

**Four Decades as a Worldwide Religion Reporter: Observations and Lessons Learned**

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December 2016

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Ken Woodward was Religion Editor of *Newsweek* Magazine for almost 40 years. He has a brand new book out called *Getting Religion: Faith, Culture, and Politics From the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama*.

He got so interested in the subject of revivals and awakenings in America, and the fact that America needed one, that he brought down an historian from the Boston area every Monday to speak to about 12 of us about the history of awakenings in American culture and society. Chuck Colson was riveted by these lectures and was hoping it was happening in America.

I asked Ken to come and tell us the things he learned, the lessons he learned and observations from his 40 years' experience, and then we're going to hear from Grant Wacker.

Ken, you're on.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** All right. I'm going to talk a little bit about *Newsweek* because it doesn't exist anymore, at least not the *Newsweek* I knew, and I want to make all of you younger journalists jealous.

# THE FAITH ANGLE FORUM

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I walked in off the street and got that job as a religion editor right off the bat. I got hired because, not in spite of, the fact that I'm Catholic. No one on staff knew much about religion or cared to write about it. It was toward the end of Vatican Council II. *TIME* Magazine was out-reporting us on the biggest religion story in at least 50 years us. They had way more people in their Rome bureau to cover the Council, and to wine and dine the *periti* while pumping them for information.

My opposite number at *TIME*, oddly enough, was a John Elson who had graduated, as I did, from Notre Dame, only five years earlier. He and I were both influenced by an English professor named Frank O'Malley on the relationship of religion to culture and I wanted to do the kind of pieces Elson had been doing for *Time* before I got to Newsweek.

Shortly after the Council, I did a cover story called “How U.S. Catholics View Their Church” for which *Newsweek* then hired the pollster for Kennedy.

Nobody -- no institution, least of all the Catholic Church -- had ever asked Catholics what they think about their church. So that was a first, and then after the Six-Day War, we put “The American Jews: New Pride, New Problems” on the cover. American Jews had never been on the cover of any magazine before that. American Jews have never been on the cover of any magazine since, at least to my knowledge.

There was a lot of nervousness. The editorial department was top-heavy with Jewish editors and writers. The managing editor came in and said to me, “You know, Ken, as they used to say in the shtetl, ‘Can this be good for the Jews?’”

And I said, “You don't ask me that about the Catholics. You don't ask me that about Protestants. What's going on here?”

Well, there was nervousness.

I also wrote the “Ideas” section for 10 years, which was really important because it forced me to read more psychology than I ever wanted to read and more sociology and the rest, but it was great relief from writing only about religion. And that way, I could see, particularly in things like transpersonal psychology -- you know, patients going out of body and things like that -- were really trying answer the same questions that religion addresses.

I also got to travel. I wrote cover stories from Africa and England, and I got to the Soviet Union, Israel and all over Europe.

Then when I retired from *Newsweek*, interestingly enough, there still wasn't anyone who knew much about religion, except one guy, the editor in chief, Jon Meacham, which is why Meacham wrote all the cover stories on religion after I left.

To be a specialist there meant you were an expert, so people would go to the medicine editor and tell him about their aches and pains, go to the law editor and try to find out something about a legal problem they had, and they'd come to me and say, you know, “I'm a such-and-such. Do we believe in this?”

For example, I was hired by the legendary editor Oz Elliott. One day he came into my office, shooed my assistant out and closed the door. He sat down and looked me in the eye. I thought I was going to be fired. He said, “You know, I'm an Episcopalian, and I just got divorced.” Actually,

I didn't know either of those things. He said, “You know, they won't let you marry in my church for a year after divorcing. Can you find me a minister to marry me?”

So you had all kinds of extracurricular chores that were expected of you as religion editor.

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*(Laughter)*

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** I knew things were coming to an end when *TIME* and *Newsweek* started cutting back on their bureau systems around the world. You really can't have a newsmagazine without your own correspondents around the world. It was wonderful to be able to press a button and have the bureaus from around the world send you files. We had much more information coming into us than could ever go out into the magazine.

Today, we have 700 *Newsweek* alumni who still stay in contact with each other on Facebook. It's a very homey, chummy group – we've even had two reunions in Manhattan.

Okay. Now, Michael's asked me to tell what I've learned. Since I was on a steep learning curve, I learned a lot in the beginning. I had never met a bishop who had a wife; I didn't think that was possible in my Catholic world. I had never run across a denomination--in this case, the Presbyterians -- that would rewrite its creed, update it from time to time. I thought creeds were forever.

I learned that most Protestants could no longer recall which doctrines distinguished Presbyterians from Lutherans or Methodists or Congregationalists. It seemed to me that the Presbyterians did the thinking for the Methodists and the Methodists did the feeling for the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians did the drinking for both of them.

I also found out when Protestants talked about church, whether it's evangelical or a mainline, and Catholics talked about church, they really were talking about two different things. The Protestant will talk about church as the congregation that he or she belongs to. Catholics always talk about the church as the whole world institution from pope on down.

Albert Outler, a great Methodist historian I met after Vatican Council II, put the difference another way: "Ken, you've got to learn something here, man. Deep down, Protestants distrust the structures they've created," meaning their denominations because they were fashioned in this country to compete in the new emerging religion market. And he said, "Deep down, Catholics, even liberal Catholics, for them, Holy Mother the Church is, damn it all, Holy-Mother-the- Church."

The other related principle, I think, is you never really know your own religion well, assuming you have one, until you immerse yourself in at least one other with sympathetic understanding. I think that's something Billy Graham never understood and that most evangelists never learn. If you're out to convert people, you're not listening to them.

Most of what I learned I have put in this book, and the reason I wrote it is the same reason that most journalists and historians write books. It's because I had a lot of stories that needed telling. It is full of anecdotes, but it is a history.

I view it as a social history that takes religion and moves it from the periphery, where most social historians put it, to the center of the narrative.

The stories are arranged along a double helixed plotline. One line traces out the decline of institutional religion from that post-war era to the end of the century and beyond. I talk about how, at that time, not only was religion strong, but it had, if you will, civic and political and cultural support; to be religious was to be patriotic. We were in a war of liberation, long before they had liberation theology talk, and we were to liberate the captive nations of Central Europe from the yoke of communism.

By the end of the century, we had what we've been talking about, the Nones—25 percent of the population. I would suggest from what I've read of polls maybe another 24-25

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percent of Americans put religion somewhere near the center of their lives. A lot of the rest are watching Osteen on television and things like that. So I see one in four Americans being seriously religious.

