THE FAITHANGLEFORUM

TRANSCRIPT

Prophecy without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square

Dr. Cathleen Kaveny
Boston College

Mark Stricherz
Congressional Quarterly and *Roll Call*

December 2016

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Now, we're delighted to have Professor Cathleen Kaveny with us here today. She has a dual appointment in the law school at Boston College and the theological department at Boston College. She has both a law degree and a Ph.D. from Yale, did her undergraduate at Princeton University under the famous ethicist Paul Ramsey.

Her book has just come out recently, called *Prophecy Without Contempt: Religious Discourse in the Public Square*, published by Harvard University Press. The book was called to my attention by a man named E.J. Dionne, and seeing the wonderful quote from E.J., I thought this works perfectly for not only this forum, but for these times. The great need for stability in our public discourse could not be more urgent.

So Professor Kaveny, thank you so much for joining us. We're delighted to have you.

DR. CATHLEEN KAVENY: Thank you. I'm absolutely delighted to be here. I'd like to thank Michael and everyone who works for the Faith Angle Forum and EPPC for inviting me, and for the great gift of hospitality, which is an ancient virtue, and one that's as important today as it's been throughout history.

I'd also like to thank E.J., who is a fellow columnist for *Commonweal*, and who has always been a model for me of how to engage intellectually and charitably and vigorously and in light of all of our interactions being folded into God's purpose. So I'm tremendously grateful for E.J., not only for connecting me with the Faith Angle Forum, but also for the model he's provided for me as I've gone about thinking about religious and political questions throughout the years.

So last night I had a dream, I have to say. I had a dream that I hadn't finished the book, now, and that this was just all an illusion that my fevered consciousness was giving me, , to prod me to finish the book. I woke up, and I realized with relief that the book is actually done and I'm actually here, so it's delightful to talk to you about a project that took me 10 years to write.

A caution to any future academics: this sort of extended research project is not something that you want to do before you get tenure If you do, you're going to end up selling cosmetics at Macy's before you finish the book. It's something that you do after you've gotten tenure and you can spend the time on it.

What generated the idea for the book for me -- and this is in the middle chapters -- was actually a particular set of instances around the 2004 election, which was, you know, a very, very heated election among religious believers. You had John Kerry, who was a Catholic, running. You had George W. Bush running. People were very, very agitated about how politically to engage controversial social issues such as abortion, even among people who largely agreed about their moral status.

I noticed that moderate and progressive and moderately conservative Catholics and evangelicals were torn apart about how to approach the election. Each side viewed people who were voting on the other side not as people who were wrong, but acting in

good faith but wrong, but instead as people actually working for the destruction of the nation's fundamental values. If they were ignorant, they were culpably ignorant.

My goal was to try to sort out what was at stake in the way we talk to one another about fundamental matters such as abortion and torture. What prevented us from seeing each other's point of view?

So that's the background, and I'll just give you a very short sense of what's in the book.

Now, obviously, we are a very divided country, and we heard that in our first session yesterday. Donald Trump won among White male older voters and those without college degrees. Hillary Clinton won among women urban voters, more educated voters, Blacks, Hispanics, unmarried women, and younger voters.

I would drill down into the statistics, but that was done so well yesterday, I don't feel a need to repeat what was conveyed so well by Bill Galston. I'd like simply to emphasize, though, that the divisions were not just in terms of voting, but in terms of how we view each other. Trump appealed to groups that see themselves squeezed between the elites and the arrivistes, and he did so by trashing both. In his acceptance speech, he said, "The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer."

Hillary did appeal to the highly educated and coastal elites, but she also appealed to those who see themselves as excluded from society by so-called normal or regular people -- those whose race, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identification didn't fit the same Norman Rockwell picture that they felt the rest of America was holding up as normative.

Insults flew back and forth. When Trump announced his candidacy in June 2015, he infamously referred to Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists. Yet, at the same

time, Hillary's campaign was slammed for her remark that many of Trump's supporters belong in a "basket of deplorables."

Speaking at an LGBT fundraiser in September 2016, , Hillary said that Trump supporters were "racists, sexists, homophobic, xenophobic, and Islamaphobic." That's a lot of insults.

Note the nature of the insults. They're ad hominem. They're about the person or the group of persons that they're targeting. They're not looking at a particular action. They're directed against the person. They express a type of moral condemnation, too.

Moreover -- and this is what worries me most -- they express a type of *contempt*. To *condemn* is to say that a particular action is wrong. It is to point to a violation of law -- a violation of God's law or human law. To *contemn* -- the verb for contempt -- is to belittle, to see somebody as vile or worthless. The two words sound alike, but they come from actually very different roots.

The debate, what we're facing right now, seems to be about the fundamental direction of our country, too. It's telling that 70 percent of the electorates said that the composition of the Supreme Court was the most important factor in their vote for president. Trump won these voters 50 to 46 percent. Among those to whom the Court mattered little, Trump lost by 10 percentage points.

I suppose this is where my own work comes in. This is our country. These are all our people. Calls to come together despite our deep divisions are going to be meaningless unless we can learn how to communicate productively about our deep moral disagreements. I'm not calling for a bland niceness that masks a kind of moral indifference. I think we need to be moral realists, and to condemn, to call out, injustice in our society.

But I think we also need to be sensitive to the fact that we have very different senses of exactly what counts as injustice. Citizens rightly call each other to account for violations of our moral and most fundamental commitments as a people. We rightly condemn such violations.

Contempt, however, is a different matter entirely. To treat one's political interlocutors as vile or worthless is to risk undermining their equal status as participants in our political community. It is to treat them, in effect, as unworthy of citizenship, as people who must be pruned almost from our common political endeavor.

The question we have to address, I think, is, "Is there a way to think about how we talk to one another that recognizes the need for condemnation -- we see things that are wrong -- but avoids contempt?"

So what I want to do here is summarize my take at addressing this question, which is in a very long book, but it's certainly not exhaustive. The question certainly needs to be addressed from different perspectives. I want to say something about public discourse and the important place of prophetic discourse in it, first. Second, I want to talk about the benefits and dangers of prophetic discourse, and finally, I want to give a few suggestions for how prophetic discourse might be deployed profitably and helpfully.

So let's just start with public discourse and prophetic indictment. To understand what the role of prophetic indictment is, you first need to kind of think about our normal form of discourse in the public square. In fact, most theorists of religion or moral discourse in the public square focus on what's called deliberative discourse -- the reasons we give to one another: "do this, enact this policy, for this reason, don't do that, don't enact that policy for that reason." John Rawls most famously focused on the type of reasons that citizens offer each other, or at least be prepared to offer each other, in debating essential matters in the public square.

And deliberative discourse more generally tends to focus on reason and the dispassionate search for truth, what Matthew Arnold tried to evoke by his reference to the Hellenistic culture of "sweetness and light," is certainly important.

But I want to open our vista to another aspect of public discourse, what Matthew Arnold gestured to as to the culture of "fire and strength," which is indebted to the great books of the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Old Testament, and which demands not just knowledge, but obedient conformity to the will of God.

So as I argue at length in my book, the language of fire and strength, the language of prophetic indictment is an important part of American public life. It was brought over, in fact, by the Puritans. The rhetoric of prophetic indictment has been a staple of American public discourse from the time that John Winthrop led a small band of men and women to leave England and found the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. These settlers saw themselves as founding a new Israel in the New World, a religiously inspired polity that would be free of the corruptions of the established Anglican Church and immune to the compromises of the English government with heterodoxy or lax Christianity. These immigrant Puritans came to New England in order to construct Godly congregations in a Godly community, bound together in a network of covenantal relationships with God one another. Just as the great Hebrew prophets decried the sins of their people in order to provoke repentance and advert God's wrath, so did the great Puritan preachers in sermons delivered at a variety of important public occasions in the life of New England. These sermons have come to be called "jeremiads" because they echo the passionate condemnations of sinful behavior that pervades the Biblical Book of Jeremiah.

Now somewhat ironically, the rhetorical form of the jeremiad proved more flexible and, therefore, far more durable than the Puritan culture that nurtured it. In the 18th century, you can find jeremiads among both Loyalist and Patriot preachers around the War of

American Independence. The 19th century witnessed fiery jeremiads delivered not only by abolitionists, which we read, but also by those who saw Scripture as giving divine sanction to slavery, which we don't read as much.

In the early-20th century, a variety of social reformers emerged, most notably those advocating Prohibition, who decried the social evils that they combated in a language that would not be unfamiliar to the great Puritan divine Cotton Mather.

The flexibility of the jeremiad allowed it to traverse the lines of political commitment. In the '60s, political liberals prophetically denounced racism and the Vietnam War. In more recent years, it has been political conservatives who chastise the country for practices such as abortion and sexual immorality.

So I've talked in very general terms about prophetic indictments. What are they like? Well, first a caveat: as the Biblical scholars have taught us, there are many different prophetic books in the Bible, and there's no one type of prophetic discourse. What I'm talking about is, in particular, the language of prophetic indictment. What are its characteristics?

The Protestant ethicist James Gustafson has noted three. First, prophetic indictments usually, though not always, address what the prophetic perceives to be the root of the religious, moral, or social waywardness.

Second, they employ languages, metaphors, and symbols that are directed to the heart as well as to the head. Gustafson observes that the prophet doesn't usually make it an argument. "He shows, he tells."

Third, prophetic indictments are usually Utopian in nature. Gustafson doesn't use this term technically, but simply to point out something that you will have all seen in your own

work in journalism, that social prophets are much better at identifying evils to be condemned than coming up with solutions for those evils. In addition, they're so into the condemnatory mode that they often will turn on each other if they don't like the solution the other is offering to a problem that they all identify in common.

By the term "prophets," here, let me emphasize that it's just shorthand for identifying people who are using prophetic indictment in the contemporary world. I'm not saying that they're channeling the voice of God here.

So let me just give you an example from the book of Isaiah. It could be written today, in terms of the level of the vitriol. Isaiah 3:13-17 (New American Bible):

The Lord rises to accuse,
stands to try his people.
The Lord enters into judgment
with the people's elders and princes:
You, you who have devoured the vineyard;
the loot wrested from the poor is in your houses.
What do you mean by crushing my people,
and grinding down the faces of the poor,
says the Lord, the God of hosts.
The Lord said:
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
and walk with necks outstretched,
Ogling and mincing as they go,
their anklets tinkling with every step,
The Lord shall cover the scalps of Zion's daughters with scabs,
and the Lord shall bare their heads.'"

That's tough, right? That's really tough. Note there's no room for the targets of the

accusation to come back at the prophet. A prophetic indictment sucks the air out of the room. You can't come back if you're a "daughter of Zion" and say well, "You know, I didn't actually *buy* the anklet you heard tinkling. It was a gift from my great grandmother for my10th birthday, you know," or, "I gave half my money to the poor last year" -- there's no room to argue. The target of the prophetic indictment is in the docket, just like you're being condemned in a criminal trial. You're violating the law. Just as a contemporary judge won't give you much room to argue that the law is unjust, so the prophet doesn't give you much room to argue with the presuppositions of their accusation.

So what are the benefits and risks of prophetic discourse? Well, let me begin with apologies to Michael, who is undergoing this. I don't mean make light of his trial. I think prophetic indictment is a type of moral chemotherapy for the public discourse. It indicts people for violations of the most basic principles of society, things that threaten to take out the entire body politic, in the manner that cancer can take out an entire human body.

It can be a necessary rhetorical tool to combat entrenched social evil in the community, to shake persons out of indifference, to direct scarce for sources in a coordinated way towards fundamental issues rather than mere superficially urgent questions. They can serve as a necessary wakeup call, but at the same time, if we're not careful, it can cause more harm than good, just like actual chemotherapy.

The funny thing is, though -- so that was my first take on all of this -- the jeremiad doesn't have to be such a socially divisive type of rhetoric. This is what confused me. When I learned, from reading Perry Miller or Mark Noll or Nathan Hatch, the great historians of this --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Or Grant Wacker.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: -- or Grant Wacker, yes, Grant Wacker, too -- the jeremiads were

very popular in Puritan times. They *liked* to read them. Michael Wigglesworth wrote a great poem called "The Day of Doom," which was a Puritan bestseller. It's not *50 Shades of Grey*, right? It's "The Day of Doom" that is the bestseller.

