

Conservative Christianity after the Christian Right

Dr. Timothy Keller
Redeemer Presbyterian Church

March 2013

MICHAEL CROMARTIE: Now, our speaker this morning is a man in great and high demand, but I knew we had a shot at getting Dr. Tim Keller here this morning when I was reading his best-selling book *The Reason for God*, and I found at least three footnotes referencing the transcripts of these meetings.

And I said, “Okay. Tim knows we exist, and he knows how serious the conversation is, and maybe he, too, would like to join us for a conversation.” And when I ran into him some time ago he said, “I need at least a year advance.” And so I have done my best to make it happen.

So he is the best-selling author of many books. He is also the pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, which has been featured in *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

His latest book is just out. It’s on vocation and work called *Every Good Endeavor*, which I will highly commend to you, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*. And this has been out maybe two months, right, Tim?

So, ladies and gentlemen, you will read the bio of Tim Keller in the packets that we have given you. I would just say that the topic we have given him, “Conservative Christianity after the Christian Right,” was suggested by one of the advisors to this event, your friend and our colleague Barbara Bradley Hagerty of NPR.

She said at a luncheon that we have about four months out before the event, “I really want you to try to get Tim Keller, and tell him to address the question of conservative Christianity after the Christian right,” whereupon, then, Barbara was not able to join us

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for the meeting. But I still think it’s a great topic. And Tim readily agreed to the topic, so, Tim, we are grateful for you taking the time, because we all know how busy you are, and thank you for coming.

DR. TIMOTHY KELLER: Conservative Christianity after the Christian right — I am used to speaking about things that I am absolutely certain of. I am used to speaking about things I would take a bullet for and things I would die for. I would like the record to show that I am not willing to die for my opinion on conservative Christianity after the Christian right.

(Laughter.)

I would just like everyone to see that, because this feels like surmise all the way down. But you’re journalists and that’s what you do. You surmise and I’m surmising with you.

It’s not totally stupid to ask me about this, because, first of all, I’m old enough that I was a conservative Protestant Christian before there was a Christian right. I was raised in kind of a liberal Lutheran church, the old LCA, Lutheran Church in America.

I became a Christian — and an evangelical one at that — during college by reading John Stott books and C.S. Lewis books and that sort of thing. And at that time, if you were a theological conservative it didn’t mean you were a political conservative. So I predate the wedding of those two things.

And now the other thing, as many of you know, the church that I pastor and have pastored for quite a while is full of what is known as the millennials. A high percentage of them are unaffiliated, the 18 to 29 year olds, and then the next generation, those are the people that are there in my church.

32 is the median age of the people who attend Redeemer, which makes it about 80 percent under 42 or something like that. And so I live in that world that is totally allergic to institutional religion, and I live amongst what you have to call younger evangelicals. And so it’s just as well I do speak to this I guess, because I’m old enough and my church is young enough that maybe I can say something about it.

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Here are some definitions. Number one, I’m actually a conservative Protestant, as you know, not a conservative Christian only. I’m not a scholar here. I’m here as a practitioner. And as a practitioner, I don’t feel like I know enough about the worlds of conservative Catholics and Orthodox and their numbers and the issues to talk much about them.

So about 80 percent of what I say is really going to fit more conservative Protestant Christianity. So actually it should say conservative Protestant Christianity after the Christian right, because that’s mainly what I am going to talk about. Even though conservative Roman Catholics and conservative Protestants really overlap in so many of their values and they could make common cause in so many causes, nevertheless, I’ll make reference to them, but I am basically thinking about Protestants.

Secondly, what is a conservative Protestant? I’ll use the Bebbington four plus one. Now, David Bebbington was a historian and a sociologist some years ago who tried to define evangelicalism and came up with these four characteristics.

I have never found the autograph of what he actually said, but because it keeps coming down through everybody else, this is my understanding of his four characteristics were the authority of the Bible — by that, I think it means the Bible trumps reason and experience. Secondly, the necessity of a conversion experience of some kind. Thirdly, salvation through faith in Christ’s work on the cross, not good works. Fourth, mission, the idea of activism, needing to take this message to the world.

And my fifth one I would add — even though it may be inherent, it may be implied, I would call it supernatural Christianity. Liberal Christianity tried to redo all of Christian doctrine in terms of naturalistic assumptions, no miracles. And I would say an evangelical conservative Protestant definitely believes in miracles, believes the resurrection really happened.

Somebody once told me, if you ask an Episcopalian minister, “Did the resurrection really happen?” and if he says, “Well, it depends on what you mean,” that means no.

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So a conservative Protestant is — when asked, “Did the resurrection really happen?” he says, “Yes.” And other people say, “Well, that depends on how you look at it.”

So, in fact, Andrew Delbanco, who I really respect, is a secular Jewish professor of humanities at Columbia University. Once I was on a panel with him and he was trying to figure out where I was. And he says, “Oh, I get it. You don’t take the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed metaphorically, do you?” I said, “Bingo. That’s it.”

