

Symposium on Religion and Politics

Religious Freedom and the Elected Official

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BOSTON COLLEGE

BOISI CENTER
FOR RELIGION AND AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE

Sym

Politics for Congress and the Public Officials

Second Inaugural Address

Abraham Lincoln

March 4, 1865

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended

John F. Kennedy

Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association

Delivered 12 September 1960 at the Rice Hotel in Houston, TX

Reverend Meza, Reverend Reck, I'm grateful for your generous invitation to state my views.

While the so-called religious issue is necessarily and properly the chief topic here tonight, I want to emphasize from the outset that I believe that we have far more critical issues in the 1960 campaign; the spread of Communist influence, until it now festers only 90 miles from the coast of Florida -- the humiliating treatment of our President and Vice President by those who no longer respect our power -- the hungry children I saw in West Virginia, the old people who cannot pay their doctors bills, the families forced to give up their farms -- an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space. These are the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues -- for war and hunger and ignorance and despair know no religious barrier.

But because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected President, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured -- perhaps deliberately, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again -- not what kind of church I believe in, for that should be important only to me -- but what kind of America I believe in.

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the President -- should he be Catholic -- how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference, and where no man is denied public

with Bowie and Crockett died Fuentes, and McCafferty, and Bailey, and Badillo, and Carey -- but no one knows whether they were Catholics or not. For there was no religious test there.

I ask you tonight to follow in that tradition -- to judge me on the basis of 14 years in the Congress, on my declared stands against an Ambassador to the Vatican, against unconstitutional aid to parochial schools, and against any boycott of the public schools -- which I attended myself. And instead of doing this, do not judge me on the basis of these

loser, in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people.

But if, on the other hand, I should win this election, then I shall devote every effort of mind and spirit to fulfilling the oath of the Presidency -- practically identical, I might add, with the oath I have taken for 14 years in the Congress. For without reservation, I can, "solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution -- so help me God.

Religious Belief and Public Morality

Mario M. Cuomo

October 25, 1984

This is the text of the speech by Governor Cuomo to the Department of Theology at the University of Notre Dame, September 13, 1984. Although some excerpts were published in the press, they were heavily cut. Here only the opening remarks have been omitted.

I speak here as a politician. And also as a Catholic, a layman baptized and raised in the pre-Vatican II Church, educated in Catholic schools, attached to the Church first by birth, then by choice, now by love. An old-fashioned Catholic who sins, regrets, struggles, worries, gets confused, and most of the time feels better after confession. The Catholic Church is my spiritual home. My heart is there, and my hope.

There is, of course, more to being a Catholic than having a sense of spiritual and emotional resonance. Catholicism is a religion of the head as well as the heart, and to be a Catholic is to say "I believe" to the essential core of dogmas that distinguishes our faith. The acceptance of this faith requires a lifelong struggle to understand it more fully and to live it more truly, to translate truth into experience, to practice as well as believe. That's not easy. Applying religious belief to everyday life often pres

do the same for the forthcoming pastoral on econom

But where would that leave the non-believers? Whose Christianity would be law, yours or mine?

The “Christian nation” argument should come even frighten—two groups: non-Christians and thinking Christians. I believe it does. It’s already apparent that a good part of this nation understands—if only instinctively—that anyt

I should start, I believe, by noting that the Catholic Church's actions with respect to the interplay of religious values and public policy make clear that there is an inflexible moral principle that determines what political conduct should be. For example,

Certainly, we should not be forced to mold Catholic morality to conform to disagreement by non-Catholics however sincere or severe their disagreement. Bishops should be teachers, not pollsters. They should not change what we Catholics believe in order to ease our consciences or please our friends or protect the Church from criticism. But if the breadth, intensity, and sincerity of opposition to Church teaching shouldn't be allowed to shape our Catholic morality, it can't help but determine our ability—our realistic, political ability—to translate our Catholic morality into civil law, a law not for the believers who don't need it but for the disbelievers who reject it. And it is here, in our attempt to find a political answer to abortion—an answer beyond our private observance of Catholic morality—that we encounter controversy within and without the

The parallel I want to draw here is not between what we Catholics believe to be moral wrongs. It is in the Catholic response to those wrongs. Church teaching on slavery and abortion is clear. But in the application of those teachings—the exact way we translate them into action, the specific laws we propose, the exact legal systems we seek—there was and is no one, clear, absolute route that the Church says, as a matter of doctrine, we must follow.