But what made Puritan society susceptible to treating the jeremiad as a constructive process? Well, first off, they had a common framework for understanding the consequences of the behavior they condemned. The Puritans believed that they were the New Jerusalem stepping into the shoes of ancient Israel. They had a covenant,,or a solemn contract, with God, and they had a clear conception of what would count as a breach of that covenant and the consequences of the breach.

The Puritans believed that the community's material prosperity -- wealth, winning military battles, agricultural success -- was all a consequence, and a reward, for complying with the terms of the covenant.

Conversely, material misfortune was a sign of God's displeasure and a cause for the community to gather together for a day of repentance. Consider the earthquake of 1727, which shook Boston -- you know, really shook everyone up literally and figuratively. Cotton Mather was never too shaken to go to his pen. I hesitate to think what that man would have produced had he had a word processor. It's mind-boggling.

So Mather wrote this: "The voice of the glorious God crying to the city in his earthquake is this: 'Let the crimes that cry to the holy God for all the vengeance of an earthquake upon you be generally and thoroughly reformed among you.' The cry is, 'Reformation, O degenerating plants, reformation or more evil to come upon you.'"

Now, this isn't just a rhetorical flourish the Puritans really believed that God's entire attention was focused on their little community in New England, and that if they started going to the tavern rather than to church, they'd start losing military battles. To

understand this, you have to put yourself in their mindset.

At the same time, they also believed, because God was paying so much attention to them, that God loved them very much and, in fact, probably loved them most of all. At the end of one of Wigglesworth's barnburners, he reassures the people of God's love for them: "Cheer on, sweet souls, my heart is with you all and shall be with you all maugre Sathan's might. And whereso'ere this body be a thrall, still in New England shall be my delight." So the message is clear: repent and God will be okay, and God will bless you again, and all will be forgiven.

But we don't live in Puritan New England. We don't have a common framework for understanding conformity or lack of conformity with our basic covenant, which is now transformed, for most people, into the Constitution. In fact, that's what we're arguing about. What are the tenants of our basic community?

Compared to the Puritans, we have a reverse, and I would go so far as to say perverse, understanding of the relationship between breach and covenant. In Puritan times, the breach of the moral norms threatened the nation's prosperity. So if the nation isn't flourishing, get yourselves morally right with God, and then God will reward you again.

Now, it's reversed. For our politicians, at least, the covenantal terms are to produce material prosperity. If you're the team that produces material prosperity and economic security and military security for the country, then you're rewarded with being able to impose your moral vision on the country. So we've got a flip of breach and penalty.

We've lost the sense as well that God loves the entire community. There is a sense of real America, and the interlopers who threaten its existence. Different people define it differently. I actually think -- and I won't go into why, and you can ask me in the question period -- that this switch of interlopers goes back to the close time period between the

French and Indian Wars and the War of Independence. I can explain why later but I want to keep moving.

What are the dangers of prophetic discourse? One, loss of nuance. The language of prophetic indictment is black and white. There's no room for shades of gray in its assessment of situations.

Second, ad hominem nature. An indictment is fundamentally a criminal complaint, a charge that certain persons are breaking a fundamental law of the community. It's extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make those charges without directly attacking the audience the prophet is addressing.

Moreover, like a criminal indictment, there's virtually no room to interpret the audience's behaviors charitably. You don't hear a prosecutor saying, "I understand you killed four people, but I want to look at things from your perspective." That's not the way indictments work.

Third is a type of dualism. The loss of nuance and the ad hominem nature of prophetic enjoinments conjoin, in my view, to produce a dualistic worldview -- the righteous versus the damned, the good versus the evil, the culture of life versus the culture of death.

Those issuing prophetic indictments identify themselves with a transcendentally correct cause, sometimes God's cause, and those opposing them with the opponents of God. This makes it hard to cooperate on other things. You don't make common cause, for example, with people you consider "minions of the culture of death"(from the abortion debate), or "hateful bigots" (from the gay marriage debate). You can make common cause with people you consider to be mistaken on an issue, but not people you consider to be thoroughly evil.

The fourth problem is a thwarted plan of positive reform. Prophets are essentially negative in function. They don't agree on and don't always think it's important to put forward a way out of the bad situation we're in, which is necessarily going to be incremental and often imperfect.

Fifth problem: dueling prophets and public tune out. Social battles typically include prophets on both sides of the issues, and as our current debates over abortion and same-sex marriage show, each group feeds off the other's energy. At the same time, the ferocity of the battle may encourage the "muddled middle" to stay away from the issues in order to avoid becoming collateral damage.

If you think about it, activists on each side really like each other because they need an opponent. You need an enemy, because the enemy confirms the value of your cause, the worthwhileness of your fight. It's the people in the middle who say, "Whatever," or, you know, "That's great, I'm going for coffee, you can go protest at the abortion clinic," or, , "at the Supreme Court." Those are the people that prophets find most upsetting.

Is there a way forward? Well, that last part of the book has a lot of suggestions on this. I'm not going to go through them all, but I'll give you a hint of what they include.

I argue for substantive constraints on the use of the rhetoric of prophetic indictment based on several models. Before I get into them, I want to say these are self-constraints. I'm not suggesting censorship. I'm not suggesting any other type of imposition. I'm saying: Suppose you're considering whether to use deliberative rhetoric or prophetic rhetoric. What might be some helpful considerations to think about before you decide which way to go in framing your point?

I argue for substantive constraints based on several models. Prosecutorial ethics -- we're talking about an indictment after all. Just war theory provides some help. I consider some

form of prophetic indictment to be analogous to engaging in a verbal war.

The substantive problem, I think, is very challenging, and I would welcome your insights on this. I think prophetic rhetoric of indictment is best used against behavior that is widely seen to be a violation of the community's basic agreement -- the Constitution or our foundational covenant.

It doesn't work well to protest behavior about whether there is significant contestation about whether the behavior actually counts as a fundamental violation. In fact, the use of prophetic indictment in these contexts may produce backlash and resentment. Nobody wants to be indicted for behavior they don't actually think is against the law. It's one thing to be busted for a speeding ticket when you recognize you have been speeding; it's another thing to be busted for violating a speeding law when there is no speeding law.

So we're in a situation, I think, where jeremiads are being most used when they are least likely to be effective.

I think there are also some rhetorical standards. I think the gold standard of contemporary prophetic rhetoric is Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, and we can talk about why. More generally, the Biblical model for contemporary jeremiads should be what scholars call "the oracles against Israel," not "the oracles against the nations."

So if you look through Scripture, you'll see that there's lots of different prophetic indictment—but they can be roughly divided in two groups. Sometimes the prophet is condemning his own people, and he's calling on them to repent. He laments the sins, he wants them to get right with God because he wants them to flourish.

At other times, however, the prophet is condemning the violations of the enemies of

Israel, and then you're talking total desolation, total destruction of Babylon or any of Israel's other enemies. It's one thing to use prophetic indictment against your fellow citizens, but model it on "the oracles against Israel" where you lament the sins. You stand with the people you condemn. Don't model it on "the oracles against the nations" where you're calling for the total destruction of those people.

Relatedly -- and we talked about this yesterday, too -- prophetic indictment should be tempered by lamentations, the closely related form of Biblical rhetoric. I would love to see people who are upset about the election, organize a day of mourning, a day of lamentation, a day of sorrow, rather than just a day of angry indictment. How would that shift both how we perceive ourselves and how other people see us?

A true prophet of Israel or Judah, forced to condemn the sins of his people, is broken up over those sins, which will bring them nothing but sorrow. A true prophet does not rejoice when the people suffer even the just consequences of their sin.

Finally, I think the best prophetic indictment is tempered and guided by the vision of a reconciled community. You see this in Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address as well as in King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

What are the virtues of prophets, those who want to use prophetic speech in a pluralistic society? We talked about this a little yesterday, too. I think you need a sense of irony.

I'm not talking about post-modern irony, "Everything is dissolved into nothingness." I'm talking Wayne Booth, University of Chicago. Irony gives you a different perspective on a situation. It's like, you know, climbing a hill and looking at the beach from the hill and seeing how different houses and different views relate. It gives you a sense that maybe your perspective isn't the only perspective.

And then also, a spirit of humility about one's own grasp of the mind of God, if you are religious, or the demands of our liberal democracy, if you're not. I think it's important to remember here that people who use prophetic rhetoric in the contemporary discourse are not actually Biblical prophets. If you are a Biblical prophetic, if God is talking to you, then God bless you, you have to do what God says. I'm not talking to those people. I'm talking to people who are modeling their speech on those of the Biblical prophets even if they're not biblical prophets.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: We have several here.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: So the question comes: can you find roots for that kind of humility and irony in religious speech in the Bible, because I am talking about prophetic speech in the Bible, and also in American political discourse? I think you can.

In the last chapter of my book, I argue that the Book of Jonah is actually a way of ironizing and creating humility for the genre of prophecy. I think that you can see in Lincoln's Second Inaugural a sense of humility about God's plans and judgments that also avoids falling finto moral relativism. Lincoln recognizes that slavery is wrong. This is as clear as a bell. At the same time, he's not going to say, "We, the North, bore no responsibility for that practice. You the South are the bad guys only you, the South." We all have to repent our sins as one nation and bind up one another's wounds.

So I'm just going to end with what I ended the book with, the end of the Book of Jonah, because Jonah didn't want to prophesy to the Ninevites because he was afraid they'd repent. He probably wanted them destroyed because they were the enemies of his people. It's not totally clear why, but I think that's one reason why.

God comes out and talks to Jonah, and he says, "You pity the plant." There was a plant that came up in one night and then was destroyed in one night, and Jonah was sad about

that. And the Lord said, "You pity the plant for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also much cattle?" I love that line. He's worried about the animals, too. God cares about the animals.

God cares about people that the prophet doesn't even know that God cares about. God has a relationship with Nineveh that's beyond the ken of Jonah and, by implication, the other prophets. God cares about the Ninevites, too.

What was Jonah's answer? The narrator does not say. Yet a medieval Jewish sermon fascinatingly speculates: "At that very moment, Jonah fell flat on his face, saying, 'Direct your word according to the attributes of mercy. As is written, mercy and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God.'" That's what I think we need in our contemporary prophetic discourse.

Thank you.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you very much. Thank you.

We often like to have one your colleagues, a fellow journalist, be a respondent just to kick off some ideas and get things going. Our respondent, Mark, has written a book called *Why the Democrats are Blue: Secular Liberalism and the Decline of the People's Party*. I've looked at this book, and I thought Mark would be very interesting to respond to Professor Kaveny. After he responds, we'll start the Q&A.

Mark, pronounce for the whole audience your last name, which I cannot seem to pronounce.

MARK STRICHERZ: Stricherz.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Stricherz, that's what I meant. Yeah, Stricherz.

(Laughter)

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Stricherz. Mark Stricherz, thank you for joining us.

MARK STRICHERZ: Well, thanks for having me here. This is a real honor. I feel like Charlie Bucket *in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* in which he got the golden ticket. I was invited to come to Miami Beach to talk with some of the nation's best writers and thinkers.

So thanks, Michael, for inviting me.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Great to have you.

MARK STRICHERZ: Eighteen steps from the top landing of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963. Walk up those 18 steps, turn to your right to the north side of the chamber, and see a two- or three-story high grave inscription of Lincoln's second inaugural address.

Both speeches are examples of prophetic indictment. We might think of prophetic indictment as for editors or writers, we might think of prophetic indictment as a fire and brimstone speech that comes across the transom or an email in which some kook or activist is going to put God on his side and the devil on the side of the others. But as Dr. Kaveny shows in her book, that's not necessarily the case. Sometimes prophetic indictment is why we got into journalism, why we got into public affairs. It's Lincoln's second inaugural and Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Many Americans feel the same way. I was looking at the stats for how many people went to Lincoln's memorial in Washington, D.C., and it was 7 million in 2014, according to the National Park Service. That's, not to pick on one publication, seven times more than the amount that subscribed digitally to *The New York Times*. That's a lot of people.

So clearly, prophetic indictment has a resonance in American culture far beyond what our initial suppositions of what these forms of speeches are -- can actually -- they actually are due. And it -- prophetic indictment -- pertains to a cherished, even hallowed, place in our culture.