The other plot line, running through the second half of the 20th century, follows an outburst of religious enthusiasm and volatility not seen since the Great Awakening in the middle of the 19th century, an era which brought us the Mormons, the Disciples of Christ, and all these good things that Grant Wacker teaches.

That outburst wasn't expected. Hence, my title for the book: *Getting Religion*, which is a line from Mencken, and it refers to the various ways and forms in which Americans got or acquired religion, including important alternatives to religion like Werner Erhard's “est,” Oprah's vaporous spirituality, and movements like transpersonal psychology, which centered on engineered out-of-body experiences.

There was a Virginia businessman named Monroe in the 1980s who claimed he had sent 1,400 licensed psychologists out of body and back. One of them was Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. I had an interview with her for a cover story on death and dying, and she described for me her out-of-body trips, during which she found, she said, other beings. It was she said so nice to know that there were other beings out there to help us get to the other side after death.

She said to me, it's so nice in this work--the hard work sitting at the edge of the bed with the dying. I think it got to her, but in any case, she told me this story. “You know, one of them came back and thanked me.”

I said, “Really?”

"Yes, and she left a note for the Unitarian minister who also helped out."

Now, if you look at the table of contents, the words Protestant, Catholic, or Jew do not appear in any of the chapter titles. What you're going to see are categories that I created like embedded religion, movement religion, entrepreneurial religion and so on. I did this as a way to show how religion in that era was connected to social change, social migrations, movements, culture, politics. Together, they represent how I have come to think about America and religion as I experienced it both personally and professionally.

For example, there's a chapter called "Sacred Families." J. Gordon Melton, who studied cults, listed some 370 new religious movements in the '80s. Some of them were resurrected from previous times, others brand new, many imports.

Well, that's a way a lot of kids got religion, sometimes pretty dangerous religion. If you were a parent and you couldn't see your kid because he or she was in a cult, you were sorely wrought. But what I did was connect this phenomenon up with the breakdown of the family and traditional marriage and family structures beginning in the '60s with the Moynihan Report on the Black family structures-- for which by the way Black leaders gave him holy hell, except for Kenneth Clark, as I remember.

The feminists went after him because, after all, weren't these single mothers, you know, battling patriarchy? Well, no, they weren't, as a matter of fact. So how do we connect the one with the other? Well, 20 years later, the indices of what Moynihan called "social pathology" were now true of White American families, and of course, the Black family got even worse.

Changes in the family structure, changes in the cultural attitudes toward marriage and family had a lot to do with the rise of the cults because a million kids a year were running away from home. Now, these were not Huck Finns going down the Mississippi. These

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were not poor kids, by and large. These were kids from junior/senior high school, freshman/sophomore college, and nearly all were from middle class and better homes.

The Unification Church is a good example. It featured Dr. and Mrs. Moon who were revered as divine parents. Another couple, Bo and Peep, ran another cult. Some were matriarchal or patriarchal. There were any number of these people, constructing cults as sacred families.

What we had, then, were various forms of religion that I present as a kind of palimpsest in which a new form is laid over the earlier ones without erasing what came earlier.

The basic form of religion, the way most people get religion, is what I call embedded religion. By that, I mean religion acquired through communal formation. It's the kind of religion that one is born into, religion that is handed down and, therefore, tied to ethnicity and extended families and sustained by local institutions, neighborhoods, as well as, obviously, churches and synagogues and now mosques.

Religion so embedded “goes with the territory.” It's embedded in the landscape. Think of Wisconsin. If you live in Wisconsin, your background, maybe even your foreground, is either going to be Lutheran or Catholic. Think of all those towns in the South where it seems like there's more Baptists than there are people.

Okay. I'm going to read you a little something from my book about embedded religion as I experienced it in the '50s. If you were a Catholic child growing up in the '50s, you felt yourself “at the center of concentric circles of belonging. There were the people you saw at church on Sunday or the kids at the parochial school. There were the Catholics at the other churches you went to on the weekend if you were traveling. There were all the Catholics on the earth, all the Catholics who ever existed, plus those saints who were looking down on us like grandparents from high front porches.” So it was a deeply

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connected world.

Catholics, as I write here, constituted the largest parallel culture at that time in the United States, and my experience of it was that we were separated by a membrane, not a wall. Now, Orthodox Jews, Mormons of the time, were separated by a wall more than a membrane. But the membrane allowed a lot of things to come in, and it kept a lot of things out. I think that pretty well describes the way Catholic assimilation took place, and it was completed by the time of Vatican Council II.

But Catholics like everybody else also belonged to neighborhoods. To me, a neighborhood is a place where the people down the street, over on the next block, know your name, can call your parents (or threaten to) if they see you doing something you shouldn't be doing.

In the 50s we knew people down the block because we cut their lawns. We delivered their newspapers. We saw them if you worked at the local gas station or at the store. Kids were everywhere. As I said, in my community, which was a suburb about 15 miles west of downtown Cleveland, we kids felt we owned the town more than the town owned us.

There was a sense of safety, too. I ran away from home twice before I was eight years old, not because there was a problem at home, but because my buddy and I, we got our toys and we got some sandwiches and we set out to see the rest of the town. We went down the railroad tracks, and we were perfectly confident that we would be safe wherever we went. You wouldn't let your kids do that today. You wouldn't let your grandchildren do that today. But we could do it then.

Obviously, at this time, culture supported the practice of religion. One telltale sign: when

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Eisenhower ran for president the second time around, the Republican National Committee declared that Ike was not only the president of the United States, not only the commander in chief, but he was also “the spiritual leader of our country.”

Now, imagine if they had said something like that about George W. Bush or Barak Obama. It was that kind of time.

Experiential religion is another form that getting religion took. It emerged out of the counterculture and the drug culture at a time when students were open to any religion except the one they were raised in.

How did this come about? Well, it couldn't have come about without the change in immigration laws in 1965, which allowed Asians and Indians to come here in large numbers. The impetus came from the drug culture -- no question about it -- because the thought was, through meditation, yogic and other practices, you could reach certain levels of consciousness without using the drugs.

Movement religion is the opposite of Experiential religion and was focused on transforming society rather than the self. With the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-'50s, we witnessed a new way that Americans got religion. Unlike Embedded Religion it didn't matter where you come from in movement religion. It didn't matter what your ethnic background was. It didn't matter who your parents were or whether you were religious or not. All that mattered, really, was the movement.

"So by this movement religion, I mean the forms that religious activism took once Civil Rights movement became the new and accepted model for expressing and mobilizing religious conscience and commitment. I also mean the correlative impulse of secular movements to assume the trappings of a religious crusade or quest. In either form, and often in combination, movement religion was directed as much against the religious

institutions as it was against secular establishment.