The bishops' pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace," speaks directly to this point. "We recognize," the bishops wrote,

that the Church's teaching authority does not carry the same force when it deals with technical solutions involving particular means as it does when it speaks of principles or ends. People may agree in abhorring an injustice, for instance, yet sincerely disagree as to what practical approach will achieve justice. Religious groups are entitled to their opinion in such cases, but they should not claim that their opinions are the only ones that people of good will may hold.

With regard to abortion, the American bishops have had to weigh Catholic moral teaching against the fact of a pluralistic country where our view is the minority, acknowledging that what is ideally desirable isn't al

Other legal options that have been proposed in any view, equally ineffective. The Hatch amendment, by returning the question of abortion to the states, would have given us a checkerboard of permissive and restrictive jurisdictions. In some cases people might have been forced to go elsewhere to have abortions that might have eased a few consciences but it wouldn't have done what the Church wants to do—it wouldn't have created a deep-seated respect for life. Abortions would have gone on, millions of them.

Nor would a denial of Medicaid funding for abortion achieve our objectives. Given *Roe v. Wade* it would be nothing more than an attempt to do indirectly what the law says cannot be done directly; worse, it would do it in a way that would burden only the already disadvantaged. Removing funding from the Medicaid program would not prevent the rich and middle classes from having abortions. It would not even assure that the disadvantaged wouldn't have them; it would only impose financial burdens on poor women who want abortions.

Apart from that unevenness, there is a moral question. Medicaid is designed to deal with health and medical needs. But the arguments fo

Nobody has expressed this better than a bishop in his own state, Joseph Sullivan, a man who works with the poor in New York City, is ardently opposed to abortion, and argues, with his fellow bishops, for a change of law. "The major problem the Church has is internal," the bishop said last month in reference to abortion. "Who do we teach? As much as I think we're responsible for advocating public policy issues, primary responsibility is to teach our own people. We haven't done that. We're asking politicians to do what we haven't done effectively ourselves."

I agree with the bishop. I think our moral and social mission as Catholics must begin with the wisdom contained in the words "Physician, heal thyself." Unless we Catholics educate ourselves better to the values that define—and can enrich—our lives, following those teachings better than we do now, unless we set an example that is clear and compelling, then we will never convince this society to change the civil laws that protect what we preach is precious human life.

Better than any law or rule that threatens punishment would be the moving strength of our own good example, demonstrating our lack of hypocrisy, proving the beauty and worth of our instruction. We must work for peaceful ways to avoid abortions without otherwise violating our faith. We should provide funds and opportunities for young women to bring their child to term, knowing both of them will be taken care of if that is necessary; we should teach our young men better than we do now their responsibilities in creating and caring for human life.

It is this duty of the Church to teach through its practice of love what Pope John Paul II has proclaimed so magnificently to all peoples. "The Church," he wrote in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979),

which has no weapons at her disposal apart from those of the spirit, of the word and of love, cannot renounce her proclamation of "the word, season and out of season." For this reason she does not cease to implore...everybody in the name of God and in the name of man: Do not kill! Do not prepare destruction and extermination for each other! Think of your brothers and sisters who are suffering hunger and misery. Respect each one's dignity and freedom!

The weapons of the word and of love are already available to us: we need only the will to provide them. I am not implying that we should stand by and pretend indifference to whether a woman takes a pregnancy to its conclusion or aborts. I believe we should in all cases try to teach a respect for life. And I believe with regard to abortion that, despite *Rev. Wade*, we can, in practical ways. Here, in fact, it seems to me that all of us can agree.

Without lessening their insistence on a woman's right to abortion, the people who call themselves "pro-choice" can support the development of government programs that present an impoverished mother with the full range of supportive needs to bear and raise her children, to have a real choice. Without dropping their campaign to ban abortion, those who gather under the banner of "pro-life" can join in developing and enacting a legislative bill of rights for mothers and children, as the bishops have already proposed.