Dr. Kaveny's argument that prophetic indictment is like spiritual chemotherapy that can be done only in extraordinary circumstances has the benefit not only of relevance -- the old is new in many ways -- but it's also sober-minded thinking. For example, Dr. Kaveny lays out seven factors –ius ad bellum -- I'm probably butchering the Latin there -- but whether a person should use prophetic indictment to follow in Lincoln's and King's footsteps.

Those factors include probability of success when you're issuing a prophetic indictment, comparative justice, such as factors as whether the person giving the speech has some moral authority. Who is the person denouncing abortion? Is it Mother Theresa, or is it some fringe candidate from Missouri? That's very important.

What will the losing side do once your side has won? That's a great insight. It's like being in a debate with somebody. You've won. But what is the other person going to do? That's good thinking.

So these are all wise points that activists and journalists would do well to consider, whether it's Rick Santorum running for the GOP presidential nomination in 2012 criticizing America's reliance on artificial birth control or what some other Democratic candidates

have endorsed.

But Dr. Kaveny's argument is – and I pardon, this is the way I like to think of things, to think of a visual image – it's kind of like an overly big blanket that has more constraints that even she -- as one of the owners of the blanket -- admits.

In the case of Lincoln's second inaugural address and Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, Dr. Kaveny's book slights the importance of the *when,* the *where,* and the *who*, and the audience that may use prophetic indictment. Lincoln could make the second inaugural because he delivered it 41 days before the end of the Civil War. He didn't need to worry that his speech, in which urged "malice toward none and charity for all," would inflame Southern or Northern forces. He could take for granted the lack of fierce opposition by Southerners. He couldn't give that speech in 1863.

King made his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963 because he was building on a 15-year run of string of successes dealing with Black civil rights: Truman's desegregation of the military in 1948, the Supreme Court's decision of public schools in 1954, and even Congress's passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1957, which created, among other things, the position of assistant attorney general for civil rights, which would become important later on in the '60s.

So the timing of prophetic speech is quite important. As far as the *where* of the speech, that's important, too. Lincoln's -- and I think this is where Kaveny and I disagree -- but Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was in many ways a prophetic indictment. Lincoln couldn't give that prophetic indictment in November 1863 because the civil war was going on. He wasn't going to invite a lot of Southerners to come up after all this huge battle in which tens of thousands of men had died.

So Lincoln could make his second inaugural in D.C. It wasn't in Richmond, or wasn't even

in Baltimore. Martin Luther King could make his speech on August 1963 in D.C., not the Mississippi Delta or Birmingham, Alabama.

As far as the *who*, the audiences, Lincoln could make his speech because he was preaching to the choir. He was celebrating his victory in the presidential election of 1865 and was unlikely to face the wrath of Confederate sympathizers. Martin Luther King could make his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963 because he, too, was preaching to the choir. He wasn't facing George Lincoln Rockwell or George Wallace in the audience, famous opponents of his.

By ignoring these key restraints on prophetic indictment, Dr. Kaveny does not fully explore the possibility of some issues that may be ripe for prophetic indictment in the future. I will add that you could make a case for Reagan's speech of the Berlin Wall in June 1987, in which he said, "Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," as an example of prophetic indictment in many ways or Bobby Kennedy's speech after Martin Luther King was assassinated in April of 1968 in which he decried the mindlessness of violence in society and talked about how you can't build your own lives on the shattered dreams of others. So this is a forum that has a lot of resonance today.

But there's another issue that I think that Dr. Kaveny does not fully explore or appreciate, and that would be abortion. She does say that it may be worth doing, to issue prophetic indictment on abortion.

She says debates about the possibility that one's life begins at conception rule out the possibility of abortion. Those who support extending legal protection to the unborn could, I think, incorporate the words of prophetic indictment as long as they incorporated, too, words of moral deliberation, which is to say going from premises to conclusions and trying to make an appeal to those who don't necessarily agree with you. This one-two punch would appeal not only to pro-lifers, but also those who are opposed to abortion

morally, but don't wish to impose their values on others, which we heard about briefly yesterday morning.

I will speak now as the author of this book that Michael cited, which was really kind of an exploration of 60 years of -- 60 most recent years, when it came out in 2007 -- the Democratic Party's history and some of the key players in changing the party as more a working-class party to more of a middle-class secular party. When you're writing a book like this, there's a lot of research, going through a lot of archives and talking to hundreds of people, you come through lots the books.

One of the books I came across was the book that Governor Robert Casey put out sometime in the 1990's called *Fight for Life*, and in the book is a speech that he gave in early 1993 in St. Louis. I submit that his speech was, in many ways, a prophetic indictment of abortion. It's a pro-life speech that fits the category of prophetic indictment in many ways.

Governor Casey, as many of us know, was a Democrat governor of Pennsylvania. He was father of the Pennsylvania's senior Senator today, Bob Casey.

The major way in which it is not a prophetic indictment was his timing. He had the misfortune of bad timing. It was given in March 1993, nine months after the Supreme Court upheld the core ruling in Roe v. Wade and its less well-known, but equally important, twin, Doe v. Bolton, the companion case cited on the same day in January 1973.

So that was the timing. Governor Casey was not going to be able to overturn Roe v. Wade in nine months after the Supreme Court had already decided that -- it upheld its court ruling, although the ruling in Planned Parenthood v. Casey gave states more leeway on enacting abortion restrictions.

But Governor Casey's 1993 speech was prophetic in its setting. This is not well known, even to pro-lifers. He gave the speech at a special session in a historical courthouse in St. Louis where the original Dred Scott trial was held. It was a conference at St. Louis University for abortion opponents, so it wasn't like he was speaking on the court steps there. But that's a pretty prophetic setting.

It was prophetic in its broad appeal. Governor Casey said "For we know, and this used to be the credo of my party, the Democrats, that progress can never come by exploiting or sacrificing any one class of people. Progress is a hollow word unless everyone is counted in and no one written off, especially the most vulnerable and weak among us. You cannot stifle this debate on a piece of paper. No edict or federal mandate can put to rest the grave doubts of Americans. Legal abortion will never rest easy on this nation's conscience. It will continue to haunt men and women everywhere. The plain facts of biology and the profound appeals of the heart are far too unsettling ever to fade away."

Governor Casey's speech then was prophetic in its generosity to opponents. He said many good people who are pro-choice are fine people. This was not a fire and brimstone speech. He cited examples of Lincoln's attitude to slaveholders as a model for pro-lifers. Casey said, "His real greatness -- this is Casey speaking of Lincoln -- "was him saying that political reform alone was not enough. Not only did the slave have to be freed, but the slaveholder had to be freed from his moral blindness."

Later, Casey expanded on this idea, saying, "The same is true when we say that abortion kills. We don't say it in meanness. It's a unique kind of killing, for the motive may not be homicidal. It may be done in ignorance of what was actually occurring. We reserve a special compassion for women who find themselves contemplating abortion. But the objective fact that what abortion is, and so mankind has always regarded it, science, history, philosophy, religion, and common intuition all speak with one voice in asserting

the humanity of the unborn. Only our current laws say otherwise."

I would add, too, that Governor Casey's speech was a prophetic indictment of Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton, although he didn't specify that. "American history," Governor Casey said, "has had its dark moments, but only twice has this principle been radically betrayed. Only twice has mortal power, using the authority of the law itself, sought to exclude an entire class of people from their most sacred rights. 136 years ago, human beings were declared a piece of property, could be led off in chains and the conscience sat paralyzed -- the ruling of the Court in Dred Scott. The other time was on January 22nd, 1973. An entire class of human beings was excluded from the protection of the state, their fate to be declared a private matter."

But prophetic indictment, as Governor Casey recognized, was not sufficient. He realized moral deliberation, too, was important for persuading those personally opposed but who find abortion socially acceptable. They don't want to impose their views on others.

For example, Casey noted that those who were personally opposed are against the vast majority of abortions. Governor Casey said, "Although many of us are Catholics, we are also joined in the conviction that abortion is not simply a Catholic concern with a large 'C.' It's a Catholic concern with a small 'c,'" meaning universal "the concern of anyone who rejects the idea of human life as a disposable commodity. It's the concern of anyone with eyes to see, a mind to reason, and a heart to feel."

It is not arrogant boast but a demographic fact that most Americans share this conviction. Anytime the question is put squarely, 'Do you oppose abortion on demand?' more than two out of three Americans answer 'yes.'"

That question may be a little prejudiced, you might say, but -- and I think this is a more telling point -- perhaps the most telling statistic is that 78 percent of American public

oppose 93 percent of abortions that actually occur, except for those in the famous hard cases. Those figures are basically still true today, have not really shifted, as we heard yesterday. So in that fact, I think he had the better argument.

Casey's speech was not perfect, though. He did not have the full moral power of Abraham Lincoln throughout Lincoln's career, especially Lincoln's speech in response to what was basically the pro-choice position of its day, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. At that time, Lincoln was a devotee of Henry Clay, one of the chief architects of legislation in Congress to restrict the slave power. His opponent was Steven Douglas, one of the authors of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854.

Lincoln's speech he gave in Peoria October 1854 would be a model for pro-lifers and many others. He said, "The doctrine of self-government," Lincoln said, "is a right" -- there's no question about that, it's absolutely and eternally right – "but it has no just application as here attempted" -- in the case of Kansas-Nebraska -- "or perhaps I should say that whether it has such just application depends on whether the Negro is not or is a man. He who is a man may do with what the person who is not a man with whatever he pleases. But if the Negro is a man, is it not to that extent a total self-destruction of self-government to say that he, too, shall not govern himself? When the white man governs himself that is self-government. But when he governs himself and also governs another man that is more than self-government -- that is despostism. If a Negro is a man, why then, my ancient faith teaches me that all men are created equal and that there can be no moral right in connection of one man's making a slave of another."

So Casey's speech was not perfect, but it had many of the key qualities that we associate with prophetic indictment, a rich tradition that, I say, has more resonance than the vast majority of the content of Facebook or Twitter, much of what passes on the worldwide web. So Dr. Kaveny did an outstanding job in bringing this tradition to life.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you. Thank you, Mark.

MARK STRICHERZ: Yes, thank you.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you. We have a list here. You have any initial response to that --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Just three quick words. First, I just want to emphasize for people who haven't read the book, the book isn't a substantive argument about abortion or torture. I'm not putting forward, as an ethicist, views on this. I've got other books where I make clear my own views on these topics, but this book is an ethics of rhetoric, not an ethics of abortion or torture. So just to be clear, I didn't want, you know, anybody to get confused about the thing.

Second, on time and place, that's fascinating. I think I did really, in comparing Lincoln's second inaugural with his Gettysburg Address, really tried to look at the differences in the time and place. I spent a lot of time talking about what it meant to give a speech at a cemetery and the real confusions that were involved in his very ambivalent attitude toward the Constitution at that point. He's fighting to preserve the Union, but the Union is also preserving slavery at that point. So the moral ambiguity involved in burying only Northerners in a war where you're fighting to preserve the whole Union, and what it would mean to do that, is a big part of my analysis of Lincoln.

So I agree, and I certainly would like to pay more attention to time and place.

The third thing I would say is it's never the words that win the war. It's the bullets. You had just as fiery speeches in favor of slavery as there were opposing it. We don't read them anymore. They're not generally included in the anthologies. It wasn't the speeches that won the war. It was the bullets.

So I do think that we can look at what's appropriate to speak about and not by solely reducing it to tactics at a particular point of time. There is a way of analyzing the speech somewhat separately and not seeing the speech as necessarily winning, especially in military war.

I talk about the relationship between prophets and deliberators, and the tension between prophetic speech and deliberative speech, in the middle two chapters of the book, and how people who are prophetic indictors of a particular practice, be it abortion or torture, really look at the deliberators as lukewarm, lacking moral fiber, and the deliberators look at the prophets as being, well, overwrought: "oh, there you go again," you know, "you're not realistic."

So a lot of what I'm trying to focus on is the way the rhetoric channels the tensions in the society. Mark brought up the point well: can you have a speech that has both prophetic discourse and deliberation? I think you can't, so this might be a real disagreement. I think once you start calling somebody a minion of the culture of death or using some of the words that we heard, people stop hearing the arguments. They just feel and experience and agonize over and resentfully respond to the personal attack.

