

Speech

By

Bill Moyers

Harry Middleton Lecture

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Thank you for those generous words, Larry, and thanks to all of you for such a warm welcome. Once again Judith and I are indebted to Mrs. Johnson, for her impact on our lives. It was the job you gave me at KTBC in 1954 that enabled us to transfer to the University of Texas and to be married here in Austin 47 years ago last month. The small apartment where we lived on 18<sup>th</sup> street is gone, but not the memories of Lady Bird's kindness to us then and down through the years. The friendship we have shared with her has been a lodestar in our journey. Now, thanks to Mrs. Johnson, we are back in Austin for this lecture series she established in Harry's name.

It's an opportunity we welcome – Judith and I – to express our affection for Harry and Miriam, our admiration for what they have meant to this community and this university, and our appreciation for Harry's contributions to the presidency and the study of history. Over the years he has earned the esteem of scholars and laity alike – including both admirers and critics of LBJ – by assuring that this library would be no mere museum, shrine, or hall of mirrors, but a lively vibrant laboratory for scrutinizing the workings of democracy, warts and all. Those of us who served in the Johnson Administration are indebted to Harry for enabling us to put our lives in perspective; for his conviction that what we did in our time isn't done yet; that our vanities, vices and virtues, our visions and vulnerabilities, our aspirations, compromises, accomplishments and defeats, the laughter we shared as well as the fears we shed – that all this should not perish with our individual memories but be available to anyone trying to understand, through the experience of the past, the possibilities and limitations of politics and governance. Harry understood early on that history is always an unsatisfied search for the truth, but that its frequent course corrections – its interim reports – could be instructive if the keepers of the record are credible. You have shown us, Harry, that by respecting the textured layers of experience – the restless kaleidoscope of reality -- a man can serve not two but three masters – the past, present, and future. We thank you for making this library an institution that can be trusted.

Now that legacy passes to another, and the powers that be have chosen well. Judith and I are fortunate to have had Betty Sue Flowers as a colleague on some of our most successful projects. She advised on *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*,

and in collaboration with Jackie Kennedy Onassis, edited our best-selling book based on that series. She edited two of our later books – *World of Ideas*, also a best seller, and the companion book to our series on *Genesis*. Her long association with the university – as student, professor, and administrator – fostered a far-ranging intellect that joins the perceptions of poetry to questions of justice and power, in ways that I believe would have intrigued and impressed even LBJ. What Harry nurtured over the past generation here will flourish in the next with Dr. Flowers.

So for many reasons – most of all for the extended family represented in this company – I am grateful to be the Middleton Lecturer this evening.

Harry asked me to talk about faith. It was four years ago that he asked me, just after I had delivered the eulogy down in San Marcos for my beloved friend, Bill Crook. Bill and I had followed parallel paths – from small Baptist churches in small Texas towns to universities here to graduate school in Scotland and on to theological degrees from the same seminary – before succumbing to the siren of politics and the persuasion of Lyndon Johnson, who hitched both of us to his star then rising in the national firmament. At Bill's funeral I talked about the twists and turns of our journey, the long conversation we had conducted about religion, how both of us had wound up in the brotherhood of skeptical mystics in the church of unholy gropers, and over the years we reported to one another the experiences, revelations and intimations for which our upbringing and theological training had not prepared us, and for which Southern Baptists would surely have excommunicated us if we had not already walked the plank voluntarily.

Harry heard me speak of such things at Bill's funeral, and soon thereafter sent me a note. He said the service had caused him to meditate on the celebration of faith despite its vicissitudes, and he wondered exactly where, after all these years, I had come out. I responded with a simple, handwritten note of scriptural plagiarism: "Dear Harry, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

I thought that would be the end of it. But some weeks later he wrote again. Reminding me that Mrs. Johnson had endowed this lectureship in his name, he asked if I would come before his retirement and talk about faith: what it means, what it gives, what it takes. He referred in the letter to 'The eternal tension between the determined and hopeful, and the courageous obstinacy of Carl Sagan, who went to his death spurning faith because it isn't knowledge.' then, said Harry, 'I don't think I'm alone in struggling with these notions. I believe there is a broad shared yearning to experience a thoughtful exploration. Would you come and lead it?'

I wasn't eager, frankly, to take on such a public and formal task, but neither did I want to disappoint my good friend, Harry. But then the light bulb went on. No one expected that Lady Bird would ever let Harry retire. I could agree to deliver the lecture, on the condition that it happen just prior to his retirement, and be confident the coin would never have to be spent. So the deal was struck: Harry retires, I speak. And there the matter rested for four safe years. You can imagine my shock when a year ago the devil called to collect his due. He would retire at the end of the year, Harry said,

with finality, and he expected me to make good on my promise. I tried to beg off, but Harry persisted. He also threatened that if I didn't come, his last act in office would be to release to the public my White House files that he had been keeping locked in his desk. So here I am, with two days to spare.