While we argue over abortion, the United States' infant mortality rate places us sixteenth among the nations of the world. Thousands of infants die each year because of inadequate medical care.

Some are born with birth defects that, with proper treatment, could be prevented. Some are stunted in their physical and mental growth because of improper nutrition. If we want to prove our regard for life in the womb, for the helpless infant—if we care about women having real choices in their lives and not being driven to abortions by a sense of helplessness and despair about the future of their child—then there is work enough for all of us. Lifetimes of it.

In New York, we have put in place a number of programs to begin this work, assisting women in giving birth to healthy babies. This year we doubled Medicaid funding to private-care physicians for prenatal and delivery services. The state already spends \$20 million a year for prenatal care in out-patient clinics and for inpatient hospital care. One program in particular we believe holds a great deal of promise. It's called "new avenues to dignity," and it seeks to provide a teen-age mother with the special services she needs to continue with her education, to train for a job, to become capable of standing on her own, to provide for herself and the child she is bringing into the world.

My dissent, then, from the contention that we can have effective and enforceable legal prohibitions on abortion is by no means an argument for religious quietism, for accepting the world's wrongs because that is our fate—"the poor banished children of Eve."

Let me make another point. Abortions have a unique significance but not a preemptive significance. Apart from the question of the efficacy of using legal weapons to make people stop having abortions, we know our Christian responsibility doesn't end with any one law or amendment. That it doesn't end with abortion because it involves life and death, abortion will always be a central concern of Catholics. So will nuclear weapons. And hunger and homelessness and joblessness, all the forces threatening human life and threatening to destroy it. The "seamless garment" that Cardinal Bernardini has spoken of is a challenge to all Catholics in public office, conservatives as well as liberals.

We cannot justify our aspiration to goodness simply on the basis of the vigor of our demand for an elusive and questionable law declaring what we already know, that abortion is wrong. Approval or rejection of legal restrictions on abortion should not be the exclusive litmus test of Catholic loyalty. We should understand that whether abortion is out-lawed or not, our work has barely begun: the work of creating a society where the right to life doesn't end at the moment of birth; where an infant isn't helped into a world

year of life.... We believe that all of these should be available as a matter of right to all pregnant women and their children.

The bishops reaffirmed that view in 1976, in 1980, and again this year when the United States Catholic Committee asked Catholic judges to judge candidates on a wide range of issues—on abortion, yes; but also on food policy, the arms race, human rights, education, social justice, and military expenditures. The bishops have been consistently "pro-life" in the full meaning of that term, and I respect them for that.

The problems created by the matter of abortion are complex and confounding. Nothing is clearer to me than my inadequacy to find compelling solutions to all of their moral, legal, and social implications. I—and many others like me—are eager for enlightenment, eager to learn new and better ways to manifest respect for the deep reverence for life that is our religion and our instinct. I hope that this public attempt to describe the problems as I understand them will give impetus to the dialogue in the Catholic community and beyond, a dialogue that could show me a better wisdom than I've been able to find so far. It would be tragic if we let that dialogue become a prolonged, divisive argument that destroys our ability to practice any part of the morality given us in the Sermon on the Mount, to touch, heal, and affirm the human life that surrounds us.

We Catholic citizens of the richest, most powerful nation that has ever existed are like the stewards made responsible over a great household. Those to whom so much has been given, much shall be required. It is worth repeating that is not a faith that encourages its believers to stand apart from the world, seeking their salvation alone, separate from the salvation of those around them. We speak of ourselves as a body. We together in worship as companions, in the ancient sense of that word, those who bread together, and who are obliged by the commitment we share to help one another, everywhere, in all we do, and in the process, to help the whole human family. We see our mission to "the completion of the work of creation."