So I think the two rhetoric forms don't mix in the same particular message very well.
So those were my three responses --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Sally Quinn, and then Kirsten, and Will and Robert and Tom.

MARK STRICHERZ: Do you mind if I respond to that?

SALLY QUINN: Yeah, Cathy --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Well, I just want to get people --

SALLY QUINN: Yeah --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Go ahead.

SALLY QUINN: You started out by talking about the word contempt, meaning "to belittle," meaning "vile worthlessness." You were talking about that we might treat our political interlocutors as vile or unworthy, and you said is there a way to think to avoid contempt.

What I wonder is that when somebody says something that's contemptuous, how do you avoid responding to that without being contemptuous? There were a lot of contemptuous things said in this past election, and so do you just sort of step back and say it's okay? I'm not talking about ad hominem. There's a difference to be saying you are a contemptuous person as opposed to what you have said is contemptuous. But how do you distinguish between -- how do you deal with contemptuous statements without being contemptuous?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: If an issue is dividing half the country, if it's a real live moral issue, which I would include, you know, the social issues, you know, pretty much everything that's controversial, contempt isn't an appropriate response. I think condemnation is sometimes appropriate—but you also need reason giving, to say: "you're wrong about this for the following reasons."

But contempt is a way of leaving somebody out of the discussion. You're basically saying "you're not worthy to talk to." If I contemn, not condemn, you, I say "you're vile and worthless." Well, how can I be in a community with you? What am I going to try to do? I'm going to try to isolate you. I'm going to try to put you in a "basket of deplorables."

I'm going to try to push you somewhere where you have no effect. I'm going to try to contain you.

Now, I do think there are issues in the country that, you know, we can agree belong in that category. But by definition, if you've got 40 percent or 30 percent even of the country taking a different view than you on this, I don't think that's a good way of conducting --

SALLY QUINN: One always hates to invoke the Nazis because it's such an easy shot. But at some point, would you not be contemptuous at someone who says "let's go kill the Jews?"

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Well, I do think there are some issues that are settled in this country, and if somebody is at that point, you know, then that's when you can do that, if somebody's talking about that.

If somebody were saying, "Let's have a program of infanticide for born children who are defective," or -- you can pick something on the other side as well, you know – "Let's have sterilization of all same sex inclined people." You can think of things in the culture wars, roughly, that are beyond the pale. But the normal arguments that we're having amongst ourselves, I think we've gotten into trouble as a nation because it's contempt and not just "here's why I think your argument on this is wrong."

SALLY QUINN: But who decides, and where's the line?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Well, there is no one person in a democracy that can make that decision, right? You have to make that decision for yourself. I'm suggesting that if what you're concerned about is effectively engaging in a public discourse in the polity that we have now, you have to pay attention to the live political division.

So the polling data that we got yesterday is, I think, very relevant in determining counts as appropriate subject for contempt, which says, "An issue was settled and you are morally wrong not to see that issue settled, and not only are you morally wrong, you're vile for not seeing it settled," versus, "We are in the midst, as a nation, in renegotiating a whole set of complicated issues on the role of women, on the status of the fetus, on how to deal with death and dying, on how to protect the country in an age of terrorism, and we're arguing about that in good faith. You're taking a position that's different from mine isn't a reason for me to unfriend you in the cosmic or national Facebook, maybe."

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Sally -

SALLY QUINN: I just wanted to follow up one. Is there anything in this past election that you think reached the level of contempt?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: There are things that I think reached the level of a contempt, myself. You know, I mean, you can just put it on the table. You know, a lot of the stuff that Donald Trump said, you know -- those things were just awful. I also was not thrilled with the "basket of deplorables," honestly. I thought that that was really bad, too.

But I think you've got to self-censor. Part of being a grownup and part of a participant in a democratic republic is saying, "I'm going to vent on some of these things with my friends, but when I'm out in public, I'm going to see you as a fellow citizen, and I'm going to try to persuade you, and at least try to communicate to you that I recognize you're a fellow citizen with me." So that's where I think contempt does nobody any good, even strategically.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Someone who did this very creatively -- Ken Woodward may have interviewed him since he's interviewed everyone -- is the late Will D. Campbell, a liberal Southern Baptist. Google him. He's a very interesting man. Campbell was the only White

man on the board of the Southern Christian Leadership Foundation, and King came to him and said, "You don't need to be working with us. You need to be working among your people." So Campbell went back to Nashville and had a ministry with the Ku Klux Klan and got to know Klans people. It's a great story. I just thought I'd throw that in there.

MARK STRICHERZ: I have to put a plug in for one of Christopher Lasch's greatest chapters in his long, distinguished career, and that's in the *True and Only Heaven*. He wrote a chapter called "The Spiritual Discipline Against Resentment" in which he, Lasch, praised Reinhold Niebuhr for coming up with the idea that resentment only breeds resentment, and that this was part of the tragedy of American history and of political life, and the only way to overcome it, the endless cycle of resentment, was to have a spiritual discipline of your followers and to train them to not, basically, be resentful of your opponents. That's why it was not shown in the otherwise fine movie about Martin Luther King, but why civil rights protesters back in the '50s, and often in the '60s, would pray for their opponents.

I don't know of any movement today in which that happens outside some precincts for pro-lifers. Other movements, however worthy they may be, they don't do this tactic that poor and middle-class black Southerners in the 1950s and '60s did.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's in *The True and Only Heaven*?

MARK STRICHERZ: Yes, *True and Only Heaven*.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Christopher Lasch?

MARK STRICHERZ: "The Spiritual Discipline Against Resentment."

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's terrific. Thank you. Kirsten Powers.

KIRSTEN POWERS: So thanks for the fascinating great panel. I have a couple questions. Just sort of teeing off what Sally was talking about, you know, you were saying there were some issues that are beyond the pale, but of course, Martin Luther King Jr. never behaved with contempt, and that was one of the gravest evils that we've ever had in our country.

So wouldn't it be true that there really isn't an issue that would allow you to express contempt if even he wasn't expressing contempt for racism, segregation? That's my first question.

The second one is even though you're saying you're not talking about, you know, prophetic indictment coming from God, you are using the language of the Bible and the framework of a Judeo-Christian worldview. How do you help a secular person think about this? Because I think for some secular people it doesn't really make sense. I think to somebody, you know, who reads the Bible, it makes perfect sense, right? This is pretty clearly laid out on how you're expected to behave.

My final question is are there any examples of people who you think are doing this well in our current cultural that you would suggest are good models for prophetic indictment?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: So I'm going to start with your second question on the secular business. I'm holding up the Puritans, not so much because I'm, you know, "yay, Puritans." I'm holding them up because they really shaped the tradition of American religious and political discourse.

And there's a fabulous book by this guy named James Darsey called *The Prophetic Tradition and Radical Rhetoric in America* (NYU Press, 1997). He shows how this tradition has been taken, expanded, and used by people with a wide range of underlying viewpoints. It has been used by socialists, by people like Eugene Debs, and by communist hunters, such as Jospeh McCarthy. In short, the rhetoric of prophetic indictment has been

secularized and adopted as American rhetoric, although it has its Puritan roots.

Nonetheless, the secularization of prophetic indictment has made its use trickier because in order to use an indictment, you have to have a law against what you're indicting--the indicter needs to specify the law you're violating. In contemporary times, prophets tend to use the Constitution, or sometimes it can be some notion of natural law, or some notion of human equality or basic human rights. But whose understanding of these fundamental laws is authoritative?

A great thing about the Puritans is they had their covenants. They had the Bible, and then they have the other covenants all nicely written down, and you could indict against those. It gets trickier if you don't have that.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Let me say I've read the book, by the way. If you get the book, your chapter and work on the Puritans is a wonderful summary of their life and thought. I was very, very pleased -- I mean touched by -- you come away with some real admiration for the seriousness of their thinking.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Thank you. I mean, I tried to, and the person I admire most -- gosh, I wish I'd met him – is the great historian, Perry Miller. You know, I mean the kind of intellectual history he does isn't done anymore; you know, *his book, The New England Mind*, his sort of history of ideas.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Grant knew him.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Did you really? I would really love to have met him. He's shaking his head. All right. I'll just keep my ideal --

(Laughter)

CATHLEEN KAVENY: In my mind, he's somebody that'd be really fun to have a drink with, you know. So there is that.

The first question –about whether contempt is ever appropriate—I go back and forth on. Maybe it's my Christian commitments coming out. I think treating somebody with contempt -- and I see your point, Sally, and I'm worried about that -- but the idea that any human being made in the image and likeness of God is vile and worthless, in and of themselves, is something that I find very hard to take. So I think I could be persuaded that what you need to do is to talk, to try to educate, to try to get to get somebody to see something in a better way.

Margaret Farley is a theologian who taught at Yale Divinity School, a very prominent ethicist. She deals with breaches of norms, and asks questions such as how do you deal with somebody that's harmed you truly and done a great injustice to you? She has a category called "anticipatory forgiveness." I mean, it's the sort of thing we academics come up with, but give us our due.

(Laughter)

CATHLEEN KAVENY: The point of "anticipatory forgiveness" is to say that you try to prepare yourself to forgive that person when the conditions are right. You pray for their repentance. You pray for their reform. You try not to harden your heart in a way that if they truly did repent and reform that you could not find a relationship with them. So I'm sympathetic to that.

And then the third, is there any good mode of prophecy. I --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Today.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Today. I'm open to suggestions. We got one about --

(Laughter)

CATHLEEN KAVENY: -- from Bob Casey. Part of the trouble is we need to ratchet down the prophetic discourse for a while. Let it have a rest.

It got out of control. I think there's three kinds of discourse. So a prophetic indictment controls bad deliberation, deliberation that's gone off the rails. You're deliberating and you're not holding yourself accountable to some fundamental moral commitments of the society. The prophet comes in and says "wake up."

What controls bad prophecy? Here's my suggestion; this might be the next book, maybe, maybe not. I think that irony and satire control bad prophecy. So when you were in the midst of the horrors of the cultural wars, you know, the big stuff, who controlled all this? You may not like them. John Stewart and Steven Colbert, right? They deflated the big puffy statements. You can't out-argue a prophet. You can't out-prophesize a prophet.

The thing that a prophet can't take, the kryptonite for a prophet, is mockery. So that's why you saw at the same time a big increase in culture war language, a big increase in the prominence given to late-night comics with sharp wits.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Will Saletan, you're next.

WILL SALETAN: So I have a question for each of you. For Dr. Kaveny, you spoke a little bit about what the conditions or the presumptions of the prophetic indictment. You spoke about the need for a common framework, the need for a common identity, and how if you don't have these things, it doesn't work.

Can you talk a little bit more about the step that has to proceed it or undergird it, the kinds of -- and I think you were just beginning to hint at this -- are there models in scripture for talking to the people about broadening the definition of us welcoming others in or reestablishing or establishing a common framework as a step toward, or as a premise for, that kind of moral criticism?

To Mark, I guess my question is Bob Casey gave that speech in 1993. I'm sitting here looking at Karlyn Bowman, and AEI put together a terrific compendium of public opinion data on abortion, and when I look at polls going back to that period, I see virtually no change on public opinion on almost any moral question relating to abortion, on whether you consider yourself pro-choice/pro-life, under what conditions you would allow abortion.

I feel like I've heard no shortage of Casey-like rhetoric from the pro-life movement in those 23 years. So is it not working? Is it not being said correctly? How would you change either what Casey said or expand it, or how would you explain that failure?.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. Professor, you first.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay. That's the $64,000 question. If you're going to have prophetic indictment, what's the basis for the indictment? What is the covenant of our community? Is it possible to broaden or expand our notions of covenant?

I think within the Christian framework, we had a really good example of how that type of broadening happened. The Council of Jerusalem said, "Well, you don't have to convert to Judaism first to become Christian" -- even though there's plenty in Jesus's own words that suggest the message was primarily for Jews. So if the goal is to broadenour sense of who is enopassed by God's covenantal concern within the Christian tradition, there are

plenty of places to start.

Within the national tradition, I think you do have some broadening. This may also be the next book: *Five Different Conceptions of Our National Covenant*. I think one version was the Mayflower compact or the Winthrop model of Christian charity that the Puritans came over with. Then, you know, it became the Constitution, in some sense, but both Lincoln and King went back to the Declaration of Independence as having a more capacious understanding of who we were as a people than the Constitution did. Plus, it didn't have that morally devastating compromise on slavery.