"To become part of a movement was to adopt a new group identity – 'we in the movement' -- that often assumed precedence over all other previous identities. Regardless of the cause movement, people all spoke the same idiom. To be in the movement was to support 'the struggle,' to fight for 'liberation,' to resist 'oppression,' to 'bear witness,' to 'speak truth to power' -- in a word, to be 'prophetic.'

"The 'evil,' that movements hurled themselves against were never merely personal. It was always 'systemic.' The military, the government, the university, the church, the Bourgeois family -- these and other institutions oppressed by their very structures because they were corrupt. Movements, on the other hand, created brotherhoods and sisterhoods, purer bonds of human solidarity. Whatever the cause, history and righteousness were aligned with the movement."

Another form is Entrepreneurial Religion, which is my language for evangelical Protestantism. Why do I call it that? First, because evangelicalism it is very entrepreneurial in creating new ministries and movements in response to changing social and cultural landscape. If there's a man's movement going on or a woman's movement, they'll have a Christian woman's movement or an evangelical men's movement. We saw a number of these.

Secondly, because traditionally graduates of evangelical seminaries are expected to plant new churches, not go to work for one that's already there.

The third reason is that, historically, free enterprise capitalism and evangelicalism grew up together in Great Britain. In short, evangelicalism *is* free enterprise in religion. There would have been no religious right without first having free-enterprising Fundamentalists and Evangelicals who created their own radio and television programs. These in turn

provided both the money and the outreach that made the later turn to politics possible.

Of course, the most successful entrepreneur of them all was Billy Graham. He was chairman of the board. He was friend to presidents, and like that other chairman of the board, Frank Sinatra, Billy Graham was a brilliant stage performer.

The GOP and the Religious Right. E.J. has already talking about some of the events and issues that prompted the rise of the Christian Right. But I would say that in the strictest sense it was created by two Catholics and a Jew:

Paul Weyrich of Committee for the Survival of Free Congress; Richard Viguerie, a conservative direct-mail whiz; and Howard Phillips of the Conservative Caucus. These men thought up the idea of forming the Moral Majority after they saw how Democrat Jimmy Carter had won over Evangelical voters. They thought Carter was really too liberal and so they wanted to create an organization that would draw fundamentalists and evangelicals away from Carter.

Now, the last thing that I want to mention is the Democrats and their pursuit of religion as politics. We often think of the GOP as the party of religion, and not only because the largest bloc within the Democratic party are the religiously non-affiliated—the "Nones." Yet the Democrats have given us the most religiously observant president we ever had in Jimmy Carter, and, you know, Bill Clinton never saw a pew that he couldn't sit in or a hymn he couldn't sing.

In 1992 I did an interview in the White House. Because I couldn't get the president, the Democrats gave me Hillary instead. We talked about Methodism and about her youth minister back in Chicago. In an interview with him the minister said with a smile, "we Methodists know what's good for you"—a reference not only to Prohibition but to the ingrained convictions have that they not only know what is good for other people but are

called to turn that knowledge into social—and governmental—practice.

I thought—bingo—that's a very apt description of the Democratic Party's ethos after it changed in 1972 under another Methodist, George McGovern. It became a high-minded party that wants to discipline the country and preach political righteousness. McGovern, you may recall, was raised in a Methodist manse, went to a Methodist college, studied for the Methodist ministry before deciding to become a history professor, went back to his Methodist alma mater and taught there until he was asked to build up the Democratic party in South Dakota.

As Mark Stricherz has pointed out in his book, [Why The Democrats are Blue] under McGovern and the commission he headed on party restructure after the 1968 convention, the party moved away from the New Deal coalition to a new coalition of moral concern—a "coalition of conscience." He called it.

To make the connection between Methodism and the post-McGovern Democratic party I studied the 1972 Methodist Book of Resolutions, which lists all the resolutions on social reform passed that year at the church's quadrennial convention held three months before the Democrats' national convention. Then I read the 1972 Democratic Party platform and found amazing congruence between the two documents, even done to the same phrases.

Now, I'm not suggesting that the party's platform writers stole the language and ideas of the Methodists, only that by looking at the platform through Methodist eyes you can see the outline of what I call the Democrats' politics of righteousness, which was discernable in the rhetoric of Hillary Clinton when she was First Lady, and again in both of her Presidential campaigns. From this we can learn how a particular religious tradition can inform the rhetoric and outlook of a political party.

That’s all I am going to say. And thank you very much.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you, Ken.

Now, Grant Wacker is an American religious historian. He has written a very important book two years ago called *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*, which was published by Harvard University Press -- we like to promote books here -- It’s to defend the biography of Billy Graham.

Thank you, Professor Wacker, for joining us.

**DR. GRANT WACKER:** So what I'm going to do now is in two parts, and the first part will be a little longer. I will respond to the book. This is what Michael had asked me to do here. I retired last June. I'm not teaching. If I were teaching, I would most definitely assign the book for a Religion in America class.

Sometime during the first Iraq War, I remember seeing a photo with a caption on the front page of my hometown newspaper. The photo showed an American sailor in the galley of a naval vessel sitting at a table with a food tray in front of him. His elbows were resting on the table. His hands were clasped under his chin, head was bowed, his eyes were closed. The caption under the photo read “Weary Sailor Rests Head on Hands Before Eating.”

*(Laughter)*

**GRANT WACKER:** Now, this is Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It's a university town, and that may explain some of it. But what I thought about then is the tremendous disconnect between journalism -- not you all, but much of journalism -- and religion.

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Ken has spent nearly four decades trying to repair that disconnect. As he mentioned -- and I'll summarize again -- as the religion editor of *Newsweek*, he wrote more than 1,000 articles, essays, and book reviews, including 70 covers, and I'm going to talk about the covers a little later.

His senior editors were supportive but often baffled by the religious culture and leaders he tracked down west of the Hudson and then described with determined sympathy. I think that's an important point, is the geographic isolation, or parochialization, of, in this case, Ken's case, the *Newsweek* editors.

For most of the post-war period, *Newsweek*, *TIME*, and, I would add, *U.S. News & World Report* were the news magazines of record. Each week, they told millions of Americans what the most important events were and, more important, what they meant.

Now, I want to emphasize that point. When I was a kid, an adolescent, we would get *TIME* and *Newsweek*. It would sit on the coffee table in the living room, and you'd open it up, and there's the “Religion” column, and, by definition, that's what's important. I think we need to think more about the enormous power that these magazines exercised in, first, choosing what was important and then interpreting them.