(Laughter.)

Conservative Protestantism — and who are they? I really appreciate what Luis said yesterday, that you should back out what I would call the soft part of Evangelicals which would be some of the big denominations like Southern Baptist and the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church, that are so large that they are actually I think experiencing a lot of the nominalism and the disaffiliation that mainline churches are experiencing. But then you have to back in the churches and people in the mainline that are really evangelical, you back them in, you back others out, it comes out about the same.

The seven percent of Black Protestants, regardless of what else you know, the vast majority of them would fit the Bebbington four plus one. There is just no doubt about it. So that gets you right now to almost 30 percent of the population, or close. Less than a third, more than a quarter, and that’s who I want to talk about.

And so I’d like to give you three things that I think I’m fairly confident, at street level admittedly, will happen in the future. And then I’d like to talk to you about some things that might happen in the future that could move the needle either way.

So, first of all, three things that I’m fairly confident of happening, and I’ll actually read you these three things and then go through them.

One is that conservative Protestant Christianity is going to be growing moderately in numbers and greatly in cultural diversity and racial diversity in a fragmented culture. Secondly, conservative Protestant Christianity is going to become consciously outside the box politically, but not consciously outside the box theologically. And, thirdly, it is going

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to get both more and less culturally influential simultaneously, with the end result in doubt.

Number one, when I say “growing moderately,” I mean that the number of the devout people in the country is increasing, as well as the number of secular people. The big change is the erosion is in the middle. The devout numbers have not actually gone down that much. It depends on how you read them. But basically, they are not in freefall by any means.

What I think is fair — and I hope this will be really driven into everybody’s psyche, because I will basically say the same thing Luis said — that you don’t so much see secularization as polarization, and what is really disappearing is the middle.

Here is what this means. It is actually very important for what is happening right now. It used to be that the devout and the mushy middle — nominal Christians, people that would identify as Christians, people who would come to church sporadically, people who certainly respect the Bible and Christianity — the devout and the mushy middle together was a super majority of people who just created a kind of “Christian-y” sort of culture.

Luis is right in saying lots and lots of unaffiliated people are not atheists or agnostics. But what has happened is that the mushy middle used to be more identified with the devout. Now it’s more identified with the secular. That’s all.

So what’s happening is the roof has come off for the devout. The devout had a kind of a shelter, an umbrella. You couldn’t be all that caustic toward traditional classic Christian teaching and truth. I spoke on Friday morning to the American Bible Society’s board. American Bible Society does a lot of polling about the Bible. I don’t know why, but —

(Laughter.)

The use of the Bible, reading the Bible, attitudes toward the Bible. They said the very same thing that I heard from Luis, that actually the number of people who are devout Bible readers is not changing that much.

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What is changing is for the first time in history a growing group of people who think the Bible is bad, it's dangerous, it's regressive, it's a bad cultural force, that was just never there. It was very tiny. And that's because the middle ground has shifted, so it is more identified with the more secular, the less religious, and it's less identified now with the more devout.

I don't know why. Luis has to help me here — because he's a scientist, he is not supposed to give too many ideas about where all of these trends came from, and what is going to happen next. But I have no such

(Laughter.)

handcuffs on me. I can pontificate all I want. That's what I am; I'm a pontiff.

I would say — I'm pontificating away. Yes.

MR. CROMARTIE: Presbyterian pontiff.

DR. KELLER: Oh, yeah. We have them.

(Laughter.)

I would say, to try to understand what is going on, if you go to a guy like Robert Bellah, or you go to Charles Taylor, or you go to the people that say that what's happening now is expressive individualism, like Charles Taylor calls it “exclusive humanism,” it's the fruit of the enlightenment. And the enlightenment said that my reason, not trumped by revelation or tradition or anything else, is the way I'm going to find truth.

It was interesting, Luc Ferry, who is a French philosopher who has written a book — I can't read French, so I can only read stuff that is translated. He wrote a book called *A Brief History of Thought*. And he says that that idea that the individual consciousness and reason is the arbiter of truth is actually like an acid that eats through its own container.

In other words, what it does is that it not only eats away at tradition and religion, but it actually eats away at everything. It eats away at all institutions, it eats away at anything

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that is going to trump my sovereign and sacred ability to decide what is right or wrong for me.

And so that is the one side. And on the other side there is the sociology of knowledge approach, which says, yes, social media and mobility and the iPod, all of those things have reinforced individualism. The iPod was the death of the music industry. The idea that I have to get an album, or the idea that I should come to a concert and sit down and listen to all four movements of the symphony, even the part that I find boring is going away.

Through the sociology and knowledge side you can do an intellectual history side. For whatever reason, the center is coming off, and the people who are able to overcome the acids of individualism, you might say, are people that have to be really devout now. It's just not enough to simply say, “I go to church. My father was Methodist and my grandfather was Methodist, so I'm a Methodist. I don't go to church very often.” That has just all gone away.