I think another way of imagining our common covenant now is the ideals associated with the Statue of Liberty, as expressed in Emma Lazarus's poem, "The New Colossus." She writes: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." I think for those of us who are resisting this contemporary hostility to immigrants, those of us whose ancestors were immigrants themselves, the Statue of Liberty poem encapsulates , who we are.

So that's the conversation we need to have before we get back to prophetic indictment, is "What is our basic understanding of our national covenant?" and "What is our imaginative model for thinking about our identity as a nation?" I can see several models running through our history. I like the Statue of Liberty model myself.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. Mark?

MARK STRICHERZ: Right. As usual, Will asks excellent questions.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's why we invite him.

MARK STRICHERZ: Clear thinking. Overturning a Supreme Court decision when half of

the population supports the decision is very, very difficult. You've got to get your side -- your political party -- marshaled to support it, and you've got to elect a president -- not only elect a president, but a president who supports it. This has taken the pro-life movement decades.

There's comparable cause for Democrats -- gay rights would be another one. It took a long time from the Supreme Court's decision on sodomy in 1986, the Georgia decision, up until -- I hope that's not symbolic -- to the Obergefell decision in 2015, that took a long time.

The timing has been wrong for pro-lifers just because of Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton. Not much pro-lifers can do to advance a culture of life when you have those two huge decisions. The core ruling is still in effect. Martin Luther King couldn't give his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1946 or 1947, before even integration of baseball, let alone the desegregation of the military by Truman in '47 or '48. So that's why timing is so important.

I will say that the public opinion on abortion is a strange thing. You're asking general questions about whether you're pro-life or pro-choice, "Do you support most abortions that are performed?" The very general questions benefit pro-choicers.

You ask more specific questions, especially to circumstances in which abortions actually occur, and those benefits pro-lifers. So two things are true. It's not just one thing. It's not just public opinion divided. It's got this strange element in which you ask more specific questions that helps pro-lifers, you ask some more general questions, and that helps pro-choicers.

And I'm not sure why pro-lifers speakers have not been able to duplicate, or even if it'd been better echoing Casey. I just think the timing and the Supreme Court decision are more important. There's only so much a prophet can do in those circumstances. The

prophet is constrained by circumstances beyond his control.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: I see Will's got a comeback.

WILL SALETAN: Just a follow-up of mine. Just to take the two issues that you just named -- so one, homosexuality, and the other abortion. As you noted, there's been a change on public opinion about homosexuality. There hasn't been on abortion.

I was presenting my first question as, like, a failure of the pro-life rhetoric because you didn't win. I want to just ask the question, is such a thing as a kind of prophetic discourse or prophetic indictment where you don't win, but you don't lose either? Could you argue that it is worth doing a kind of prophetic indictment to preserve the status quo or at least not to lose the debate the way that the debate on say same-sex marriage has been lost?

MARK STRICHERZ: Yes.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Good answer. Okay.

MARK STRICHERZ: I have friends who disagree with me on this. But on gay marriage, one overlooked element of that debate was that the Supreme Court short-circuited the deliberate democratic process, and when there's not really a democratic process, opponents of the Supreme Court of the decision don't have much chance to respond and try to get up public opinion for their side. For example, in my state, California, in 2008, public opinion polls on the Prop 8 in early Spring/Summer of 2008 showed that 55, 60 percent of Californians endorsed gay marriage. But once gay marriage opponents were able to marshal their argument for why gay marriage would be bad -- in other words, a deliberate democratic deliberate process occurred -- then the opponents to gay marriage won.

We didn't really have that with the Obergefell decision. The Obergefell decision was just the Supreme Court saying "well, we've got a few states, including Maryland, where the voters have decided gay marriage, and now we're going to get rid of all the laws banning gay marriage and we're just going to put them up." That helps explain the populated gay marriage because gay marriage opponents haven't been able to put out their arguments in the public square.

Now, whether ultimately the gay marriage opponents are going to win is probably -- you know, I can see that gay marriage supporters would win the debate because of the generational replacement.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. We have a lot of people on the list, but we also need to take a break and check out. So I think we're going to take a break and check out. I'd like for you to come back in 15 minutes, if possible, because we have a whole bunch of people on the list.

Thank you.

(Break)

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: So I think we're going to get started, and we have a strong list. Robert Draper and Tom and Jamie and E.J. and Graeme and Grant and Daniel and Elizabeth and Bill Galston. So Robert Draper, you're first. Over here.

ROBERT DRAPER: I'll ask a strong question. Doctor Kaveny, since we are sifting through the wreckage of the 2016 cycle, I'm struck by the interchangeability of the phrase "prophetic indictment" and the word "demagoguery." Obviously, for demagoguery, a crucial ingredient is a sense of theater. George Wallace long knew that. No one has understood it better than Donald Trump.

When I was asking myself during your talk which candidate most represented the kind of tempered version of prophetic indictment that you were describing -- a sense of humility, a sense of ironic detachment -- the closest I could come up with was John Kasich.

John Kasich never stood a chance against Donald Trump. I can't imagine a superior version of Kasich that would have stood a chance against Trump, and I think one of the main reasons for that is that Trump understood his audience and understood what they wanted, and he delivered that with full force on TV and rallies and on social media.

This leads me to, you know, a pretty unoriginal prophetic indictment, but I think it's a valid one, which is that we've become a nation that has an insatiable hunger for zero sum simplicity and good guys and bad guys. Trump issued that prophetic indictment in a way when he said, "My people love me so much, they'd vote for me if I shot someone on Fifth Avenue."

I'm wondering if, like, short of a unifying catastrophe on the order of a 9/11, how, if at all, can we expect the public to find it within itself to value a more tempered version of prophetic indictment as opposed to a purveyor of opioids and huge ratings?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: That's a tough question. The first thing I want to say in response is -- Part of what we need to do is reintroduce the study of rhetoric into scholarship on public discourse. We would benefit, I think, from considering the points made in Aristotle's work on rhetoric in thinking about how we deal with each other in the public square. I wrote *Prophesy Without Contempt* because I thought we were focusing too much on deliberative rhetoric. But I don't mean to suggest that prophetic rhetoric and deliberative rhetoric exhaust the waterfront. I think Donald Trump is doing something very different than prophetic rhetoric. I think he is engaged -- and I have to think about this more -- in almost an epideictic rhetoric, the rhetoric of praise and blame, and what

he is doing is there are good guys --

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (inaudible - off mic).

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Epideictic rhetoric? It's -- I can't. I have to -- E-P-I-D -- somebody help me. I wasn't good at spelling. Epideictic.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (inaudible - off mic).

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I'll find it for you. I mean it's a type of -- here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: (inaudible - off mic).

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I-C-T-I-C, yeah. Thank you. I knew you'd help me out. I knew it. I was looking at you with my heart because I knew Phil would help me out there.

So it's a kind of rhetoric, the rhetoric of praise and blame. Aristotle's not really that interested in it. It's usually more the rhetoric of praise of the great person at ceremonial events.

Trump's using the rhetoric of blame. That's different from prophetic rhetoric. Not every type of angry rhetoric is prophetic indictment.

How do we avoid an overuse of prophetic rhetoric? Well, I think we have to first pay attention to the fact we're doing it. It's almost like we're addicts, in a way, and the first think you have to do to get over an addiction is admit you've got a problem. I think the first thing we need to do is pay attention to the way we're talking about all of these things. So that's the best I can do at this point because there is no clear answer.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. Tom, you're up next. Over here.

TOM GJELTEN: I have a question about the 2016 election, and I'm now a little hesitant on the basis of what you just said, Cathy. Did you just say that you did not see the rhetoric of the Trump campaign as an example of prophetic discourse?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I did not see it as exclusively a matter of prophetic discourse. I think, in the end, has shaded into epideictic rhetoric, which is the casting of blame. There was some prophetic indictment, but when he got to sort of blaming whole classes of people apart from, you know, indicting somebody against a covenant, when it was just blame -- you know, "you people" -- all the insults that were unattached to a vision of the national community, that was a different kind of rhetoric.

So I think explaining Trump is going to require rhetorically more than what I talked about in this book.

TOM GJELTEN: Well, here's the question I have, and I'm going to ask it as carefully as I can. Yesterday, we were considering why so many White evangelicals were drawn to Trump.

I'm curious about whether there's a kind of an inverse question, which is whether you would say that people -- those people who were inclined to support Trump might have been drawn to a religious tradition that embodied a lot of prophetic discourse.

You did not say specifically that evangelical Christianity is characterized by prophetic discourse, but you talked about the importance of dualism, and I just see a lot of dualism in evangelical Christianity with the notion of saved versus unsaved, the idea of redemption really involving a kind of a before and after moment, born again. I'm curious whether, you know, that particular religious tradition might be especially appealing to

people who sort of are drawn also to a kind of a prophetic discourse.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I think it's more than that. The Puritans are one of the progenitors of the evangelical tradition, and you could argue that Puritanism had both a very highly intellectualized, you know, theology that came through Ramus that included, you know, a very elaborate way of reading Scripture, a way of reading a covenant.

Plus, it had it this emphasis on, you know, heart and feeling. And some people saying -- and I think it's too simplistic, but there's a little bit of truth to it -- well, the head part, you know, walked off and became Unitarianism and Congregationalism. Then the heart part went off and became, through the revival, some of the evangelical movements.

But sure, there's a great attraction to prophetic indictment. I think that with Trump voters, you know, evangelicals and Catholics, there are two key things to keep in mind. One, I think some them saw him as Cyrus of Persia--as an instrument of God. They weren't saying he was a holy messenger of God, they believed he was an instrument of God, used by God to carry out the divine plan.

Second, I think there's an ethics of voting that's at stake. You know, one of the things we haven't talked about is what do we do, from a moral perspective, when we vote? How should you conceive our responsibilities when you're voting? Does voting for a candidate mean that you are signing on to a whole package of what he or she stands for or does?

Some people think that's the case. But others think that voting is making the best of a highly imperfect situation. So there were clearly religious people who reasoned "Trump is the person who's going to cause the least amount of harm to this country, particularly to the things I care about because of the way he's going to approach appointments to the Supreme Court and because he's going to break the shackles of political correctness. We can clean up the mess later," I think that that's sufficient to explain why somebody with

that worldview voted for Trump. It's not my reasoning with respect to the cost-benefit analysis, but I understand it.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Well, let me just say, this is the first Faith Angle that we've had -- and we've had Faith Angle now, this is the 29th -- that the Book of Jonah's been quoted and Cyrus of Persia has been quoted, so it's a new first for the Faith Angle Forum. Thank you, Professor, for that. We'll all go back and read the Book of Jonah tonight before --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: It's short.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: -- we make prophetic utterances tomorrow.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: And it's read on Yom Kippur, isn't it? Where do we …

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: I want to call on Jamie Weinstein, but I just want to call it --

MARK STRICHERZ: I could --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. You want to respond to that?

MARK STRICHERZ: Yeah. Dualism sometimes is necessary in prophetic indictment. In the Peoria speech that Lincoln gave in 1854, he said, "The Negro is a man or is not a man." He can't be both. There's no room for some sophistication. It's either one or the other.

In the Lincoln-Douglas debates, Lincoln makes that point, too. I mean, he accuses of Douglas of saying there is no right to do wrong.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's very helpful. Thank you, Mark.

Now, before I call on Jamie, I do want to call attention to Jamie's tweet, which said, "Don't think it's a coincidence we're talking about prophetic indictment at Faith Angle and Donald Trump just met with modern prophet, Kanye."

(Laughter)

(Crosstalk)

CATHLEEN KAVENY: We've merged tweets.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Jamie, you're up next. Thank you for that tweet, and thank you for your comment.

JAMIE WEINSTEIN: No problem. Three short questions on this topic. Do you see in some ways that those who engage in prophetic indictment throughout American history, serve almost as third parties have served in many ways, that they raise an issue that needs to be raised in kind of moral terms, and once that issue becomes mainstream or addressed, those figures, as third parties often do, fade away? That would be my first question.

My second question is the two people I immediately think of when you discuss prophetic indictment in our modern day, people that I can think of who use that language, and I think intentionally so, knowing kind of the history of it, would be Cornel West on the left and Alan Keyes on the right.