This is difficult work today. It presents us with many hard choices. The Catholic Church has come of age in America. The ghetto walls are gone, our religion no longer a badge of irredeemable foreignness. This new-found status is both an opportunity and a temptation. If we choose, we can give in to the temptation to become more and more assimilated into a larger, blander culture, abandoning the practice of the specific values that made us different, worshipping whatever gods the marketplace has to sell while we seek to rationalize our own laxity by urging the political system to legislate on others a morality we no longer practice ourselves.

Or we can remember where we come from, the journey of two millennia, clinging to our personal faith, to its insistence on constant service and on hope. We can live and practice the morality Christ gave us, maintaining His truth in this world, struggling to embody His love, practicing it especially where His love is most needed, among the poor and the weak and the dispossessed. Not just by trying to make laws for others to live by, but by living the laws already written for us by God, in our hearts and our minds.

We can be fully Catholic; proudly, totally at ease with ourselves, a people in the world, transforming it, a light to this nation. Applying to the best in our people not the worst.

Persuading not coercing. Leading people to truth by love. And still all the while, respecting and enjoying our unique pluralistic democracy. And we can do it even as politicians.

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Editors' note: The proposed Hatch amendment to the Constitution would permit the states to pass anti-abortion laws.



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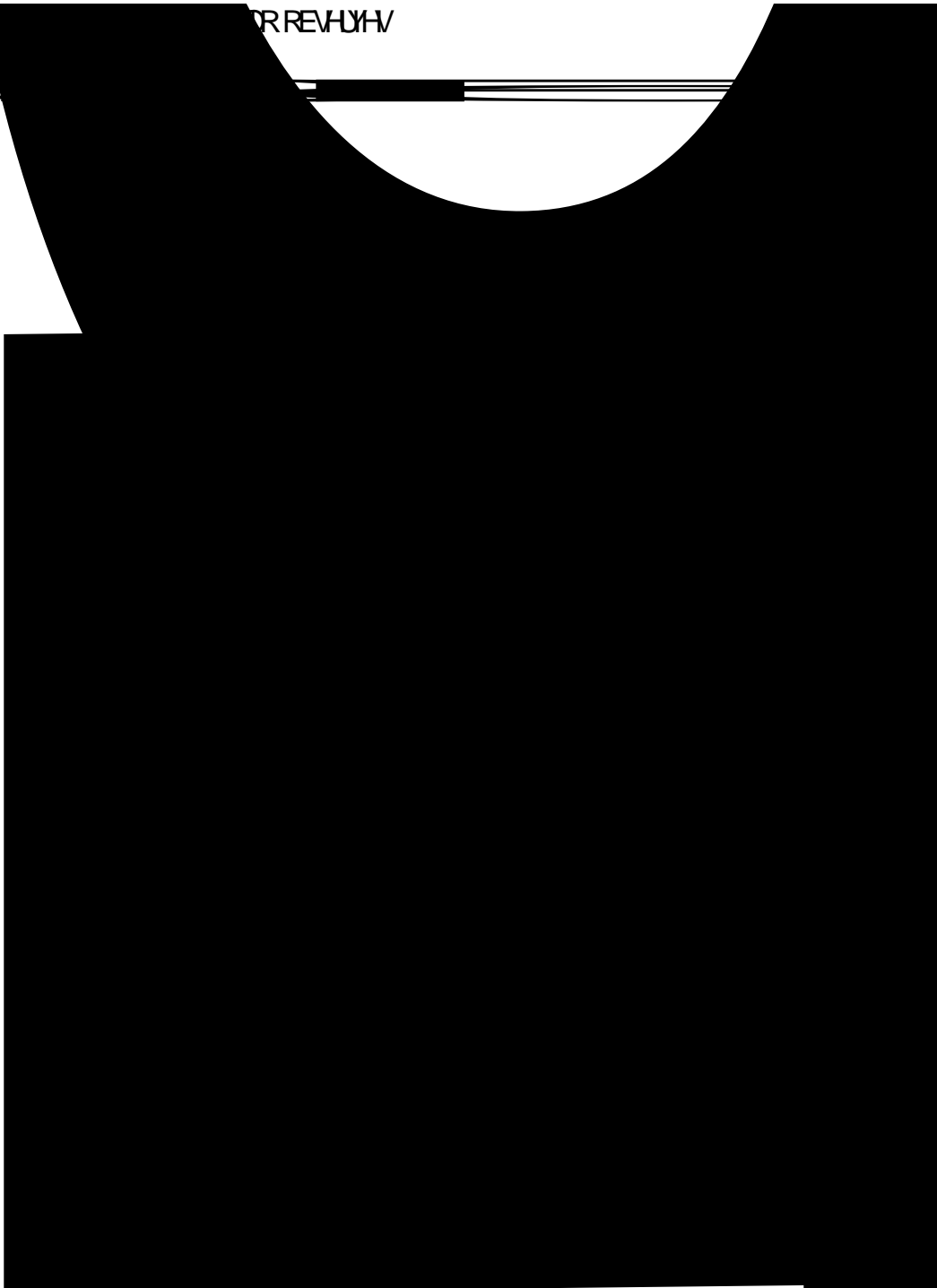
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Barack Obama
Call to Renewal Keynote Address
Wednesday, June 28th, 2006, Washington, DC