In a nutshell, this book, *Getting Religion*, is a social history of the second half of the 20th century. It puts religion at the center of the story. Ken uses personal memoir as well as portraits of key figures to make the history come alive. He rightly suggests that being there on the scene, personally interacting with the protagonists, offered an immediacy and, thus, a distinct perspective that more distant academic studies often missed.

I hope later, Ken, you'll talk more about the role of the leaders and your interaction with them because it's a whole dimension of the story of religion in America that, I would say, most academics simply have no access to. Ken's main argument is that the conditions in

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which people get religion strongly influence the kinds of religion they get. Faith cannot be reduced to those trends, but it cannot be divorced from them either.

For example, one chapter that Ken has talked about, about the decline of the family, he contrasts with the sudden appearance of more than 300 new religious cults, as he calls them, most of which take the form of sacred families. These emerged in the late 1970s, a time when a million kids, mostly from White middle-class families, ran away from home. So we see a kind of compensatory effect. They're running away, but, also, they're compensating by replicating the structures that they ran away from.

By Ken's telling, the extraordinary pace and intensity of social change running from Eisenhower to Obama released two forms of religion -- embedded and movement. These are key terms -- embedded religion and movement religion. These two forms, broadly conceived, might be conceived as a double helix, as Ken has told us. Let me say a little bit more about embedded religion. Embedded religion was tied to churches and synagogues, schools, regions, ethnic, and racial groups, and families, nuclear and extended.

One of the most intriguing parts of the book is how Ken uses his own Catholic boyhood in Ohio as a case study of how embedded religion emerged from its social setting, what it looked like, and how it worked to shape believers' lives. He tells us his father came to Christ in a Billy Sunday revival. His mother and her extended family were devoutly Catholic, and that is how he was reared. Catholic schools, Catholic friends, priests, and nuns formed his world. A cultural ecosphere capped off with four years of Notre Dame where he met his wife, Betty, who was a student at neighboring Saint Mary's College.

This embedded religion was a cultural universe. It was separated from mainstream Protestant culture by a membrane. It's not a solid membrane. It's a porous membrane. But nonetheless, it's a membrane, and it forms a cultural universe.

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Now, what's movement religion? It's powered by a coalition of co-believers or, sometimes, co-belligerence and a common cause. Its members happen to be from Detroit or happen to be Methodists or happen to be Irish, but their main bond lay in the pursuit of a shared goal. They were, in effect, religious special interest groups animated with religious fervor, spiritual commitment, collegial intimacy, and, often enough, a legitimating sense of ultimacy.

So this contrast between embedded religion and movement religion is key to the book, and I think it makes a major contribution to our study of religion in America.

Ken's story is really worlds within worlds, and this is intriguing. I think that as you read it, and as I would urge other people to do it, one of the most important parts is the stories themselves that give life, give flesh to these larger structures. For example, Ken's avocation of the drama in pathos of the historic civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 is just one of the beautiful and utterly memorable features of the book. Like a television photojournalist, he takes us back to that day when the Reverend Martin Luther King strode with Rabbi Abraham Heschel at the head of the march, and Ken quotes Heschel, who said, “ That day I prayed with my legs.”

Ken does not argue that movement religion won and embedded religion lost. But by my reading of the evidence he details, it does look like embedded religion came up short. In the 1950s, for example, 98 percent of Americans said they believed in God. Baptists and Catholics alone counted for 40 percent of the population. A half century later, 25 percent of Americans claimed no religious identification. It's not quite the figure we heard this morning, but pretty close. Another 50 percent acknowledged only moderate or intermittent concern for religion. The foundations of the powerful culture religion symbiosis of the 1950s had fragmented, and they had reconfigured in new and unpredictable ways.

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Woodward can say more in a single sentence than many historians can say in an entire article or book. For me, I'm as Protestant as Ken is Catholic. And the line that sticks best is the one that stung most. And the line is, "If the Protestant Reformation was built on a trinity of alones -- Christ alone, faith alone, the Bible alone -- revivalism added a fourth. The voice alone addressed to the listener as an isolated me alone."

Now, to be sure, even the most flamboyant of the revivalists -- some of you think of Billy Sunday or Aimee McPherson -- they knew perfectly well that Christ, faith, and the Bible, not me alone -- Christ, faith, and Bible was the foundation of evangelical Christianity. But I would say that Ken is basically right. Most of the time, that's not the way they behaved, and that's not how they acted.

Paul Tillich inspired his former student, James Pike, to live on the boundary of Christian faith, including the boundary of Christian marriage. Both were notorious philanderers, and neither went to church unless he was the preacher.

Other individuals come out looking pretty good. One of my favorite lines, "The mature Billy Graham had the gift of making the simplest sentence sound like sacred scripture."

Best of all, Woodward knows how to poke fun at himself. "When an aging Reinhold Niebuhr agreed to sit down with me," he says, "and agreed to talk, I asked him every question I could think of. Afterward, Niebuhr advised through intermediaries that if I listened more and talked less, I'd get better interviews."

*(Laughter)*

**GRANT WACKER:** Now, Ken is not above exaggerating a point in order to make a point. Billy Graham's evangelism, he argues with a straight face, leaped over millennia of Christian history to promote an individualized Biblical Christianity that was, in effect, born

yesterday.

While I would say that claim is true, as far as it goes, but there's more -- and focus on Graham. The letters, the millions of letters, that the faithful posted to Graham over the years suggest that they were writing to Graham, not to plumb his knowledge of the Bible and certainly not his knowledge of history, but, rather, they wrote because they saw him as a pastor who might help them deal with their private pain and find a path to a second chance.

His rare book, it brings so many virtues to the table, including the potential for stirring frank discussion about our culture and where we are headed. I would conclude by saying that *Getting Religion* is a major achievement, and it's a fitting capstone for a long and distinguished career, Ken.

I have just a few comments I would make about Ken's remarks today, and I will focus on evangelicals, in particular, because they were the subject of this morning's invigorating conversation.

First, the import of covers. Billy Graham appeared on 34 covers -- *U.S. News*, *Newsweek*, and *TIME* -- and I think this is extraordinarily important. How often do we see cover stories about mainline religious leaders? I believe the last one was Franklin Clark Fry in about 1960. The power of the magazines and then the cover on these magazines to reify what's important is a subject that we haven't studied nearly enough. I would go beyond that to say is that they legitimate the study of a subject and, even more, the columns that they have about religion. The covers are not inconsequential, and particularly, as I go back to Graham, they almost always show these strikingly handsome images of a White Graham with perfect teeth, perfect smile -- how do they reify certain images, all right?