So I guess my question is, is it intentionally in the African-American religious community, prophetic indictment, is that kind of something that is taught in a way that might not be taught in other areas, being that the two figures that I can think of, in the modern day, do come from a religious African-American tradition?

Finally, you discuss Abraham Lincoln as someone who has engaged in prophetic indictment. But I do wonder, wouldn't it be more someone like William Lloyd Garrison who would be actually the person in the kind of abolitionist movement who's engaging in prophetic indictment with contempt for the other side, who doesn't really want to reconcile, who wants to, in fact, I think withdraw the North from the Union as long as slavery --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Death --

JAMIE WEINSTEIN: Yeah.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: -- he called it.

JAMIE WEINSTEIN: -- whereas Abraham Lincoln was willing to work within the system even if tainted with slavery. So I guess those are my three questions.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay. Your three questions. Prophetic indictment in third parties, that's interesting. I hadn't thought of it, you know, with that kind of analogy.

Part of the trouble is a lot of prophets are never satisfied with the practical results of the reform they seek, in part because they they're holding themselves and a country to such a high standard.

So it would be interesting to look at. I think the question that needs to be asked that hasn't been written about is "how are arguments settled?" Nobody writes about that. How do we decide on it? When is an argument over? What counts as ending an argument?

So that would be connected to, I think, your first question, is do they fade away or does

nobody pay any attention to them anymore because they're considered cranks at this point? I don't know.

Second question: with respect to Cornel West and Alan Keyes, I think that that's a very good point. But part of their eloquence is attributable to the fact that the Black church tradition is so thoroughly immersed in Scripture. What the Puritans had and that the Black churches still have is a very rich way of reading Scripture. For the Puritans, it was a method. The Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible was seen as prefiguring events in the New Testament, so they had a way of relating all of this to a sort of teleological vision of how the community should operate. The Black churches do have, and have maintained, a very rich way of interrelating the Old Testament and the New Testament, of easily drawing by memory on whole biblical passages.

Two sources are really interesting on this. Both pertain to Martin Luther King. One is a book by Drew Hanson, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Speech that Inspired a Nation* (Harper Perennial, 2005). It offers a close analysis of the rhetorical structure and background of the speech. The second is the online database of all of Martin Luther King's writings at Stanford University. The collection is exhaustive. Go back and read some of his undergraduate papers on Scripture. He's got a paper on the Book of Jeremiah that I cite in my book that you can get online, and that is astounding in its depth of familiarity with the biblical text.

To go back to the question of persuasion, I think what we need to ask is what actually works. For example, I quote William Lloyd Garrison a great deal in the book. He is a textbook example of prophetic rhetoricHe's fiery. He's unequivocally condemnatory.

Part of the question I'm asking, though, was that the really helpful way of discussing the issue, or did that turn people off? I suspect that Lincoln's speech marks a standard that is more useful for us today than Garrison's fiery condemnation. Because who does fiery

condemnation convince? What won the Civil War wasn't Garrison's words. It was the bullets.

I want to pick up on finally, just quickly, Mark's point about dualism. There are some traditions that are more dualistic within Christianity, and certainly, there is a prophetic tradition that's dualistic.

Yet the fundamental Christian tradition, ever since Augustine repudiated the Manichean heresy, is non-dualistic – it teaches that the same good God created the entire world, and everything that has being, to the extent it has being, has goodness.

I think that Augustine's framework can provide a helpful reminder to those of us that want to resist the hegemony of prophetic discourse. Augustine thought evil wasn't an actual thing. It was a "privatio," or a privation. It was a lack of goodness. So a bad action was a badly ordered choice. You were not choosing evil per se, but you were choosing the lesser good rather than the greater good, and that's where you got into trouble.

If we see our interlocutors as not choosing evil as a positive sense, but as having a badly ordered set of priorities, it's much easier to converse with them and to see them as conversation partners that we can talk to than if we see them as embodying evil in itself.

I just want to say one thing on seeing evil in itself in other people, and then I'll go on. I think Hillary Clinton was tacitly configured as a witch in this past election season. A witch is someone in league with the devil—she is the devil's consort. We think we have rejected the charge of witchcraft since the ignominious events at Salem. Yet I suspect we have simply reconfigured that charge. I'd like to do a little bit of exploration of how we configure powerful women who are transgressing their socially approved roles. Whether we admit it or not, I suspect that we configure them as witches. That is, I think, something that would be worth looking at from a sociological, a theological, and a historical point of

view.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's her next book.

Okay. E.J., and then Graeme and Grant. E.J. Dionne.

E.J. DIONNE: Thank you, Mark and Cathy. Thank you, Michael, for bringing Cathy here, so everybody knows why I love her so much.

And your comments at the beginning show that the definition of a friend is someone who ascribes virtues to someone they don't have, so thank you.

I have three quick questions. The ones I care about most are the second and third, which relate. The first is just one question I've always had about Martin Luther King. We focus very much on the early King, the civil rights Christianity King, the conciliatory King.

In a way, we sanitize, or domesticate, King because later in his life, before his death, particularly about the Vietnam War, he really shifted to a much stronger, tougher, at times, angrier version of prophetic indictment. I'd just love your reflections on King.

Second, one of my favorite statements in politics ever was Norman Thomas, the great American socialist. When people started burning the American flag in the '60s, Thomas said, "No, no. We need public symbolic washings of the American flag, reverent washings of the American flag," which sends a signal we don't hate our country. We love our country, but it needs to be cleansed. It needs to be improved.

This was inherent in what you said, what Michael Walzer has written about. Is there any moral reason, or practical reason, to prefer indictments that are embedded in the society that hold the society to its best standards versus indictments of the whole society itself,

including its standards? And there are times and places, and that goes to the last question, which is Trump. Pete was very instructive about, you know, "I'd vote for Satan rather than Hillary Clinton." Many Clinton supporters believe they did vote for a Satan over Hillary Clinton.

I say that because one of the other distinctions you make is prophetic witness versus practical deliberation, and there really is a real debate, I think, going on between people who are anti-Trump about what the appropriate response to the next year or four years is. There are some people who say, "Well, there are ways. We have obligations to work with him," et cetera, et cetera, versus those -- and I confess I'm more in that camp at the moment unless you morally persuade me that I am completely wrong -- you know, which is that prophetic witness may be what is required.

How are we supposed to think about this question? That's the one I'm sort of putting my friend on the spot on it to help us, some of us, sort this out.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: All right, the three questions. The later King did really shift his rhetoric, and it did become much angrier. But it also became more diffuse, and I think some of it shows that prophetic indictment is really better when it's targeted at a very clear practice that violates a common covenant.

The Vietnam War was an injustice, but it was very hard to frame that as going against some particular aspect of the Constitution. And economic injustice, well it was harder to claim that it went back and violated the very roots of our national commitments.

So I think the later King's rhetoric, although it was extremely powerful, verged on exceeding the boundaries of the the genre of prophetic indictment.

The second point about washing the American flag versus burning it -- I think that that's

great and that that goes back, actually, to the distinction I was trying to draw between "the oracles against Israel," where you call for the reform and cleansing of your country rather than its destruction. I've got a chapter in the book where I talk about the controversy over Jeremiah Wright, where he said "God damn America," and people got all upset, you know. You remember all of that?

Well, if you go back and read the transcript, the full transcript, it was an interview with Bill Moyers. He was basically saying, "God damn America for its sins. It's got to reform. It's got to repent. I love the country. I'm not calling for its destruction like Babylon. I'm calling for its repentance and reform like Israel and Judah."

So that's another example of washing rather than burning. So I agree with you on that.

What do you do to Trump and to think about Trump? Prophetic witness, practical deliberation? I think we need other forms of rhetoric. I think that this doesn't exhaust everything. I think we need a communal ceremony of lamentation, of sorrow. That was brought up.

I think we also need to think about other categories. Abraham, Joshua Heschel he follows Aristotle in distinguishing between ethos, pathos, and logos, as a way of identifying where the power of a speaker comes from.

Obama's power as speaker comes from logos. He's cerebral. He's serene. He's like Mr. Spock in Star Trek. He's just so brilliant and calm. He's got a little bit of ethos, too, in his palpable moral rectitude.

But what we didn't have out of the mouths of either Clinton or Obama, I think, was pathos – "I feel." What Trump somehow communicated was that he felt people's pain, not just that he understood it intellectually. He got it. He didn't need the knowledge of

differential policy analysis because he had the truer knowledge in his heart. Many people believed that.

I think a good response to Trump has to be how consideration of the following question: how do we find room for expressing feeling in our national life and solidarity through a communal e ritual. I think Catholics actually have something we could teach -- not teach, I don't mean, but, you know --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Share.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Share. Share is good. Ritually, yes. But we don't have any public rituals anymore, you know. Part of what a ritual does is transform the way you approach something by transforming both your mind but also your feelings, and I think the phenomenon Trump means we need to come up with public rituals that express and channel deep emotions.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Graeme Wood and then Grant Wacker.

GRAEME WOOD: Thank you very much for your presentation. There was a book a few years ago that I really enjoyed called *The Honor Code* by Anthony Appiah, which seemed to touch on some of these subjects.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Called what again, Graeme?

GRAEME WOOD: It was called *The Honor Code* by Anthony Appiah, a philosopher and now the ethicist columnist for *The New York Times*.

But it discussed the relationship between honor on one hand and specific engagement on difficult questions for moral reasoning and looking at topics like the Atlantic slave trade,

dueling, foot binding in China. It was pointing out that the moral reasoning definitely did precede the kind of social decision to stop these practices -- that is, for hundreds of years, people recognized that dueling was a morally bad thing to do.

But while it was considered an honorable practice, even though people understood it was immoral, it was --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Right.

GRAEME WOOD: -- something that was essentially encouraged by society. So the way that he conceived -- and the same thing with foot binding -- in a 10- to 20-year period, it went from being something that everybody reasoned to the point of believing it was a bad thing to do but, at the beginning of the 20 years, was something that would cause people to -- you would not want to marry someone who didn't have bound feet to being mortified of the possibility 20 years later of marrying someone who had bound feet.

So I bring this up because the way that he conceives of honor seems to have some characteristics of contempt -- that is, being dishonored by the presence of someone who advocates one of these things, a very, kind of, pariah attitude or shunning, things that you've mentioned in the context of contempt.

So I wonder if you might have any comments on a distinction to be made between this honor discourse and then the discourse of contempt that you don't like.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I think that that's a great set of questions to explore. I think it's a little more complicated in an American society so that, you know, if you've got a hierarchical society where you know where you are and how much honor you deserve by what rung on the society you are -- the sumptuary laws of Europe were in part designed for this purpose. If you were not a gentlewoman or man but wore the clothes appropriate

to a gentlewoman or man, you were dishonoring the people of the class that had the right to wear that clothing. We don't have sumptuary laws like that anymore.

So part of what we have to figure out is how to reconcile equality and difference. We're a country of people who are, in some sense, egalitarian, at least in our politics. We all have a vote. But we have a lot of different kinds of class stratification, and working out the sense of resentment that people have entails critically examining the effects these various ways of stratifying society. Upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class, working class. What do those terms mean? What are the connotations they express, and how are those connotations consonant, with the notion that we're somehow all equal?

What do you do if you're a country that has class but also says class doesn't matter? That's the additional problem we're facing, I think, here, when thinking about how contempt operates in political context.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Before I go to Grant, any of you know that Graeme Wood a couple years ago wrote a very important cover story on ISIS? Itt was the most widely read piece in *The Atlantic*. It's now becoming -- it's been expanded into -- a book.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Oh, cool.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Graeme, tell us when the book is coming out, who the publisher is, and we'll get an advertisement in among all these people for you.

GRAEME WOOD: Thanks for never missing a chance to embarrass me with some of those details. Yeah, the book is coming out on December on 20th. It's called *The Way of the Strangers*, and it's coming out with Random House.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Great.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: You say December 20th?

GRAEME WOOD: December 20th, that's right.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Sounds like a week from now.

GRAEME WOOD: Yes, that's right.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: So you must have copies.

GRAEME WOOD: I have not held a copy in my hand, but --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Oh, sorry.

GRAEME WOOD: -- when I do, it will be literally still warm from the press, I think.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: And the title is?