But this is not the speech Harry wanted. It is not the speech I intended. I had all but completed that speech the weekend before September 11<sup>th</sup>, the last weekend before the world changed.

I know that's a cliché – to say the world's been changed by what happened that bright beautiful morning. I've said it enough times myself for it to sound like a cliché. But clichés mean what they say and truisms are true. This one is true: the world has changed. Things even sound different now. Peter Gomes reminded us recently, words spoken for thousands of years sound suddenly as if they were written last week. Just try the most familiar of all psalms, repeated so often it had begun to sound like a cliché: The Lord is my Shepherd...Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.' Those words sound so different today.

Our gross national psychology is different, too. One GNP – the Gross National Product – measures the state of our economy; the gross national psychology measures the state of our mind. It's where terrorists like to pillage. They're not after our land, our territory, our material possessions. Sure, they aim to annihilate the targets they strike, but their real aim is to possess our psyche, deprive survivors of our peace of mind, of trust and hope and resolve – to keep us from ever again believing in a decent, safe, and just world, or working to bring it about. This is their real target: to turn each and every imagination into a private Afghanistan, where they can rule by fear.

Our daughter and son-in-law live in New Jersey, just across the river from lower Manhattan. This summer they adopted a baby boy. On September 11<sup>th</sup> our son-in-law passed through the shadow of the World Trade Center to his office two blocks up the street. He was there when the fire and smoke erupted. He saw the falling bodies, saw the people jumping to their deaths, saw the towers fold to earth. His own building was evacuated and for long awful moments he couldn't reach his wife, our daughter, to say he was okay. Even then he couldn't get home, back across the Hudson, until the next morning. It took him several days fully to recover. Now, matter-of-factly, our daughter tells us how she often lies awake at night, wondering where and when it might happen again, going to the computer at three in the morning – her child asleep in the next room – to check out what she can about bioterrorism, germ warfare, anthrax. Terrorists do that; beyond the carnage of the sneak attack they create another kind of havoc by invading and despoiling a new mother's deepest space, holding her imagination hostage to the most dreadful possibilities.

None of us are spared. The building where Judith and I produce our television programs is just over a mile from Ground Zero. It was evacuated immediately after the disaster, although we remained with a handful of colleagues to help keep the station on the air. The next day, just as we ended a live broadcast for PBS, security officers swept

through and ordered everyone out; there was a bomb scare at the Empire State Building up the street. As we were making our way down the stairs I took Judith's arm and was suddenly struck by the thought: is this the last time I'll touch her? Could our marriage of almost fifty years end here, on this dim, bare staircase? I shoved the thought forcibly from my mind, like a bouncer removing a rude intruder; by sheer force of will I drove it out of my mind. But in the early light of morning, it crept back – the specter of death on those stairs.

Terrifying images, uninvited thoughts: the legacy of terrorists.

I've tried to find the wisdom in this. But wisdom is a very elusive thing. We have the experience but not always the wisdom. Wisdom comes, if at all, slowly, painfully, and only after deep reflection. I'll be honest with you. I haven't been ready for reflection. I have wanted to stay busy, on the go – on the run, perhaps, from the reality that just a few subway stops south of where I get off at Penn Station, almost four thousand people died in a matter of minutes. One minute they're taking off their coats, sipping their coffee, adjusting the picture of a child or sweetheart in the frame on their desk, booting up their computer – and in the next, it's all over for them. No chance to say goodbye. No chance to know why.

For weeks the New York Times has been publishing short compelling profiles of the dead and missing. I've been reading and keeping them. Not out of some macabre desire to hold on to death, but to see if I might recognize a face, a name, some old acquaintance, a former colleague, even a stranger I might have seen occasionally on the subway. That was my original purpose. But as the file has grown I realize what an amazing montage of life emerges from those profiles of the dead. They have become a composite portrait of the America those terrorists wanted to shatter. I read them now, to be reminded of the rough, great, bewildering but exhilarating society of human aspirations we call democracy; I read them to be reminded of the people with whom I share it.

Luis Bautista was one. It was his birthday, and he had the day off from Windows On The World, the restaurant high atop the World Trade Center. But Luis needed money for the tuition he would soon be paying to attend New York's College of Criminal Justice, and back home in Peru his family depended on the money he had been sending since he arrived in New York two years ago speaking only Spanish. So on the eleventh of September Luis Bautista was putting in overtime. He was 24.

William Steckman was 56. For thirty-five of those years he tended NBC's transmitter at One World Trade Center, working the night shift because it let him spend time during the day with his five children and to fix things up around the house. His shift ended every morning at six, but this morning his boss asked him to stay on to help install some new equipment, and William Steckman said sure.

Elizabeth Holmes lived in Harlem with her son and jogged every morning around Central Park where Judith and I go walking, and I have been wondering if we crossed

paths some morning. I figure we were kindred souls. She too was a Baptist and sang in the choir at the Canaan Baptist Church. I thought of Elizabeth Holmes last week, as I put the lights on our tree. Her fiancé was going to give her a ring this Christmas.