Ken raised the point of how journalists learn more by being outside a tradition than within

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it in some cases in some ways. I think this is consistently true, and I would say that in my study of Graham the best journalists, or among the best journalists, have, in fact, been Jewish. I think especially of Ken Garfield, *Charlotte Observer*, and then Cathy Grossman, and there are others. My sense there is that they don't have a dog in the fight, so they can afford to be empathetic and critical in a way. That's another question that's worth thinking about: the role of a kind of critical engagement rather than distance.

Third issue that Ken raises that's worth thinking about and talking about is that he said evangelicals are not embedded. They're part of movement religion. I emphatically agree with that. Evangelicals as a group have no ecclesiology. They don't have much sense of sacraments either, but there's more to it than that.

What evangelism is about in many ways is conversion, and what is conversion? It's leaving who you were and becoming something else. The notion of becoming something else is absolutely fundamental to the tradition, and I would add to it the issue of itinerancy. Itinerancy is important to the tradition, and you get the notion of conversion, the notion the centrality of itinerancy and what that suggests about mobility. We get a sense of the malleability and the amorphousness and the whole movement of the tradition, and that may have ramifications for understanding of evangelicals and politics.

Just one more. Ken talks about the Catholic imagination. I've never in my life thought of using the imagination with reference to evangelicals. We have good evangelical historians, good philosophers, journalists, but we have few evangelical dancers.

Who else thinks like that? Mormons. If you go to various evangelical denominational headquarters, you'll see art usually on the wall, and you would not know that you're not in Salt Lake City. There is a certain kind of realist epistemology lacking imagination, and I have never heard or read anyone who traces that to political activity. But that's a topic just waiting.

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I said that would be my last comment, but it's not. I lied. I'm going to make one more, and that is suggested by a variety of things that Ken says, but not explicitly. Evangelicals have a prophetic sense, calling the nation to be something more than it has been, but, on the whole, they have little sense of irony. They have little sense of -- well, they have little sense of institutional humor and next-to-no sense of lament about themselves, so there's a great deal of judgment about how the nation has gone astray -- usually astray from its blueprint -- but not nearly as much of looking inside ( “Where have we gone astray?”).

Well, those are my comments, Ken, about your book and then a few other thoughts that you triggered in my mind about movements.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you, Grant. Okay. Tom Gjelten, you're up first.

**TOM GJELTEN, NPR:** I'm wondering what the corollary is of covering religion...is being a devout believer an advantage or a disadvantage, when it comes to, you know, if you believe in sort of one true faith? How does that position you with respect to other faiths, for example?

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Well, first of all, there is a certain sense that if you don't believe your faith is the one true faith, then why are you there? You know, there's always that attitude. But once you understand yourself -- what I mean by deep immersion, I mean a couple of things. It means, for me as a Catholic, when I go out to, you know, some place, one of the Orthodox places out in Brooklyn, I feel at home. There's all kinds of physical or material things there. There's laws of observation, the same practices and so forth that remind me analogically to Catholic practices, especially when I was a kid when you still had boundaried religion. Namely, we didn't -- we were people who didn't -- eat meat on Friday, and there were other sins that only we could commit, and when you have a tradition where you can commit the sins, you really do have a strong tradition.

The job for me was, I learned, I had -- anybody I talked to about, including Catholics even though there's a lot of them, for my audience they were all other people. I had to tell them what it was like, what it felt -- when I could -- what it felt like to be a Mormon and why they took this particular ring and so forth. So that's what I'm talking about.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. E.J., you're up next.

**E.J. DIONNE, *The Washington Post*:** Thank you to Ken and to Grant. I want to ask a question about a relatively narrow slice of history at the beginning of your career, Ken, to invite both you and Grant to make a larger point, that you started at *Newsweek*, if I remember right, in 1964.

In 1965, my old teacher, Harvey Cox, published *The Secular City*, which celebrated the loosening of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself. This was a sort of a religious bestseller; it took hold in the world. Harvey's an honest guy, and he's revisited himself over the years. In this same period, as you remember better than anybody, *TIME* magazine, in a very short period, had “Is God Dead?” on a cover in 1965 and, if I remember the year right, “Is God Coming Back to Life?” in 1969. So they kill God off in '65, and brought him back in '69.

What I wanted to ask about is a kind of two-part question. One is, just to reflect on -- or both of you, really -- to reflect on that time when these ideas were floating around, why they took hold, why they were so popular among religious people, particularly -- Harvey had a great Catholic readership, as you remember -- and how they hold up. In some ways, you can easily say well, the rise of Islam, the rise of the religious right, these ideas were all wrong, and yet if you look at the rising numbers of nonparticipants, some of Grant's figures about the decline of embedded religion, it's not so clear that the thesis -- I reread the book recently, and in some ways the thesis seemed fresh again.

I'm just curious if you would talk about both that time and what it says about our time.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** I mean, Harvey was always on to the next hot thing, but he missed the woman thing all together. And, of course, the anthropology class patronizingly said, "Don't worry about it. It's only pronoun envy," and that was the title of our piece in *Newsweek*, "Pronoun Envy." It was one of the great inspired headlines.

Harvey's book was quite extraordinary in many ways. It was a huge international bestseller. He had just come back from Germany. He was studying German sociology there, and he really applied it in this book. The take that I had -- one of my takes would be on it that, first of all, he quickly found that the real enchantment of the world in his next book very quickly. He was always agile and likable for that reason.

You know, what he was talking about -- I want to make two comments on this, and they come from the book. The first thing he was talking about was the best and the brightest, the Kennedy can-do technology. You know, it could be Dick Friedman today. This is going to take can-do optimism, that was one thing.

He was the east side of Manhattan, not the lower west side. He ignored the still enchanted Catholics. He didn't talk about the people that were going to storefront churches.

**GRANT WACKER:** We didn't mention death of God theology. Ken writes about it a good deal. It had a very short shelf life.

The death of God theology made a splash, and it was gone. I think there was a much longer -- is a much longer -- ramification of death of God theology, or perhaps that's an artifact of a deeper trend, and that's the mainline's willing relinquishment of cultural

authority, the mainline voluntarily emptying itself of its authority and saying, “We have to welcome all kinds of pluralisms, and, in the process, we're going to acknowledge that we do not, and should not, have a custodial role”. That is a huge shift in the history of the mainline because, through the 1960s, it exercised this custodial role.

I think, Ken, you write about how many mainliners voted Republican until about the '60s, and then they began to become much more diverse. So that's one long-range effect of secularization of the city.