GRAEME WOOD: The title again is *The Way of the Strangers*.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: *The Way of the Strangers*.

GRAEME WOOD: *Encounters with the Islamic State*.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Excellent. Thank you for that. Okay. Grant Wacker, if you have a new book, I'll be glad to promote it. You're up. Pull the microphone over, please.

GRANT WACKER: I have two quick questions.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Pull the microphone over, please.

GRANT WACKER: Oh, I'm sorry.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I never knew that either.

GRANT WACKER: Okay. Two quick questions, but first a comment that Graeme's words about honor trigger -- very thoughtful words -- and that is the role of blasphemy.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Oh, good point.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: The role of what?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Blasphemy.

GRANT WACKER: Blasphemy.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yes.

GRANT WACKER: When does speech cross the line into blasphemy? It has a lot of ramifications about how it's punished and how it's prevented, and blasphemy is defined differently in different communities.

But anyway, if you want to think about that and make a comment, it would be great. But here are my two questions. The first is we've talked a great deal, or almost exclusively, about the speaker. I'm curious if you could ruminate some on the audience and in what way an audience constitutes speeches, either irrational discourse or prophetic discourse. I'll leave it at that. I think that's all, given time, that I need to say.

Then the second question is the difference between what, for lack of a better word, might be called intrinsic quality versus effectiveness. Here, I think of the famous line attributed to Mother Theresa that "God calls us not to be effective, but to be faithful," and how that kind of distinction might apply here in which prophetic discourse, one hopes, achieves its ends but has its intrinsic power, whether or not it actually wins ascent.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay.

GRANT WACKER: Those are the two questions.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Those are great questions, and they're hard questions.

Audience, I mean, that's the thing that's really interesting. One of the things I've been contemplating is that perhaps the point of this prophetic rhetoric, maybe not consciously, is really simply to whip up the people who already agree, you know.

It's one thing to use this rhetoric as a means of persuasion. It's another thing to do it in a stump speech to energize everybody that already agrees with you.
I think there's some truth to that, especially in the contemporary era, which is characterized by the "siloing" of our discourse so that, many speakers only address their own people, those who already agree with them. Such an audience will find the prophetic rhetoric not as off-putting as the people who are its ostensible targets.

The problem with that objection is that it really distorts the purpose of prophetic rhetoric. Prophetic rhetoric, at least the oracles against Israel, really was meant to call an audience, the audience, to consider its own flaws and failings, not to contemplate the flaws and failings of all those people, those other people, that aren't in the room.

I think that there's another additional twist here that's causing some of the breakdown. On the tension between the intrinsic truth quality of the statement versus its rhetorical effectiveness, we might recall the old question from Tertullian: "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?"

You could say, "Well, the tradition calls for us to proclaim the truth no matter what, no matter if everything falls; if we're faithless, that's the worst thing," but there is another tradition in the broader Christian thought that comes more from Athens than from Jerusalem that says, "Well, part of what we need to do is to work out how the community should be organized and promote the common good, given the limited circumstances that we have. Incremental improvement and the use of prudence, which is practical wisdom, is also part of the divine plan—it can be illuminated by grace."
A real question is this: Does faithfulness require standing up and saying, "This what I believe, I can do no else," or does faithfulness also permit what so many of you do, what so many good politicians do, which is working in the community for incremental improvement? That's the question.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. Daniel Lippman, and Elizabeth, Bill Galston, and Ken Woodward, Pete Wehner. Daniel, you're up next.

DANIEL LIPPMAN: My question was you mentioned that the pro-life movement had waited, you know, decades for a time to overturn Roe v. Wade, and we might be approaching that moment again soon. Is there a risk for the pro-life movement, and also the Republican Party, that it's almost like you might get what you want, but then undermine the movement long-term if the majority of Americans who kind of like the status quo, when that status quo is disrupted, then it could backfire on both the Republican Party and also pro-life conservatives?

MARK STRICHERZ: Overturning Roe is kind of like what happened with Obamacare, that

it was pushed through but it did not have public acceptance. Yes, in the immediate aftermath, pro-life politicians would be defeated, especially in marginal districts. But long term, the issue would go back to the states, so it would much more of a state issue, and then there would be much of a variance for public opinion because, right now, there's no real moral restrictions that pro-lifers can put through without the Supreme Court coming in and knocking them down. If there's examples to the contrary, I'd like to hear them.

The Supreme Court's decision this year on the regulating at abortion clinics, that was what pro-lifers most wanted to take and had public acceptance, as shown in states like Virginia, and the Supreme Court said, "You can't do that."

So I think long term, I think that that shows that our abortion regime or abortion laws would be more similar to that of other countries rather than this mostly one-size-fits-all standard that we have.

DANIEL LIPPMAN: But wouldn't you also expect that, you know, the moment that there was a pro-choice majority on the Supreme Court again, that you would just basically flip-flop constantly or they would put back into effect Roe.

MARK STRICHERZ: Right. Well, that's outside my expertise about what -- on the precedence about overturning and -- I don't know -- under turning or re-putting it back. Yeah --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: We've already got all the time here, so feel free.

MARK STRICHERZ: Yeah. I'm not sure there's an issue like that. If there's one, I can't think of it, where you're constantly putting it back and forth. I mean, it's a fair point, yeah. The American public is divided.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Professor Kaveny, do you want to add anything?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Well, I have written substantively and normatively on abortion in my first book called *Law's Virtues: Fostering Autonomy and Solidarity in American Society*. So I'm just going to put that hat on for a second.

I was working out of, a Thomistic account of the nature, purpose, and limits of law not because it was St. Thomas who offered the account, but I thought it actually made sense in today's world. One of the things he says is good law has to be according to the custom of the country. It can't be too harsh, or you'll get a backlash. It also has to have a certain stability to it, or too much flip-flopping will undermine the rule of law, per se.

Go back and read the opinion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, which was the opinion that stopped the expansive line of abortion rights but didn't go so far as to overturn Roe. It reaffirmed Roe but cabined it in a bit, giving pro-life legislators more room to operate. It basically said well, we don't want to overturn Roe, because Roe is settled law. Many people depend upon it, and we need to preserve the integrity of the legal system.

So one of the fundamental jurisprudential questions we rarely talk about is how an act of law has to perate in a very real context, under very real constraints. It is not like an act of magic. I think the failure to grapple with the limits of law is a big flaw in the pro-life movement.

You know, it's not like "I don't like this, I'm going to make a law against it law." It's not like we're in *Bewitched* land where you snap your fingers and it's gone. A law has to operate against a whole culture, and one of the things you need to take into account in order to make sound law is how it's going to be received and responded to and how it's going to affect the whole ecosystem of law.

I would love to see the pro-life movement talk more about what counts as good law in this broader sense, not just looking at whether the particular law under consideration is just or unjust in the abstract. Just and practicability are both criteria, even in Thomas's understanding of what good law is.

DANIEL LIPPMAN: I don't think your book appreciates sufficiently that the Casey restrictions did have a big effect on lessening the abortion rate if you looked at what the abortion rate was in the early 1990's as far as more than 1.5 million --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I think we're going to disagree very much on this, how to read all of the statistics -- whether it was the regulations that did that, whether it was the better economic circumstances that did that. So --

DANIEL LIPPMAN: Right.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: -- I think some of that would be how we appreciated that, and then that would be the question. That's not this book, right? That's *Law's Virtues*. That's a different book.

DANIEL LIPPMAN: Well, it's probably in that book, too, where you talk about what's the difference for somewhat of a pro-life voter, whether that pro-life voter should take John Kerry's position that more federal funding for social programs will be able to reduce the abortion rate or presidential candidates who may appoint Supreme Court nominees who may overturn Roe. You didn't have that prudential question in the book.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Right. The point --

DANIEL LIPPMAN: So I would say that as far as --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: The point of this book was to show the difference between prophets and practical deliberators on how they looked at the abortion issue, even if they were pro-life. So if you were pro-life and you were more of a practical deliberator, you'd worry about kind of concrete effect on the abortion rate and other sorts of things. If you're a prophet, you would say, "We really need to condemn it and the condemnation is the most important thing."

But I do have my own substantive view of abortion and the laws in this other book.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. We'll do the other book next time. Elizabeth Dias and then Bill Galston.

ELIZABETH DIAS: Thank you both. As I've been listening to you all talk about prophetic discourse, I am also wondering about the role of the media, not just, you know, the speaker and the audience, but specifically the role of the reporter versus the columnist. I'm a reporter, so I'm selfishly asking that question.

I'd love to hear any reflections that you have, putting this moment as we think about where the country is in terms of prophetic indictments being thrown around, et cetera. Any historical context to help reflect on this moment for the role of reporters would be helpful.

This is a bit open-ended, but I'd love to hear you reflect on what's running through your mind as you have more historical background on maybe where the media has been with these things and where we are now.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I have not done a lot of work on the ethics of media. The only thing I would say is it sometimes gets frustrating for those of us in academia. It does seems as if the media quotes the more extreme voices, that when you turn on the television and

you see the people representing the views in contention, it's usually someone taking a very strong prophetic -- to put it charitably -- but honestly -- not so charitably --almost deranged, angle on a particular point of view.

The people who have been doing the slow, careful work on these issues trying to balance various factors, they're too boring for television or for columns or for that sort of work.

So it would be nice if you talked to the boring people once in a while because they might actually help calm things down.

(Laughter)

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I've got a list I'll give you.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: But to follow up on Elizabeth's point, do you have any examples -- maybe somebody in the room do -- of writers who, in their editorializing, were so prophetic from their position as a columnist that they moved the audience to change their mind about a social issue?

MARK STRICHERZ: I think someone like David Brooks does that, challenges people, people in New York and people who don't read, you know, a Christian's writing.

But I would just echo that, what you said, and completely agree. I think all the incentives are perverse. If you want to sell books, if you want to get tweets, page views, buzz, ratings, it is to be salacious and provocative and controversial.

So it almost becomes a systemic problem, and if you choose, as an individual, to use responsible rhetoric, it's almost like unilateral disarmament in this business.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Hmm.

WILLIAM GALSTON: Well, that apparently explains my reception as a columnist.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Well, and on that point, we call now the prophet, Bill Galston.

WILLIAM GALSTON: A couple of preliminary brief remarks and then my question. Maybe the first one's a question.

What happens if the pathos that an orator is channeling is dangerous? That is to say, what if the pathos is not, "I feel your pain," but, rather, "I feel your anger and resentment and am prepared to give practical voice to it?" In other words, there are some passions and emotions that are politically and humanly dangerous.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAM GALSTON: Is the public discourse enriched by the forceful public expression of those sentiments? That's not an easy question.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: No.

WILLIAM GALSTON: I think we also need a sidebar, and maybe even a session in the future, on dueling notions of forgiveness.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Dueling notions of what?

WILLIAM GALSTON: Forgiveness.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay.

WILLIAM GALSTON: You know, a virtue that you invoked because the Jewish account of forgiveness, which is very rich and detailed, is very different from the Christian account --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Mm-hmm.

WILLIAM GALSTON: -- and, if I may be so bold, I think probably more plausible than the Christian account. I realize I'm reopening some very old wounds here, but --

(Laughter)

(Crosstalk)

WILLIAM GALSTON: Thank you. That was fast. That's the problem.

When I heard the people who survived the shooting in, I think it was, the Charleston church, you know, immediately forgiving the shooter, I said to myself, "There's something wrong with this," and, you know, I think that repentance proceeds forgiveness. And I -- but this is --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's a Christian notion, by the way.

WILLIAM GALSTON: Excuse me?

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That's a Christian notion, repentance.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Yeah.

WILLIAM GALSTON: Well, then somebody forgot to tell the people in the Charleston church –

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yeah --

WILLIAM GALSTON: -- because show me the evidence of Dylann Roof's repentance. We haven't seen any yet.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yeah, yep.

WILLIAM GALSTON: He's not worthy of forgiveness.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yeah.

WILLIAM GALSTON: And the whole question of what's forgivable and what isn't, I think, is a very complex one.

And by the way, regarding an act as unforgivable does not mean exiling the perpetrator from the moral community. Go back and watch *Judgment at Nuremberg*. Those acts were unforgivable, but the perpetrators were treated as members of the human community nonetheless and rightly so, you know. If they'd simply been shot without a trial, you know, it would have been a different matter.