Linda Luzzicone and Ralph Gerhardt were planning their wedding, too. They had both sets of parents come to New York in August to meet for the first time and talk about their plans. They had discovered each other in nearby cubicles on the 104<sup>th</sup> floor of One World Trade Center and fell in love. That's where they were working when the terrorists struck.

Mon Jahn-bul-lie came here from Albania. His name was hard to pronounce so his friends called him by the Cajun 'Jambalay', and he grew to like it. He lived with his three sons in the Bronx and was supposed to have retired when he turned 65 last year, but he was so attached to the building and so enjoyed the company of the other janitors that he often showed up an hour before work just to shoot the bull. That's where he was when the terrorists struck.

Fred Scheffold liked his job, too – Chief of the 12<sup>th</sup> battalion of Fire Fighters. He loved going into fires and he loved his men. But he never told his daughters in the suburbs about the bad stuff that happened in the fires he had fought over the years. He didn't want to worry them. This morning, his shift had just ended and he was starting home when the alarm rang. He jumped into the truck with the others and at One World Trade Center he pushed through the crowds to the staircase heading for the top. The last time anyone saw him he was heading for the top. While hundreds poured past him going down through the flames and smoke, Fred Scheffold just kept going up.

I can't get these people out of my mind.

And I can't get out of my mind the reason they died. These were calculated deeds deliberately conceived, meticulously planned, and methodically executed by people who were willing to give their lives in the belief they were pleasing God.

The social philosopher Eric Hoffer wrote about such people in a book I first read almost fifty years ago. He called them true believers -- people whose inner rage seeks refuge and validating rebirth – a religious conversion, if you will, within a charismatic movement. Once they marched for Hitler; now they march for God. The journalist Christopher Hitchens calls them 'Fascists with an Islamic face.' Indeed, you don't have to believe terrorism is a true reflection of Islam—and I don't -- to take Osama bin Laden at his word when he describes his followers as 'vanguard Muslims...the forefront of Islam.' This son of a wealthy Saudi Arabian – this trust fund baby – should know. Somehow to the young Muslim men who flocked to his banner, bin Laden became the new Saladdin – the Muslim hero who led the Islamic resistance to the Christian crusaders a thousand years ago. A decade ago the Russians who invaded Afghanistan were seen by these Muslims as westerners whose presence on Muslim soil was a heresy and corruption of Islam. Because bin Laden and his followers were the enemy of our enemy – the Soviet Union – we gave them weapons and called them freedom

fighters. But then, during the Gulf War, when his own government of Saudi Arabia allowed American troops to be stationed on Saudi soil near the holy shrines of Mecca and Medina, bin Laden formed his Al-Quaeda movement and declared war on the United States. His kind despise America for our support of Israel, for our emancipated women, for our scientific inquiry, and for our refusal to place the sword of the state at the disposal of the clergy. Bin Laden told the journalist Robert Fisk: 'we believe that God used our holy war in Afghanistan to destroy the Russian army and the Soviet Union – and now we ask God to use us one more time, to do the same to America, to make it a shadow of itself.'

Their goal is the sterile and bleak theocracy – the kind they created in Afghanistan. There, under the Taliban's ministry for the promotion of virtue and vice, no one could eat pork or lobster; watch movies or look at photographs; own VCR's, TV's and satellite dishes; use a computer; fly a kite or play chess; keep pet pigeons or sewing catalogs; clap at sporting events; sing or dance; or enjoy any activity that propagates sex or is full of women.' (Time, Dec. 3, 2001). Even before the Taliban women there had a hard time. The warlords who now make up the Northern Alliance—our allies – permitted their young undisciplined soldiers, and mullahs, to rape at will; the women of Afghanistan came to call it 'lying down' because that was the best way to cope – just lie down quietly and let it happen. But then came the Taliban and life worsened. Religious police patrolled the streets and beat women with steel cables for infractions like wearing white socks, or shoes that clicked; or makeup; or showing their ankles; or leaving home unaccompanied by a close male relative. Paradise regained, in a totalitarian ideology that turns faith into something so 'extreme, radical, and megalomaniac as to justify conquest, intolerance, and cruelty'. God hijacked.

This is not of course the whole of Islam, only an extremist minority. But because Islam is a world religion, with a billion followers spread around across the earth, the militancy is potentially a global phenomenon. Even here in America some of its adherents have been heard to argue that they cannot accept the legitimacy of the existing American order because 'It is against the ordainments of Allah.' (City Journal).

Fortunately, that, too, is a minority view. All of us know Muslims in this country who live both as committed believers and patriotic Americans -- who even see Islam reaffirming the values of freedom, tolerance, and democracy. In the long run it is Muslims who pray to a god of love instead of a god of hate who will make the difference in the struggle with terrorism. Our own Mohammed Ali put it this way recently: "I am a Muslim. I am an American. If the culprits are Muslim, they have twisted the teachings of Islam...God is not behind assassins.'

