we are becoming increasingly religiously diverse. Is this diversity a hair shirt, a problem that we must bear up under and figure out how to respond to, because it is a negative? Or is it in fact a blessing—I would use that word—a great opportunity for our democracy?

MARIO CUOMO RESPONDS About the religiosity, this is a truly intriguing question and a very good one. What I have seen over my span is an increasing desire to be able to engage this world in spiritual terms, as distinguished from material terms. And I think, without making it too complicated, that is not always religion qua religion. It is a growing desire to find an explanation that goes beyond ourselves.

And this has always been true of humanity. We have always wanted to find an explanation that goes beyond our own me-ness and that is larger and more beautiful and will sustain us in all the confusion of this place, especially after things like 9/11, where the biggest question we are left with is not, Why did our religion fail, why did our intelligence fail? but Why did any good God allow this to happen? And that is the question asked of the Holocaust, and that is the question asked when a child dies in the crib without explanation, and that is the question that troubles religious people most. We read Rabbi Harold Kushner's book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, but it is never enough, no matter what we read.

Most people conclude at some point that the only thing they are sure of is the value of the next breath they draw, the value of their lives and of making more of their lives. And then they fall back to one of two possibilities: One, they see themselves as baskets of appetites and run around filling up their baskets as fast as they can because they know they are likely to be extinguished at any moment; that is what 9/11 reminds them of, and so they do sex or food or power, whatever it is.

But I think a larger number of people know that that is foolish, because they get older, and the basket falls apart, and they look for something really

meaningful. And what is it? It is the people they love and the people who love them. It is their children, their home.

So the short answer: Spirituality, yes, a great desire for spirituality, but the sophistication—and I am using the term as a negative—that comes with a lot of education makes it a little bit harder for people to keep the religious tradition and to make a religious commitment, because more and more people think they are wise enough to challenge it: I cannot prove it, I do not understand it, and so I am going to reject it. And if you give them any provocation to give up on their so-called faith, they will lapse; they will say, Well, I am spiritual.

So if there are people who are trying more and more to be spiritual, more and more to find some truth, that is what the natural law is. It is a truth that appeals to reason, that does not have the benefit of bureaucracy and carefully etched, specific rules for specific situations, but that has the fundamental principles that make people believe in something bigger than themselves. And what is bigger than ourselves is the world we are part of and the contribution we can make to making it a little bit better.

Now, I am not smart enough to figure out Heaven and Hell and why any good God would burn us eternally for making us vulnerable and all of that (this is not me; I am talking about people who are spiritual but not religious). I detect—and that is a very good thing—people looking for something more to believe in. That is what religion is supposed to do for you.

Is it good? Bad? I think it is good because I think what we desperately need is some way to express a willingness to be a community, because we are going from the slime to sublime, and the only way you get there is through integration, and that means we have got to learn better than we know now how to come together. So I think it is good.

MARK SOUDER RESPONDS I will give a couple fast answers to the questions, and then I want to zero in on the two related to the Muslims. I have some agreements and some disagreements about the religiosity question. I believe, in fact, we are losing a lot of the middle, that we are simultaneously moving to traditional faiths, which are growing, and also moving away from any organized religion at all in the sense of church attendance or a rule that mandates something other than a person's will.

I agree that 9/11, particularly, sparked people into looking for something bigger than themselves. But often, if there is not a standard that has

a tradition, this search merely becomes looking for something that enables people to do what they want; or the method is really arbitrary, like finding guidance in a crystal or how the stars align. I believe the question, at least for Christianity, is, Do you accept Jesus Christ as your savior? Because without him, you will be lost in Hell forever. And then you honor and obey him. Other religious faiths have variations of that, but to me, that is what religion is, not what our personal desires are and the way we cope with them. It is how to honor the creator.

The poverty question is difficult. I am more of a neoconservative than a libertarian. However, all conservatives are really fusionists in the political arena, because that is how we get elected. I have more faith in the free market than many others might have, but I have always believed that corporations have a responsibility to be active in their communities. I am as angered by Enron as any liberal, because I believe the company is a shame to capitalism, hiding things off the books. I believe in openness and honesty. The Enron scandal shook confidence in the whole capitalist system, the system that I believe helps the poor the most.

That said, I believe that we will never eliminate the poor, because *poor* is a relative term. What we want to do is make sure that there is opportunity to rise and a decent standard of living for the poor. Eliminate not relative poverty but absolute poverty, as Nicholas Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute says, and with certain decent standards as a given. While I might have different solutions than Ron Sider would advocate, he has helped call attention to the fact that we in the Evangelical movement often get into thinking that our little fingernail is more important than anything else in the rest of the world. And we as Christians have obligations to the rest of the world.

I am an American. I am proud. I think this country is a beacon to the world. But I also think it is part of an international community. Christ talked more about the poor than he did about the rich, and I believe that we will be measured ultimately by how we help those who are hurting, not by how we help those who are powerful. In the public arena, however, that means we can differ over whether capital gains cuts will help the poor.

With regard to the question of diversity, which ties into the question about Muslims, I have a far more diverse base than establishment liberals or Democrats do. My campaign chairman is Armenian. I have a large Asian Indian community in my district, which actively supports me. I have never in any subpoll pulled less than 67 percent of any minority subgroup, includ-

ing African American, Asian, and Hispanic, and it is partly because, by my nature, I am nondiscriminatory. I have strong views, and so I respect the strong views of others, and people sense that.

For instance, I am a very strong supporter of Israel. That, however, does not mean that I believe that Palestinians or Arabs or Muslims are subhuman, or that I am disrespectful of them, or that I do not want to try to work out the complexities, both international and domestic, with the Muslim faith. And it is not that I do not understand the diversity of the Muslim community in my district. There are 200 Iraqis in my district. About half of them came here before Saddam Hussein's reign in Iraq. About half of them are Shi'i from the southern part of Iraq, and the other half are Sunni. If Christians or others, particularly at this time, do not try to understand the complexities and the differences in the Muslim community, this is wrong.

The bad news for the Muslim community is that the potential war in Iraq and the terrorism question have exposed them to prejudice and discrimination in our society. The good news for the Muslim community is that others are trying to understand Islam and to learn how many Muslims are in America, in our communities. Americans are also learning that Muslims are not all one. Just as I said about the Catholic Church, it is clear that there is a wide diversity in the Muslim community. For instance, Iraqi Shi'i point out that Iranian Shi'i are not Arabs, although they are Muslims and a part of the Shi'i Muslim community. But still most Americans, including many in government, do not necessarily understand these distinctions.

Now, understanding the differences and the common traditions is going to be slow. But how we work through that is important. The ultimate question is, Do I think that the diversity will strengthen or weaken America? It depends on how we react. In fact, we have absorbed one wave after another of immigrants, and each wave of immigrants has felt some form of discrimination: the Asians did, the Irish did, the Germans did, the Mexicans do currently. The question is, How do we assimilate? And that goes in both directions: How much does American society expand to tolerate and understand the new people who have come in? And what things cannot be assimilated in the public arena? And how much do those who come accept the values of America in the public arena? So assimilation can take a while, but there still has to be an assimilation of certain values that people came to America for.

As we absorb people who practice Asian religions and Muslim religions in larger numbers than we have before, how in the public arena do we

accommodate a legal system and an ethical system that is anchored in the Judeo-Christian tradition? How much are the people who are coming in going to assimilate into the Judeo-Christian tradition? How much do we have to change the framework? To answer these questions, we have to be far more understanding of the differences, and we have to work out how these differences and changes are going to work in the public arena.