Okay. Here is my response to your account of prophecy. It seems to me that there are two ways in which prophecy can fail.

Way number one -- and you know, the Hebrew Bible is suffused with this -- is prophets who believe that collective disasters are a function of individual sin. There's a straight path from that deeply implausible way of thinking to Pat Robertson's invocation of the

path of the hurricane as punishment for, you know, as punishment for the sins of abortion and homosexuality.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Yes.

WILLIAM GALSTON: That's crazy prophecy, in my judgment, without any credibility. That's not the right way to approach an earthquake, with all due respect to Cotton Mather.

So that's one way the prophecy fails when you're sort of analytically and humanly crazy.

The other way it fails is, as you say, Utopianism without a constructive alternative. But this gets to the point that I want to make, and that is that neither Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, nor Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural, can be characterized as Utopian critique without an alternative program. In fact, Abraham Lincoln announced the alternative program at the end of the second inaugural, and if he'd lived, you know, we might be a better country. Martin Luther King's prophetic discourse was embedded in a march, you know, for jobs and freedom. That's what it was called, as I recall, and it's no accident that the speech led very directly to the enactment of specific legislation.

So good prophecy --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Yes?.

WILLIAM GALSTON: -- is in the service of a concrete alternative to an inadequate status quo.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay. What happens if the pathos is dangerous – "I feel your anger and resentment." I completely agree that there can be dangerous sentiments that people

are feeling.

Then the question comes in -- and I think you've talked about this very, very insightfully -- well, what do you do with it? Is it better that we tamp it down and we don't deal with it? Do we just, you know, push those sentiments back down in people?

Is that wise? Is that feasible? How do you push sentiments back down in people if they're unhealthy sentiments? You know, we can't give the whole Midwestern part of the country therapy. That's not going to work.

So what do you do if a whole part of the country has this sort of feeling of anger and resentment? How you address the problem? I don't know.

The economy is better now than it's been in a long time in some sense and slightly better for that group of people. That hasn't helped.

So what's the root of the problem? I don't know whether the answer is not talk about it or talk about it, and maybe we need to talk about that.

The Jewish notion of forgiveness and repentance, I think, is a big theological thing there, and you've just got to go straight to the theology on this. You know, if you're an orthodox Christian, you believe that Jesus died for the sins of humanity and the forgiveness came first, and the repentance and reform was enabled by the grace that came from Jesus' life and death. Repentance and reform came second.

What the people in the Black church did, you know, is astonishing and admirable. It's amazing, but it makes sense as a notion of forgiveness that operates within the Christian theological tradition. I also suspect there are some human resonances to that view of forgiveness. Sometimes, people find it in their hearts to repent when the person they

have wronged says "I forgive you" first. The forgiveness enables you to admit that you did something wrong. You can drop the defenses because you know the relationship being sustained by the offer of forgiveness.

That's really what the offer of forgiveness from God to humanity is in the Christian tradition. It's an offer of a continued relationship, despite the sin, and when human beings can't do it, God's going to step in and maintain the relationship on our behalf.

I think I'd love to see a session forgiveness. Jeffrey Murphy and Jean Hampton's book, *On Forgiveness and Mercy* (1990) is a great place to start, but there's a lot of other good stuff, too.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Let me just put an advertisement in it. We've had two sessions on forgiveness at the Faith Angle Forum.

A year ago, we had Professor Albert Raboteau from Princeton, the African-American church historian, who spoke on forgiveness and the African-American church experience, where I said start with Charleston in mind, but give us the history. He gave us the whole history of African-American experience struggling with slavery and discrimination and abuse. It was one of the most powerful presentations we've ever had here, and that's on our website.

Number two, we had Professor Greg Jones of Duke Divinity School on "Spinning Sorrow: The Uses and Abuses of Forgiveness in the Public Square" --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Mm-hmm.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: -- where he was addressing the question of politicians making really bad blunders and the next day coming out and saying "I apologize, forgive me. I'm

ready to run for office again."

CATHLEEN KAVENY: That's a slightly different issue, in my view.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: That was another great session. So we've covered forgiveness here, and we're glad to cover it some more, because we believe in forgiveness. But go ahead.

MARK STRICHERZ: But anticipatory forgiveness because that seems to more of a --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Anticipatory forgiveness.

MARK STRICHERZ: I agree with Bill -- I don't know if I agree with the idea that it's Christian. It seems like it's a more recent Christian adaptation or introduction because when Pope John Paul II was shot, he met with his would-be assassin, but I don't recall John Paul II saying well, "I forgive you for what you did" before he met with him. It was when he met with him. I'm sure the shooter said he was sorry for what he did. But it was not this anticipatory idea of forgiveness that applies not only to the example of --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: I think he did. I think he said that he forgave him early, before his attacker apologized.

MARK STRICHERZ: But he met with --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Anticipatory forgiveness doesn't mean there is no sense of justice. It means that you're disposing yourself to reopening the relationship at the right time. So that's what it means. You'd have to look into her technical analysis of this.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Let me just intervene here. We have --

MARK STRICHERZ: Well, I meant the confession. You're always open to the idea of God's grace for whatever you've done. But is it --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: We're getting in deep theological territory here, and it's okay. But we only have a few minutes --

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Well, can I just respond to his final --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yes, and then we have two more people.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay. So --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Ken Woodward and Pete Wehner -.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: We have to leave. All right.

Collective disaster. I agree prophecy goes awry under those circumstances. Remember that prophetic indictment is based on a covenant, and a covenant operates like a contract.

So if you do these things you are required to do by the contract, you get what you're entitled to. The reverse is also true. If you breach the contract with God, God punishes you. So how do you escape the logic of this framework? There's some really wonderful stuff in Perry Miller's *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*. Taking the threat of a smallpox epidemic as an example, he shows us how this covenantal cause-and-effect relationship could begin to break down. Cotton Mather warily advised his flock to try the new vaccinations against the disease.

Well, if you start telling people to go get vaccinations, rather than pray that the small pox

epidemic doesn't take over, you're actually kind of undermining this idea that God's rewards and punishments are based on your fidelity to the covenant. You're suggesting that the epidemic can be fought with other means at least as effective as prayer and repentance.

Lincoln and Martin Luther King and Utopianism -- let me make it clear, I don't think utopianism is a characteristic of good prophetic discourse. I should have made that clearer. I think it's a tendency toward which much bad and mediocre prophetic discourse tends to run. So you're entirely right. I'm sorry I wasn't clear.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Before I call on Ken, Will, you were here for Professor Raboteau's session. Why don't you put in a good blurb for everybody in taking a look at that. I remember your response to it.

WILL SALETAN: (inaudible - off mic). Sorry. It was amazing, and I can't do it justice in words. So you should go watch it. It's on the website, right?

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yeah.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: And he has brand new book out on American prophets --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Yes.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: -- that's well worth reading.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Is that out?

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Yes.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: The book is out, yes, and some of it was in his presentation here. Anyway, Will, I knew you would give us a good endorsement of that. So thank you.

Ken Woodward, we're almost out of time, so we're going to have to be concise. You and Pete are next.

KENNETH WOODWARD: Okay. Two things, and maybe this a program for the future. But one, you didn't talk about liberation theology. Was that good prophetic discourse?

It seems to be the only test, the real life test that we had, was Nicaragua, and that didn't work. That was liberation theology put in action, and it was compromised from the beginning, as it was probably supposed to be, partly by the Contras and Reagan, certainly, and partly by the Sandinistas themselves. How would you fit that into prophetic rhetoric?

The other one really is for Grant Wacker. I mean, here we got Billy Graham. Billy Graham played a prophetic role. He spoke prophetically. He spoke prophetically to the audience in front of him and then also on television. But it seemed to me that this became ritualized -- that is to say, expected -- and was, therefore, blunted in some way because that's what Billy Graham does. That's the way he speaks. We go to listen to it. It becomes a kind of entertainment and the fruition of our expectations. So I'm wondering in what sense that was effective prophetic discourse, the same as --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Okay. I want to ask her to hold her answer, and we'll get Pete's intervention. Pete, pull the microphone over, and we'll get these on the table.

PETER WEHNER: Thanks. Yeah, Cathleen, you talked earlier in your remarks about creating humility in the genre of prophecy, which interested me. But if you could unpack that a little bit, do you think of it in terms of prophesy with less certitude, or are you talking about it prophesy turning within? So what do you mean by that? The virtue of

humility is one that intrigues me.

The second is if either or both of you have thoughts on this idea of prophetic witness being more powerful coming from within the tribe than outside. It just strikes me that liberals become prophetic when conservatives are in power, and conservatives become prophetic when liberals are in power.

But just from a utilitarian and efficacy standpoint, it's a lot stronger if one is prophetic within the tribe that one is associated with.

Otherwise, it's not perceived as a prophetic witness. It's perceived as a partisan witness or a partisan attack. But I wonder what you think about that and if there are examples you could dial in on.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Okay, three questions. Liberation theology, is it prophetic? Well, obviously, it's prophetic in some sense. It's social condemnations are rooted in the two big violations of the covenant identified in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament -- idolatry, where you see mainly in Hosea; and lack of care for the poor, which you see very much in Isaiah. So to the extent the liberation theologians are calling attention to great social injustices in their community, I think that it is clearly prophetic discourse.

Questions about the status of liberation theology can be asked. I think some of them, you know, at least in Catholic circles, had to do with whether or not they were tying themselves too closely to a secular ideology -- namely a kind of a communist vision of the country -- versus, you know, really rooting themselves in the theological tradition.

So different liberation theologians have been treated differently even by the Vatican. When liberation theology was at its nadir in terms in popularity, Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, and even Cardinal Mueller, who is even now the head of Congregation

for the Doctrine of the Faith, made sure they protected Gustavo Gutierrez, because it was totally clear he was rooted in a deeply orthodox theological tradition, rather than trying to plop a Marxist critique on top of theological insights.

Your point about humility is also important. I see the humility as something that we need to bring in to contemporary prophetic discourse, and as something we can authentically root in these texts I'm talking about. So I write this on Page 391 of the book about Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address:

"Yet the Second Inaugural Address takes an additional and striking step: It carves out a space for prophetic humility. Lincoln notes that both sides of the war 'pray to the same God' and 'invoke His aid against the other.' Calling the situation 'fundamental and astounding,' he emphasizes the lack of correlation between the prophetic word and the subsequent result. Neither party 'expected' or 'anticipated' the war's duration. Each 'looked for an easier triumph.'" Lincoln creates distance between the prophets of I sides and the divine will: 'The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes.'"

We sometimes think that prophets see themselves as being messengers of God and even delivering that message like Verizon, you know, 100 percent accurately. Yet Lincoln recognizes that he's a limited messenger of God and he does not fully understand the full plan of God.

The same point can be made with the Book of Jonah. Jonah doesn't know why God's sending him to Nineveh; he doesn't want to go. If you read his reluctance in the whole context of the Biblical tradition, you know that Nineveh is associated with Assyria, the country that ends up destroying Israel, and was itself destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in the seventh century B.C.

So where is God in all of that? I think what the Book of Jonah is trying to tell us is that God is still there, and that even God's prophets don't necessarily understand the whole picture

And then was there one more question?

PETER WEHNER: (inaudible - off mic) speaking within the tribe.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Oh, yes. I think it's a lot easier for those who want to practice prophetic indictment in the public square to use "the oracles against the nations" as their model. It's tempting to say: "Condemn those awful people who need to be destroyed."

But that's really not the main point of the prophetic books of the Bible, and I don't think it's effective. It's just—let's be honest--more fun. It really is, you know. It's just a lot more fun and more satisfying to condemn those evil others than to turn the condemnation on yourself.

WILLIAM GALSTON: (inaudible - off mic) that Pete's question comes from a deep and, I think, personal place because he has found himself, you know, in --

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Prophetic --

WILLIAM GALSTON: -- a critical mode versus his own tribe.

CATHLEEN KAVENY: Good for you.

WILLIAM GALSTON: And that can't have been easy, and he must have paid a price. But your actions were honorable and are duly honored.

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Thank you, Bill.

Well, you know, you can tell a session has gone very well when it continues to go over time and nobody's up and running out.

So please join in me in thanking our speakers for this session.

◆ **END** ◆