He's right. No one with a deep spiritual life would commit such monstrous crimes. People do such things who believe that their faith must reign supreme and all others negated. This, in Thomas Friedman's words, is bin Ladenism. This is the tyranny over the human mind against which Thomas Jefferson swore eternal hostility.

Now we must now reaffirm that vow, because we have some work to do on the home front. We have our own version of theocrats in people like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell. They took bin Laden's line – that what happened on 9/11 was God's judgment on a decadent America. On Robertson's television program Falwell said, 'We probably got what we deserved.' and Robertson replied: 'Jerry, that's my feeling.' And what is the sin for which God condoned terrorism to punish America – why, the sin of the Bill of Rights. The sin of tolerating people Falwell and Robertson and bin Laden don't like – feminists, gays, lesbians, rationalists, humanists, liberal judges, pro-choicers, the ACLU, People for the American Way. Yes, said Falwell, '(They) helped this to happen. So it was that people like Luis Bautista, William Steckman, Elizabeth Holmes, Linda Luzzacone, and Fred Scheffold had to die to propitiate a wrathful God.

Repugnant? Of course, but under that Bill of Rights they so detest they are entitled to their repugnant opinions. But such rights cannot mask their repulsiveness as human beings – piously spreading their virus of holy hate from the safety of plush studios and stately pulpits where they are isolated from the consequences of their malevolence. Let God do the dirty work – while they rake in the takings of bigotry and bile. We must say to these people – over and over again – what Mohammed Ali said to bin Laden: God is not an assassin.

It's an old and enduring riddle -- how faith, "The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" – becomes a toxic chemical compound capable of changing plowshares into swords?

Of all that I've read since 9/11, nothing is more chilling than the handwritten document found in one of the terrorists' suitcases left behind when it didn't make it onto the flight. It's a cross between a chilling spiritual exhortation and an operational mission checklist. Written in Arabic, Its first four pages recite some basic Islamic history about fighting infidels. Then, it offers the suicide bombers the promise of eternal life – 'Keep a very open mind, keep a very open heart of what you are about to face, you will be entering Paradise' – and goes on to give some practical advice as they board the plane. 'Make sure you are clean, your clothes are clean, including your shoes.'

But what brought me up with a start were the prayers and exhortations in it. Listen to this one:

O God, Open all doors to me. O God, who answers prayers and answers those who ask you, I am asking for your help. I am asking you for your forgiveness. I am asking you to lighten my way. I am asking you to lift the burden I feel. O God, you who open all doors, please open all doors to me, open all venues for me, open all avenues for me. God, I trust in you. God I lay myself in your hands.'

That's the prayer of a suicide bomber.

But that's my prayer, too. I've prayed it over and over again – almost the same words and certainly the same supplication. And the question persists; How is it the God of

comfort, peace and hope to whom so many pray, becomes to some the God of cruelty, oppression, vengeance and death?

We southerners know about this. Our history is haunted by the violent intimidation and terror – the night-riding, cross-burning and mob assaults – perpetrated by Klansmen who claimed to be deeply religious Christians dedicated to the preservation of the Anglo-Saxon white race. Not only did they rage in God's name against blacks but against Catholics, Jews, foreigners and all kinds of sinners. Two years ago, when I gave the commencement here at the university, I met with some student leaders who couldn't believe it when I told them that the very year I graduated here, a spokesman for the Ku Klux Klan was widely quoted as saying: "the KKK is the only white Christian Protestant one hundred percent American organization in the country today.' Another from his brotherhood also made news about that time when he said, 'We are gonna stay white, we are going to keep the niggers black (and we are gonna do it) with the help of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.' They hijacked Jesus...dressed him a white robe and hood.... Put a noose in his hand and murder in his heart.

Even people of moderation speak of 'Our God' in exclusivist terms as if God deals only with them. In an interview I did with her on PBS, the scholar of religion Elaine Pagels said, 'There's practically no religion I know of that sees other people in a way that affirms the other's choice.' We were recently reminded of this by the two-God policy of Billy Graham's son, Franklin, himself an evangelist. "The God of Islam is not the same God,' said the Reverend Franklin Graham. 'It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion.'

That's not an uncommon opinion. Remember what happened in South Carolina a couple of years ago, when it was proposed that the Ten Commandments be posted in the public schools? When someone asked what Buddhists and Muslim students might think about this, one public official shouted: 'Screw the Buddhists. Kill the Muslims.'" And when recently for the first time a Hindu was invited to give the invocation at the U.S. House of Representatives, one prominent conservative organization denounced it as a move toward 'ethical chaos' – as if the House of Representatives needed outside help to achieve ethical chaos.

We have work to do.