Good morning. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here at the Call to Renewal's Building a Covenant for a New America conference, and I'd like to congratulate you all on the thoughtful presentations you've given so far about poverty and justice in America. I think all of us would affirm that caring for the poor finds root in all our religious traditions – certainly that's true for my own.

But today I'd like to talk about the connection between religion and politics and perhaps offer some thoughts about how we can sort through some of the often bitter arguments over this issue over the last several years.

I do so because, as you all know, we can affirm the importance of poverty in the Bible and discuss the religious call to environmental stewardship all we want, but it won't have an impact if we don't tackle head-on the mutual suspicion that sometimes exists between religious America and secular America.

For me, this need was illustrated during my 2004 race for the U.S. Senate. My opponent, Alan Keyes, was well-versed in the Jerry Falwell-Robertson style of rhetoric that often labels progressives as both immoral and godless.

Indeed, towards the end of the campaign, Mr. Keyes said that, "Jesus Christ would not vote for Barack Obama. Christ would not vote for Barack Obama because Barack Obama has behaved in a way that it is inconceivable for Christ to have behaved.

Now, I was urged by some of my liberal supporters to take this statement seriously. To them, Mr. Keyes was an extremist, his arguments not worth entertaining.

What they didn't understand, however, was that I had to take him seriously. For he claimed to speak for my religion – he claimed knowledge of certain truths.

Mr. Obama says he's a Christian, he would say, and yet he supports a lifestyle that the Bible calls an abomination.

Mr. Obama says he's a Christian, but supports the destruction of innocent and sacred life.

What would my supporters have me say? That a liberal reading of the Bible was folly? That Mr. Keyes, a Roman Catholic, should ignore the teachings of the Pope?

Unwilling to go there, I answered with the typically liberal response in some debates – namely, that we live in a pluralistic society, that I can't impose my religious views on another, that I was running to be the U.S. Senator of Illinois and not the Minister of Illinois.

This is why, if we truly hope to speak to people where they are – to communicate our hopes and values in a way that’s relevant to them – we cannot abandon the field of religious discourse.

Because when we ignore the debate about what it means to be a good Christian or Muslim or Jew; when we discuss religion only in the ritual sense of where or how it should not be practiced, rather than in the moral sense of what it tells us about our obligations towards one another; when we shy away from religious venues and religious broadcasts because we assume that we will be unwelcome – others will fill the vacuum, those with the most insular views of faith, or those who cynically use religion to justify partisan ends.

In other words, if we don’t reach out to evangelical Christians and other religious Americans and tell them what we stand for, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson’s will continue to hold sway.

More fundamentally, the discomfort of some progressives with any hint of religion has often prevented us from effectively addressing issues in moral terms. Some of the problem here is rhetorical – if we scrub language of all religious

can help fortify a young woman's sense of self, a young man's sense of responsibility, and a sense of reverence all young people feel about the act of sexual intimacy.

I am not suggesting that every progressive should latch on to religious terminology. Nothing is more transparent than inauthentic expressions of faith – the politician who shows up at a black church around election time and claps off-rhythm – to the gospel choir.