The other is something that we haven't talked about today the role of anti-Catholicism and how intense that was, and it worked both ways. If we think particularly about evangelicals, until quite recently, until the 1970s, it would be difficult to exaggerate the intensity of evangelicals' dislike and fear of Catholics and the possibility of a Catholic conspiracy. It sounds utterly preposterous now. When I tell undergraduates about it, they have no idea. They can't even imagine such a thing, but the fear of a conspiracy by Catholics, linking arms with Communists, right, to take over America.

Well, this leads to a larger point, and that is the necessity of an adversary. It strikes me that evangelicals always need an adversary, partly for self-definition, but also for self- invigoration.

**E.J. DIONNE:** Is Islam the new Catholicism?

**GRANT WACKER:** Yeah. Absolutely, yeah.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Yeah, that's a problem. Sally Quinn is up next.

**SALLY QUINN, OnFaith:** I wanted to talk about Billy Graham's son, Franklin Graham. I met Billy Graham a number of times in the early days, when he was at his peak. Franklin,

as I'm sure you know, has exploited his father and his father's reputation and his father's image terribly.

I just want to know from your experience what is the attitude about Franklin Graham? Are the evangelicals buying his act?

**GRANT WACKER:** Well, thank you Sally. You wrote some wonderful things about this question, and I say wonderful because we agreed. I think it's a complicated question, actually, and Peter Boyer and I were talking about this last night. Franklin's a complicated figure. In some ways, there are two Franklin's. There is the Samaritan's Purse CEO. Last year, Samaritan's Purse gave away a half billion dollars in humanitarian relief, no questions asked. Whenever there is a natural catastrophe, Samaritan's Purse is right there on the ground.

But it then there's the other side of Franklin, who is a culture warrior, and I would love to see a doctoral student somehow get to him enough that they could write a dissertation about this very complicated man. Maybe the one side energizes the other. I don't know.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Billy changed enormously, and I think the change is when he went to the Soviet Union -- I mean to Eastern Europe -- for the first time. He came across Christians there who seemed more committed than the ones he knew back home. For the first time, the separation of Christianity from America became, I think, very real for him.

During that trip, he went to Krakow, and he was to meet the local Archbishop, who suddenly got called to Rome because they had to pick a new pope, and, of course, you know he never came back home.

So when Billy saw him come out on the porch, and the first thing he said was something like, “Christ, Christ is the answer.” Billy told me, he says, “Oh, my God, he's an evangelist.”

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And I thought, you know, of all the things that pope was -- and he was a great man and multi-gifted philosopher and so forth -- he was an evangelist, and it took one to know one.

And then when they wouldn't let the Pope into the Soviet Union but they let Billy in, Billy said -- well, first of all, he acknowledged the pope as a spiritual, religious leader of the West. That's a big change from the fundamentalism he came from. Then he said, “I got invited to the Soviet Union because, you know, they wouldn't let the pope in.”

And then I thought this is a whole change thing. Of course when the Pope died, the only organization other than the churches that got invited to the funeral was the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. He told me one time that he felt most at home in the evangelical wing -- I think we mentioned that -- you know, evangelical wing of the Anglican Church. I think he liked to dress up a little bit because Baptist threads, after all, are simply Baptist threads.

*(Laughter)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Bill Galston is up next. Bill.

**WILLIAM GALSTON, Brookings Institution:** The last Democratic President who was a Methodist turns out to be James K. Polk. Maybe there's a reason for that. So here is my question, and I'm delighted to be able to pose it to people who may actually be able to answer it. What is there about Methodism that seems to be politically rebarbative even if it's spiritually impressive?

What is there about the affect of a Methodist in public life that seems to create difficulties?

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** You saw it and Hillary Clinton when her husband said you take

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care of, you know, healthcare, and she already -- first of all, she had a stack of Methodist papers like this to walk into it with because they had been working on that issue, healthcare, for a long time. There's just that sense that comes off -- not all Methodists, obviously.

Look, the Methodists come in the early part of the 19th century. They get transplanted here. Middle of the 19th century, according to Nathan Hatch, historian, they were the largest national organization.

They have an instinct. It goes right back to one-half of Wesley, the founder, is to first reform yourself. The Wesleyan wing of Methodism emphasizes that, right? That's where Pentecostalism comes from. The other side was what we somewhat erroneously called “the Social Gospel,” you know, “we're going to change society,” and out of that comes the Salvation Army, and that's just part of who they are. But knowing what is good for you is very much a part of that attitude. That would be my answer to your question.

**GRANT WACKER:** That is a great question. And actually, I am Methodist, and until this moment I'm sorry to say, I didn't know that there were four recent presidents -- or candidates -- that were Methodists. And why have they been unsuccessful? I would agree that Ken has a pretty good answer to it. But I also think that Methodism assimilates too well. In a sense, it lacks backbone. There's not an edge, and there certain sects or sections of Methodism that certainly have an edge, but on the whole, it doesn't have that. So it accommodates too easily so that there is not, you know, this compelling message of change. That's the best I can do.

**WILLIAM GALSTON:** Can you explain the theological reasons for that?

**GRANT WACKER:** That's a great question.

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**KENNETH WOODWARD:** You know, just to say, Stanley Hauerwas, who's got the dirtiest mouth of any theologian I ever ran across; I'm sure you've never had him here, you would have to blank him out all the time. But Stanley is a Methodist, and he said, “We Methodists are nice. We are nice people. The problem is the word nice isn't in the Bible.” Talk about lacking edge.

**ELIZABETH DIAS, *TIME*:** George W. Bush is a Methodist.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Bush?

**GRANT WACKER:** That's right.

**ELIZABETH DIAS:** He converted, yeah.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Bush Jr. married -- I mean joined the church of his wife's choice. He was really raised in the small group movement that Robert Wisner wrote a book about. That's where he comes out of, and he had been an Episcopalian, had been a number of different things. But the formative influence is that, and that had something to do with his, you know, effort to, however political it might be, to use churches to -- it was his father's thousand points of light, run through the churches. I think because of his work in the small group -- I talk about that in the book. He could have done more with that, but they really didn't. The White House didn't want to do much with it.

**GRANT WACKER:** Elizabeth makes a good point. I mean, formally he is a Methodist, but is he primarily Methodist or primarily evangelical? See, this brings up the tension between movement religion and embedded religion, denominational religion and movement, and you know, it's a mobile tension, yeah.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Cathleen Kaveny is up.

**CATHLEEN KAVENY, Boston College:** I'm going to try to maybe press you gentlemen a little bit and maybe complicate the narrative a little to see what your response would be to three questions that are troubling me about the whole general topic.