You know that I come out of that big tent of tradition called Baptists. At last count, there were more than two dozen varieties of us in America. Bill Clinton is a Baptist; so is Pat Robertson. Jesse Jackson is a Baptist; so is Jesse Helms. Trent Lott is a Baptist; so is Al Gore. Newt Gingrich and Richard Gephardt. No wonder Baptists have been compared to jalapeno peppers – one or two make for a tasty dish but a whole bunch of them together in one place brings tears to your eyes.

Twenty years ago I covered the first convention of the Moral Majority, held right here in Texas, in Dallas. With a major presidential candidate sitting on the dais, our

cameras captured the president of the Southern Baptist convention as he declared that God does not hear the prayers of a Jew. Since then his crowd has taken control of the Southern Baptist Convention – the country’s largest Protestant denomination – and turned their pews into precincts of right-wing politics. Recently they published a prayer guide calling on Christians to pray for the nine hundred million Hindus who ‘worship gods which are not God.’ Now it’s natural for religions to want others to see the truth as it does, but when a Hindu engineer asked me if Southern Baptists speak for all Baptists, I told him they don’t even speak for all Southern Baptists. We Baptists differ profoundly in how we read the Bible, how we read history, and – surprise, surprise – how we read election results. My father was a Baptist deacon who thought for himself. He was certain that Cain and Abel were the first Baptists, since they had introduced fratricide into the Bible. But think about it. The first murder rose out of a religious act. Adam and Eve have two sons – the first parents to cope with what it means to raise Cain. Both brothers are rivals for God’s favor, so both bring God an offering. Cain is a farmer and offers the first fruits of the soil. Abel is a shepherd and offers the first lamb from the flock. Two generous gifts.

But in the story God plays favorites with his faith-based charity. God chooses Abel’s offering over Cain’s, and the elevation of the younger leads to the humiliation of the elder. Cain is so jealous he strikes out at his brother – his brother – and kills him. Once this pattern is established, it’s played out in the story of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, and down through the centuries in generation after generation of conflict between Muslims and Jews, Jews and Christians, Muslims and Christians, until the red thread of religiously spilled blood runs like a fault line through the story of faith. Religion has a healing side, yes, but it also has a killing side. And virtually every armed conflict occurring on the planet today is explicitly driven by religious motives or by memory traces of persisting religious conflict. So in Afghanistan Sunni Moslems war with Shiite Moslems. In Algeria the defenders of orthodoxy cut professors’ throats for teaching male and female students in the same classroom. In Israel Muslim suicide bombers kill busloads of Jews and a fanatical Jewish doctor with a machine gun mows down praying Muslims in a mosque. The young orthodox Jew who assassinated Yitzhak Rabin looks into the camera and declares, ‘Everything I did, I did for the glory of God.’ Timothy McVeigh blows up the federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people partly to seek revenge for the death of David Koresh and his cult. Groups calling themselves the Christian Patriot League collect arsenals, and at a political convention, in so-called ‘Christian booths’ in the exhibit hall, I could buy an apron with two pockets – one for the Bible and one for a gun. Two weeks ago someone belonging to the self-proclaimed Army of God sent FedEx packages containing a powdery substance to women’s health clinics. The Army of God, no less. Driving in my car in New Jersey before the holidays, I was manipulating the dial on the radio when I came upon a choir singing boldly: ‘Onward Christian soldiers, Marching as to war/With the cross of Jesus, Going on before/ Christ the royal master, Leads against the foe/Forward into battle/See his banner go.’ Now, I’ve heard that hymn all my life. But this time it made my skin crawl. I turned off the radio and drove in silence, but in my head I could hear the sad wise voice of the Quaker William Penn: ‘To be furious in religion is to be furiously irreligious.’”

That evening, I completed reading Paul Woodruff's new book, *Reverence: Renewing A Forgotten Virtue*. Paul Woodruff – who teaches philosophy here at the university – writes that “Religious wars are endemic to our time, which is a time with little care for reverence.... if a religious group thinks it speaks and acts as God commands in all this, this is a failure of reverence. A group like that may turn violent and feel they are doing so in good faith. Nothing is more dangerous than that feeling. War is nothing new, and neither are killer strains of religion, pathogens that take hold of a people and send them into paroxysms of violence. War and religion will always be with us; we can't expect to shake them off. But we can ask what it is in religion that might keep the dogs of war on a leash and what it is that whips them into a frenzy and lets them loose. It is reverence that moderates war in all times and cultures, irreverence that urges it on to brutality. The voices that call in the name of God for aggressive war have lost sight of human limitations. They have lost reverence, even when they serve a religious vision.”

We must change our metaphors. Through both politics and faith we must seek new metaphors, because we are entering a new religious landscape in this country, and the old metaphors are like road signs pointing in the wrong direction.