But what I am suggesting is this – secularists are wrong when they ask believers to leave their religion at the door before entering into the public square. Frederick Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, Williams Jennings Bryant, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King – indeed, the majority of great reformers in American history – were not only motivated by faith, but repeatedly used religious language to argue for their cause. To say that men and women should not inject their "personal morality into public policy debates is a practical absurdity; our law is by definition a codification of morality, much of it grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Moreover, if we progressives shed some of our biases, we might recognize the overlapping values that both religious and secular people share when it comes to the moral and material direction of our country. We ought recognize that the call to sacrifice on behalf of the next generation, the need to think in terms of "us" and not just "I," resonates in religious congregations across the country. And we might realize that we have the ability to reach out to the evangelical community and engage millions of religious Americans in the larger project of

Leland, who were most concerned that any state-sponsored religi

This goes for both sides.

Even those who claim the Bible's inerrancy make distinctions between Scriptural edicts, a sense that some passages – the Ten Commandments, say, or

"I sense that you have a strong sense of justice and I also sense that you are a fair minded person with a high regard for reason...Whatever your convictions, if you truly believe that those

Faith in America
Mitt Romney

December 6, 2007

George Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas

The following is a transcript (as prepared for delivery) of former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's speech "Faith in America." The speech begins with Romney addressing former President George H.W. Bush, who introduced the former governor.

Romney: Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind introduction.

"It is an honor to be here today. This is an inspiring place because of you and the first lady, and because of the film exhibited across the way in the Presidential library. For those who have not seen it, it shows the President as a young pilot, shot down during the Second World War, being rescued from his life-raft by the crew of an American submarine. It is a moving reminder that when America has faced challenge and peril, Americans rise to the occasion, willing to risk their very lives to defend freedom and preserve our nation. We are in your debt. Thank you, Mr. President.

"Mr. President, your generation rose to the occasion first to defeat Fascism and then to vanquish the Soviet Union. You left us, your children, a far and strong America. It is why we call yours the greatest generation. It is now my generation's turn. How we respond to today's challenges will define our generation. And it will determine what kind of America we will leave our children, and theirs.

"America faces a new generation of challenges. Radical violent Islam seeks to destroy us. An emerging China endeavors to surpass our economic leadership. And we are troubled at home by government overspending, overuse of foreign aid, and the breakdown of the family.

"Over the last year, we have embarked on a national debate on how best to preserve American leadership. Today, I wish to address a topic which I believe is fundamental to America's na.728Tpic:nosu

"Given our grand tradition of religious tolerance and liberty, we wonder whether there are any

Constitution. No candidate should become the spokesman for his faith. For if he becomes president he will need the prayers of the people of all faiths.

"I believe that every faith I have encountered draws its adherents closer to God. And in every faith I have come to know, there are features which were in my own: I love the profound ceremony of the Catholic Mass, the approachability of God in the prayers of the Evangelicals, the tenderness of spirit among the Pentecostals, the confident independence of the Lutherans, the ancient traditions of the Jews, unchanged through the ages, and the commitment to frequent prayer of the Muslims. As I travel across the country and see our towns and cities, I am always

"We believe that every single human being is a child of God - we are all part of the human family. The conviction of the inherent and inalienable worth of every life is still the most revolutionary political proposition ever advanced. John Adams put it that we are 'thrown into the world all equal and alike.'

"The consequence of our common humanity is responsibility to one another, to our fellow Americans foremost, but also to every child of God. It is an obligation which is fulfilled by Americans every day, here and across the globe, without regard to creed, race or nationality.

"Americans acknowledge that liberty is a gift of God, not an indulgence of government. No people in the history of the world have sacrificed as much for liberty. The lives of hundreds of thousands of America's sons and daughters were laid down during the last century to preserve freedom, for us and for freedom loving people throughout the world. America took nothing from that Century's terrible wars - no land from Germany, Japan or Korea; no treasure; no oath of fealty. America's resolve in the defense of liberty has been tested time and again. It has not been

"I'm not sure that we fully appreciate the ~~pro~~found implications of our ~~tr~~adition of religious