If I'm getting something wrong in the book, you know, you can correct me, but I get the sense that there's some nostalgia for the thick communal life of the 1950s.

But maybe there's another way of looking at the '50s. I mean, after all, the '50s did, very quickly after this, give birth to the '60s. The kids who were growing up in the nice nuclear '50s families were the kids that joined the Charles Manson family. They were the kids that gave rise to the upheavals of the '60s. So being raised in a traditional nuclear family in the 1950s didn't actually lead to the nirvana that, you know, one might expect.

So what went wrong? Is it the *Mad Men* diagnosis that underneath the veneer of family perfection there was a lot of rot going on? Are we being too nostalgic about the '50s when we look at the history? That's the first complication.

The second complication is Ken's claim that being a member of one religious group would make you more sympathetic toward members of other religious groups, provided you're deeply religious and they're deeply religious. I guess I have some questions about whether that is true.

Certainly, there are religious traditions around the world now that take their religion very seriously but see that religion as giving rise to an obligation to oppress other religions. Certainly, Christianity throughout its history has had people take religion very seriously and see that as giving rise to a decision to repress heresy.

So the question is it can't just be that you take your religion very seriously if you're going

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to be a successful religion reporter reporting on other religious traditions. You have to have certain key pieces of a view of God's relationship to those other people that are allowing you to see them sympathetically. That's the second complication.

The third complication is the distinction between embedded and movement Christians. I'm going to be a little provocative here, I guess, and say one of the things that I think has caused some harm to people who have grown up within an embedded tradition, you know, kind of ordinary -- I'll call them “B-plus Catholics” -- you know, just you go to church, you do your thing, but you're not expecting, you know, the Virgin Mary to tap you on the shoulder and give you a private revelation -- has been the way movement Catholics have called into question the integrity of the ordinary day-to-day embedded Catholics who don't maybe go along with the total political project of the movement Catholics.

I'm thinking, in particular, of Richard John Neuhaus here. You know, you have a convert to Catholicism from a different tradition who looks around and says well, “Catholicism's got this great power, this great organizational power. Look at all these bad Catholics who aren't doing what they should be doing to promote family values, to fight abortion, to do this and that and this.” So you get a rift in embedded Catholics precisely because movement Catholics are casting a baleful glance on them saying why aren't you more politically active on the side that you should be, which is my side. Those are my three complications.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Well, let me start with Neuhaus. There's a whole portrait of Neuhaus in the book as he moves from left to right and yet, in his mind, stays consistent. He was a movement man throughout the whole thing, and you have to see him as that.

**CATHLEEN KAVENY:** I do.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** So when he moves to the right, he would like to see what it is

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that he wanted. I think if you're a cradle Catholic, you sort of felt, “Hey, wait, you know, take your turn here. You just joined the mob.” And it is a mob, as we all know, the Catholics. think, Cathy, you don't like him because of the positions that he took kind and so on, but he was movement all the way.

I think when it comes to embedded, I was really taking the child's view; the first book I wrote was *The Grandparent-Grandchild Relationship*. I did it with a child psychiatrist, and I learned an awful lot about children's needs in sense of the importance and sense of place and having lots of people around them, that sort of thing.

I was describing it, but I also talk about criticism of it, and the criticism comes from Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*. It's a wonderful book of criticism, because, look, religion to him was Jewish prophetic religion, and he didn't see it. He thought it was too convenient. Secondly, he was an ex-communist, and he knew from cells that he had been involved with what the commitment was. So he was the first on-scene critic, that comes to my mind at any rate, be able to see the fatuousness and whatever of simply belonging.

I am taking the child's view and the security that was there as to when these other things happened. Did they happen to '50s people? I don't know. I just know that that -- and I saw the studies back in the '70s -- people who grew up in the '50s, two-thirds of them were married to the same spouse at that point. That's one part of what they did. You kept a marriage going.

I saluted in the book, as you can see, for various kinds of reasons, mainly young people having more than just their family, belonging to -- you know, larger sectors of belonging I think is really good. It's really good to come from somewhere, and perhaps that's my experience of New York. All the people I knew who were interesting came from some place that they then, like Willa Cather, went back and wrote about.

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So now, as far as -- what was the other one you were talking about here? When movement religion was really the time when we had all those movements. There aren't movements now, and the question I raise at the end, it is socially at least as volatile today. Look what we had -- economic collapse, Twin Towers, 20 years of war. We've had every bit as volatile a period as that was. And yet religion, there's -- there are no public -- there are no important pulpits. There are no important people to be in those pulpits.

The kids aren't rebelling against the war because they're not vulnerable to it. It's being bought by our surrogates, the way we do wars anymore. But I do ask the question of how come there's nothing like this right now even though, as I say, it's volatile.

**CATHLEEN KAVENY:** And I guess the question -is embed -- you know, does movement religion, as it's taken the form -- in the culture wars -- actually come back and undermine embedded religion? Because the movement people kind of turn around and look at the embedded people, or people who are kind of B-plus and sort of say you're not doing your job. You've got to do this. You've got to do that.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** They do. They are scolds, yes.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Grant Wacker is going to comment. But E.J., you want to make a quick point on this?

**E.J. DIONNE:** Yeah. It leads to the question, you know, what one side would see as committed versus lukewarm the other side would see as fanaticism versus moderation. How do you square that, and does the lukewarm or the moderate actually lead religion to peter out over time?

**GRANT WACKER:** Just some thoughts. The '50s were still living in the residue of World War II and the consensual necessity of World War II. I recently read that there's a college

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in Massachusetts that has chosen not to fly the American flag. I just can't imagine that in the 1950s.

Then by the time we get to the '60s, something else has happened, and that is communism has eroded as a threat. So this raises the question of the role of the adversary. If the adversary has now eroded as a threat, then other kinds of, you know, latent impulses, it seems to me can, come to the surface.

The empathy question is the kind of thing that historians deal with all the time, especially folks like me who write about religion. How far do you have to get into it? And George Marsden has written a very interesting piece on how American religion divides between those movements that think that they possess an absolute truth and those that don't. There's this constant, you know, tension.

So those of us who, you know, are academics or journalists, I guess that's what we learn in graduate school or in other kinds of training, is how to compartmentalize, make it possible to step over. If I may be autobiographical for a second, I've been working on Mormonism lately, and I wondered, “I'm not a Mormon, is it possible for me ever really to get inside the tradition as long as I don't share their notion of revelation?”

Finally, I disagree with Ken. I think there *is* a movement today, and it's called prosperity gospel, and it's everywhere. It's multi-billion dollar -- well, Elizabeth knows more about this than I. You certainly could pose that as a powerful movement with immense amounts of money and with an influence upon our incoming president.