For most of our history our religious discourse was dominated by white male Protestants of a culturally conservative European heritage – people like me. Dissenting visions of America, alternative visions of faith – rarely reached the mainstream. The late cartoonist Jeff McNally summed it up with two weirdoes in a California diner. One weirdo says to the other, ‘Have you ever delved into the mysteries of eastern religion?’ And the second weirdo answers, ‘Yes, I was once a Methodist in Philadelphia.’ Once upon a time that was about the extent of our exposure to the varieties of religious experience. No longer. Open the encyclopedia of American religion and you will see listed more than two thousand one hundred religions in this country. America has become the most religiously diverse country in the world, and it began on our watch -- on July 4, 1965, when we went to the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor where LBJ signed the new Immigration Act. For forty years only a trickle of foreigners had been allowed to come in. Seventy percent of all immigrant slots were allotted to natives of just three countries –the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Germany – and those went largely unused. When President Johnson signed that bill, he put people of all nations on an equal footing and ushered in an era of mass immigration which is dramatically changing the profile of America. In the four decades since, people from all over the world have been coming by the millions, bringing their gods with them. Some Americans don't like this – people like Patrick Buchanan – but it's a fact on the ground, not a theory to refute. As Diana Eck reports in her superb new book on religious pluralism, ‘Buddhists have come from India, East Africa, and Trinidad; Muslims from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Middle East and Nigeria; Sikhs and Jains from India; and Zoroastrians from both India and Iran. Immigrants from Haiti and Cuba have brought Afro-Caribbean traditions, blending both African and Catholic symbols and images. New Jewish immigrants have come from Russia and the Ukraine. The face of American Christianity has been changed with large Latino, Filipino, and Vietnamese

Catholic communities; Chinese, Haitian, and Brazilian Pentecostals; Korean Presbyterians, Indian Mar Thomas, and Egyptian Copts.”

Travel the country that Diana Eck has visited, and you will find Muslims worshipping in mosques from Toledo to Phoenix, as well as in a U-Haul dealership in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, a gymnasium in Oklahoma City, a former mattress showroom in Northridge, California. Large Hindu temples in Pittsburgh, Albany, and California’s Silicon Valley, as well as a former YMCA in New Jersey, a warehouse in Queens, and an old Methodist church in Minneapolis. Now there’s a significant example. Judith and I go often to Minneapolis and St. Paul, where we our grandchildren live. For a long time the twin cities were one third Lutheran. Now they are home to more than 80,000 Asians and Pacific Islanders, including 14,000 Hmong, 10,000 Vietnamese, 8000 Lao Buddhists and 7000 Cambodians. More than three hundred temples make Los Angeles one of the most complex Buddhist centers in the world. A Buddhist American died on the Challenger. Hindu Americans are managers at large corporations. The U.S. Navy has commissioned its first Muslim chaplain. And at a New Jersey mall recently I bought a pair of shoes from a Hindu salesman.

If only LBJ could see us now. He would say that none of us – hard-core fundamentalist, Unitarian rationalist, or principled atheist – can escape the profound challenges to democracy wrought by these changes. Just as he had to wrestle with race as the dominant issue of his time, so we must wrestle now with religious diversity. If he were here now, I believe Lyndon Johnson would challenge the LBJ Library and the LBJ School of Public Affairs to do everything they can to help America figure out how all these many faiths and beliefs can engage without going for each other’s throat, politicizing God, or polarizing the country. There are big questions to address. What do we mean when we invoke the first words of the Constitution – “We, the People.” What do we mean by we? When we read on our currency, ‘In God We Trust,’ whose God do we mean?

Harry asked me to speak on faith: what it means, what it takes, what it gives. By now you must be shaking your head, Harry, because this really isn’t the speech on piety or pilgrimage that you asked of me four years ago. It isn’t the speech I had almost completed on that weekend before September 11<sup>th</sup>. I haven’t done justice, and can’t do justice tonight, to what faith means, takes, and gives. Except to offer you the insight of the writer and poet Kathleen Norris, who said: ‘We are all God’s children now,’ and in the next breath prayed, ‘God help us because we are.’ because in a pluralist world what faith requires is humility. And whether my neighbor believes there are 20 gods or no god; what matters to me is whether my neighbor has faith in democracy. Creeds have made a slaughterhouse of faith, while democracy spares us from the orthodoxy of the sword. Trust in God, sure, but count on democracy to save us from those who would save us against our will. The only antidote to bad theology, you see, is good democracy. And that’s the main thing I want to leave you with tonight.

I believe democracy is at a crossroads. The playwright Tony Kushner wrote more than a decade ago of “Moments in history when the fabric of everyday life

unravels, and there is this unstable dynamism that allows for incredible social change in short periods of time. People and the world they are living in can be utterly transformed, either for the good or the bad.'

Isn't this just such a moment? As we have been visited with tragedy, we are also presented with an extraordinary opportunity to define in deep and enduring ways our faith in democracy, and then to live that faith every day – personally, practically, and politically – as if everything depends on it. Because it does.

We must win this struggle with terrorism. I don't doubt that bin Laden is a man likely to keep on killing until he himself is killed. But other bin Ladens will spring up behind him; mass terrorism is a syndrome of this modern world, and there are always people who find violence a simulation of religious transcendence. So President Bush got it right – this is going to be a long struggle. But while we wage that struggle we mustn't forget the kind of country we want to be. And no one must be permitted to hijack democracy in the name of fighting terrorism.

Some hopeful things have happened. Americans have pulled together in ways I can't remember since World War Two. In real and instinctive ways we have all felt touched – singed – by the fires that brought down those buildings, even those of us who did not directly lose a loved one. Those planes the terrorists turned into missiles cut through a complete cross-section of America – stockbrokers and dishwashers, bankers and secretaries, lawyers and window washers, Hollywood producers and new immigrants, Republicans, Democrats, Liberals, Libertarians, Conservatives. We have been reminded by this catastrophe of a basic truth at the heart of our democracy: no matter our wealth or status or faith, we are all equal before the law, in the voting booth, and when death rains down from the sky.

We have also been reminded of the value of public service. Those firefighters and policemen and Port Authority workers and emergency rescue workers and the teachers who led children from their schools through smoke and dust and debris. And the postal worker who waited impatiently in line for his Cipro because he wanted to get back to work – these public servants are today's heroes. Public employees all, most of them drawing a modest middle-class income for difficult and dangerous work. They have caught our imagination not only for their heroic deeds but because we know so many people like this, people we took for granted. For once our TV screens have been filled with the modest declarations of average Americans coming to each other's help, And we have been reminded of how much, in a democracy, we need each other.

But not all the signs have been encouraging. We have also been reminded of America's double standard, of the rot that has been growing in the soul of democracy. We saw it revealed as the wartime profiteers crawled out of their lairs on K Street in the nation's capital to cash in on the tragedy. While in New York we were still attending memorial services for the dead – while everywhere American cheeks were stained with tears – while the President called every day for patriotism, prayers, and piety, the predators were pulling off their own sneak attacks on democracy.

Within 24 hours of the attacks, the biggest energy companies – companies with record profits – tried to sneak themselves huge new subsidies by attaching them a defense bill. A defense bill! Here our soldiers, sailors, and airmen were about to put themselves in harm's way in a strange and hostile land against a fanatical foe, and what were these corporations doing? They were hijacking the defense bill and turning a public tragedy into a feast of private greed.

But that was just the beginning. Eleven days after the attacks Congress rushed through a fifteen billion dollar bailout of the airline industry. While no one can doubt it was critical to compensate the companies for the losses they suffered, the bailout had literally no provisions for the workers. Surely fairness and justice call for relief that extends unemployment insurance to more workers, raising the average benefit level, and providing more weeks of eligibility so workers have time to find a job. But the only people who got bailed out here were the shareholders. When it was proposed to provide unemployment and some health benefits to laid-off airline workers, the republic majority leader in the house – Texas' own Dick Armey – said that wouldn't be commensurate with the American spirit. I'm not making this up. He really said it.

Compare what happened some years ago when taxpayers bailed out Chrysler. The government set up a finance board to monitor it. Lee Iacocca agreed to work for one dollar a year. Doug Fraser of the UAW went on the board as well as a consumer representative, and there were strict requirements to pay the money back over time. None of these standards were followed in the airline bailout. So the bailout contained no provisions for workers – and once the airlines got their money they proceeded to layoff 140,000 employees. No, Armey was right: It wouldn't have been commensurate with the American spirit to accord to the public – the taxpayers – the protection the industry had bought for itself from a House Majority on the take.

In the weeks after the tragedy we heard repeated calls for Churchillian courage. The President asked for sacrifice. So how did America's most powerful and privileged corporations assure that future generations would look back and say, 'This was their finest hour?' That's easy. Give us back the three-martini lunch, at taxpayer expense. Give coal producers more freedom to pollute. Cut the Capital Gains Tax on the wealthy. And eliminate the Alternative Minimum Tax. That was the tax enacted fifteen years ago to make sure the country's most profitable companies pay something to keep public services running, like ordinary citizens are obliged to do every week. Until then, many of those wealthy corporate citizens had escaped the income tax altogether through various shelters and loopholes. Understandably, they have been trying ever since to rid themselves of the requirement. So they seized this moment to propose that the best way to fight terrorism is to relieve themselves of any obligation to pay their fair share of fighting it. We saw what Mr. Armey and his merry band thought commensurate with the American spirit. Mr. Armey and his band of true believers went along with them. They voted not only to repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax but also to refund to corporations every cent they had already paid in the fifteen years since it was enacted. Sixteen of our biggest corporations would have been the top beneficiaries of the rebate.

Ford Motor Company -- \$1.4 billion. General Electric – 671 million. Even the incompetently led and ethically challenged but politically connected Enron would have gotten a quarter of a million dollars. I'm sure it won't surprise this audience that these corporations had been the most lavish contributors to the politicians who do their bidding. Enron gave \$2.4 million in campaign contributions in 2000. General Electric contributed one million, Ford, three quarters of a million. And the list goes on, commensurate with the American spirit.