**E.J. DIONNE:** And what problems do each pose for religion, each side of that equation?

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** A brief answer, please.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** A brief answer is -- well, I said the arrogance and cutting out the other people; "you're not really Christian or you're not really whatever." But then on the other hand, most Christians aren't really Christian. I mean, I'm sorry, I take a very stringent point of view on this sort of thing.

I think -- you need both kinds. You really do need both kinds, and there's a danger with both kinds. One is exclusivity.

But you've got to have just the ordinary believer there, and we've got to -- it can be very humbling to meet the ordinary people that are the ballast of all these traditions.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Thank you. Yes. Pete Wehner?

**PETER WEHNER, *The New York Times*:** Yeah, a figure that actually hasn't come up but I find in some ways one of the most fascinating and maybe consequential religious figures today is Pope Francis.

Just as a backdrop, I think, generally, simplistically speaking, there are two view of Francis. One is that this is a person who is a kind of embodiment of extraordinary grace and tenderness, that he's less doctrinaire than other popes; that he did certain symbols like washing the feet of Muslim women, which had a kind of electric effect. Others believe that he is discarding his core truths of the faith.

And what's really hit here in the last probably two months is this apostolic exhortation on the family where he was, if I understand him right, it certainly seems to be moving toward couples that divorced and remarried without an annulment are able to get communion or not. This seems to have shaken a lot of the foundations of the Catholic faith for a lot of people. What's your sense in terms of Francis? And is this a kind of a fundamental challenge?

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Then just to piggyback a little bit, it strikes me that there's a push and pull. You had said earlier that mainline churches had voluntarily emptied themselves of authority.

I'm wondering how -- in the context of Francis, there -- how one, in the one sense, takes doctrine seriously and offers an argument for an ordered life that people are longing for and yet can appeal in an age in which those kind of traditional efforts raise suspicions.

**GRANT WACKER:** Yeah. Thank you, Peter. Well, actually, Ken probably will be able to answer that a lot better than I. But you raise a lot of good, interesting points in that, you know, I find among my students who are Catholic those who are, for lack of a better word, on the liberal side, of course, lionize Francis, and those who are not, are on the more conservative side, see him -- well, to put it pretty harshly, selling out.

Then, though, there's maybe a third group who think that journalists are the problem, that journalists find the parts in Francis they like and emphasize that and then say very little about, you know, the Francis that they don't care so much, who is still a very important figure.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** To pick up on what he said. Which Francis are we talking about? This is a guy who in his first interview said I'm a sinner and, you know, and I have received the mercy of God. Everybody heard mercy; nobody heard sinner.

The other day, he talked very seriously about the absolute reality of the devil, all right? Hardly anybody noticed that because they didn't want to hear it. He's not acting in character, and I think, in some ways, his character is unsettled.

Also, remember his experience is in Argentina, which can be very different from here. So he is trying to get those people who, in some sense, are innocent in a divorce and

remarriage situation. There are people who qualify who should be reunited with the Church and allowed the Eucharist. He's trying to say look, "I can't do it myself. The Vatican can't do it. You people out on the line, you priests, have got to be able to do it."

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Fred Barnes, you're next, and then Sally.

**FRED BARNES, *The Weekly Standard*:** I know so many Christians who are so pessimistic, and they're pessimistic about Christianity -- that it's shrinking. We've heard all these number here today. It's shrinking. There are fewer Christians. People don't want to become Christians anymore, and they're just very pessimistic about it.

I don't happen to be very pessimistic. I tell them look. Christianity has gone through much more threatening and worse periods over the last 2,000 years than it's facing today, and they're not all reassured when I say this. So what would you all say to these people? You must to them as well.

**GRANT WACKER:** Shrinking here and Western Europe but not in the rest of the world and certainly not south of the equator. So if we look at it globally, I think Christianity is surging. That may not be a good thing. Christianity is usually stronger when it's persecuted and shrinking. I'm not so pleased to see it actually grow, but I think it is.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** There's a winnowing effect taking place, and we had studies that we know Christian Smith's very good on this. If your parents are committed to the Democratic Party or to the Presbyterian Church -- that's where the kids get it from the most. Even though parents think it's their peer group, he argues that it's parents.

But just simply, you know, it has to be handed on, and it hasn't been handed on, and even the evangelicals are beginning to see some of this. This outside society really doesn't sustain many -- it doesn't value personal qualities, personal virtues like it used to.

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But I mean, I'm not optimistic either. But I also agree with Grant that, at some point, people are going to have to realize that they have a commitment and it costs. They're so busy getting on -- especially the young people, getting on with things -- and there's no time. The Biblical day of rest disappeared a long time ago. Just so many things are not in place that would allow for this sort of thing. Who's got time to think about religion?

**GRANT WACKER:** And also, much, if not most, of the rest of the world Christian growth is of a prosperity gospel nature.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Sally, you're up.

**SALLY QUINN:** Well, Ken, you mentioned at the beginning of your talk that when you came to *Newsweek* that you had hoped to be doing profiles of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr, and so it made me think about those two guys and what influence they had on religion and sort of religion in politics and whether their influence still carries over today. I'd like to hear from both of you.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** I would just say Tillich has not been necessarily benign. Who prays to the Ground of Being? He was trying to make connections in a particular cultural moment. I don't think he's relevant much anymore.

**SALLY QUINN:** Well, what about Reinhold Niebuhr?

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Well, Niebuhr -- you know, everybody loves Niebuhr. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. loved Niebuhr. They all sort of cite Niebuhr. I quote Niebuhr in here -- Niebuhr talked -- among other things, he talked about irony -- irony of American history and so forth. We're not in an age of irony, and movement people are notoriously non-ironic. So I think we're not in an age that appreciates Niebuhr, and maybe we should be.

# THE FAITH ANGLE FORUM

## ABRIDGED TRANSCRIPT

“Four Decades as a Worldwide Religion Reporter: Observations and Lessons Learned”

Kenneth L. Woodward and Dr. Grant Wacker ♦ December 2016

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**SALLY QUINN:** Why are they still quoted? Why are they still touted?

**GRANT WACKER:** Because he's quotable.

**KENNETH WOODWARD:** Yeah, just because he's quotable.

**GRANT WACKER:** I agree with him, yeah. I agree with what Ken said, yeah.

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** You agree with what Ken said.

**GRANT WACKER:** On that issue.

*(Laughter)*

**MICHAEL CROMARTIE:** Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, join me in thanking both of these gentlemen.

♦ END ♦

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