If I sound a little bitter about this, I am. Whose side are these people on, anyway? As my friend and fellow journalist Bill Greider recently reminded us, in frightening times these big companies turn like all of us to their government for security. But the rest of the time they will abandon the national interest if it serves their interest to do so.

Listen to these words: "There's no mindset that puts this country first. The United States does not have an automatic call on our resources." Those are the words, according to Bill Greider, of a Colgate-Palmolive executive. They have become the motto and mantra of one multinational corporation after another.

Consider the example of Citibank. Bailed out more than once when it was on the brink of failure. The former CEO of Citibank used to complain mightily about regulations imposed by our government to protect consumers, and he often threatened to move his headquarters overseas. 'The United States is the wrong country for an international bank to be based,' said its CEO. Wealthy autocrats have been known to find Citibank a useful channel for laundering their money. And get this: last year the right wing Heritage Foundation in Washington teamed up with deep pocket bankers to stop the United States from cracking down on terrorist money havens. I'm not making this up – it's all on the record. Early last year thirty industrial nations were ready to tighten the rules on offshore financial centers whose banks have the potential to hide and help launder billions of dollars for drug cartels, global crime syndicates, and groups like bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organization. Not all offshore money is linked to crime or terrorism; much of it comes from wealthy people who are hiding money to avoid taxation. And right wingers believe in nothing if not avoiding taxation – let those firefighters and police and teachers with their middle incomes pay for the war on terrorism. So these right wingers and the banking lobby went to work to prevent the American government from joining in the crackdown on dirty money. Closing down tax havens, they said, would in effect lead to higher taxes on poor folks trying to hide their income overseas. The president of the powerful Heritage Foundation spent an hour with Treasury Secretary O'Neill, Texas bankers pulled their strings at the White House – and presto, the Bush Administration pulled out of the global campaign to crack down on dirty money – until the September terrorist attacks made them look like co-conspirators.

How about that for patriotism? Better terrorists get their dirty money than tax cheaters be prevented from evading national laws and pay their fair share of the public sector. And this from people who wrap themselves in the flag and sing America the Beautiful with tears in their eyes.

Bitter, yes. It's not just religious true believers who threaten our democracy. It's true believers in the god of the market who would leave us to the ruthless amorality of unfettered corporate capitalism where even the law if the jungle breaks down. And they're counting on your patriotism to distract you from their plunder. While you're standing at attention with your hand over your heart, pledging allegiance to the flag, they're picking your pocket.

I know, I know, we're not supposed to be raising such criticism right now. This is an emergency, remember. But what if this emergency does last a long time? What happens to democracy? Was it cancelled on September 11<sup>th</sup> – not to be restored until the President and Dick Cheney and John Ashbrook give us the all clear? I don't think so. But democracy won't survive if citizens turn into lemmings. Yes, the President is our Commander-in-Chief and in hunting down and bringing to justice the terrorists who are trying to destroy us, we are all the President's men. But we are citizens too. And citizens are no one's minions. There *is* a fight going on against terrorists around the world – people who hate democracy. But there's a fight going on here, too, and those of us who love democracy must join that fight to stop powerful interests from setting us back a hundred years – back to when the poor, old, and sick were on their own – back to when minorities were at the mercy of a capricious state – back to when the sheriff, police, and military were free from public scrutiny – back to when huge corporations had the country in their pockets. It took muckraking journalists and progressive crusaders and outraged citizens to defend democracy as everybody's business. And if any administration wants to go there – wants to turn democracy upside down – it's every patriot's duty to join the loyal opposition. "Is this a private fight," asked the Irishman, "Or can anyone get in it?" The answer is – it's our fight. Democracy is our fight. Come on in – keep the faith.

I began this talk with the names of a few of the people who died in the attacks – Bautista – Steckman – Holmes – Luzzicone – Jahn-bul-lie—Scheffold. I did so because I never want to forget the humanity behind the horror. I never want to forget the email sent by a doomed employee in the World Trade Center who just before his life ended wrote: Thank you for being such a great friend." I don't want to forget the man and woman holding hands as they leapt together to their deaths. Or those firemen who just kept going up. I never want to forget that the very worst of which human beings are capable can bring out the very best. I want to remember that the kingdom of the human heart is large, containing not only hate but also courage. And I want to remember that I am a survivor. What does that mean? Listen to Michael Berenbaum, who worked for years with the survivors of the Holocaust:

*"The question is what to do with the very fact of survival. Over time survivors will be able to answer that question not by a statement about the past but by what they do with the future. Because they have faced death, many will have learned what is more important: life itself, love, family, community. The simple things we have all taken for granted will bear witness to their reality. The survivors will not be defined by the lives they have led until now but by the lives that they will lead from now on. For the*

*experience of near death to have ultimate meaning, it must take shape in how one rebuilds from the ashes. Such for the individual, so, too, for the nation.”*

We're survivors, you and I. And we have work to do.