Now, here is why I think probably conservative Protestantism will either grow moderately or stay the same — but I think it will grow. Here is the reason why, and I'm going to be a little more optimistic.

First of all, as we have already seen, it is mainly white people who are getting more secular in the world. White people. Just keep that in mind, since most of you are. And there is a tendency —

MR. CROMARTIE: Most of them here, right.

DR. KELLER: Most of the people right here are, yes. I'm sorry. Let the transcript show I am talking about the people in the room.

And there is a tendency for us to think it is just impossible to overcome this practically. That we are reality, and because so many of our people are getting more and more secular and unaffiliated, and so forth; this is the way the world is going. It's just not true. I understand that by 2050 maybe only 30 percent of the world will be white, something

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like that. So white people are definitely getting more secular, but they are not the majority of the world.

Now, I am in a spot where I have seen, for reasons I will tell you under my second heading here, that I have seen a lot of disaffected, Anglo-type people who go off to college, decide that I can't find a Christianity or a faith that really works for me, and then get recaptured by Redeemer and churches in Manhattan. I can see that, and I do see it — I don't know how statistically significant it is. Maybe it's not much. But I do know we can hold our own with that crowd. I just know it can be done.

We actually did a survey a couple of years ago in which we looked at, Manhattan, from south of the top of Central Park, and maybe extreme western New Jersey and extreme eastern Queens and Brooklyn. As many of you know, that's sort of the professional core of the city and has about 1,050,000 people.

We went through there, and, as generously as possible, windshield survey, tried to identify every evangelical-ish Protestant church. And we — like I said — were fairly generous in using our Bebbington four approach.

And it took a lot of work, but we realized that in 1989 there were about 100 of those churches, with about 9,000 Manhattan residents attending them, which is less than one percent of the population. And in 2009, there were about 200 of those churches. My church helped start about a third of them, and there are now 34,000 Manhattan residents in those churches.

Now, from one side, that is a big uptick. From another side, it's still a fringe phenomenon. Nevertheless, it means we are holding our own. However, the primary reason why I think that evangelicalism or maybe conservative Protestantism is going to probably hold its own and grow is because of the rise of global Christianity. Many of those folks are coming here, especially in the city.

Here is what I do know. Korea, in 100 years, went from about zero to 40 percent Christian. Africa, in 100 years, from 1900 to 2000, went from nine percent to about 50 percent Christian. China is probably on a 100-year trajectory to do about the same thing, probably

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go from about two or three percent to maybe 30 or so. By the way, that is going to change the history of the world, right there. Because as some of you may know, China is a little bigger than Korea.

(Laughter.)

And, of course, not as troubled as Africa — there are already more Pentecostal evangelical Christians in China than there are in all of the United States.

So, now what does that mean? It means that Christianity is growing in these non-Western places at seven to 10 times the rate of the population in many cases, and they are coming to the Western cities. The biggest churches by far in London right now are African churches.

What happened in New York? Very interesting. In 1965, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens were largely — outside of black Protestants, it was basically a Catholic-Jewish place. There were a few scattered mainline churches, and that was about it.

There has been an enormous influx, and now almost certainly out of the eight million New Yorkers, 10 percent are Pentecostal Christians. My son is an urban planner, works for the city of New York. He says when you go to Manhattan community boards, they are very secular.

But if you go out into the Bronx and Queens and Brooklyn, places like that, he says community boards — and you know what a community board is. It's where zoning decisions get made. Half the community boards are appointed by the Mayor — he says, “They are opened and closed in prayer,” especially in the Bronx, because it is all led by black and Latino Pentecostal ministers. They are the community leaders.

And we guess that 12 to 15 percent now of — it's a guess — the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn are probably what you call Bebbington five, Pentecostal or evangelical.

Now, what happens is those folks are very ethnic. They are not from eastern southern Europe, which is what used to dominate New York. They're from the eastern southern

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hemisphere. And when they come, they win their own folks and they grow and they plant tons and tons of churches.

And then, when their kids grow up, go to college, learn to speak English, they come into the center, and that’s why if you go into Redeemer, you’ll see we are only about 43 percent white. Redeemer has 5- or 6,000 people attending weekly. 15 percent of the people who go to Redeemer either have their doctorate or are working on it out of the 6,000. It’s 70 percent single.

This is pretty unusual. And it’s still a fringe phenomenon, actually. It hasn’t captured the cultural imagination, but the fact is that to a great degree, we are fueled by lots and lots of people who have actually been won to faith in ethnic churches.

They need to get a kind of religion and Christianity that helps them figure out what it means to be a Christian in the dominant culture. And very often some of the ethnic churches can’t do that.

A good, quick example of this was some years ago I had three Korean pastors from Queens come to see me, and they sat down. They weren’t hostile at all. They just said, “You know, a lot of our Korean folks — boys and girls who were raised in our churches go off to college, they stop going to church, but now they are showing up at your church. Why?”

And I said, “I can tell you.” I said, “You’re Korean, so you are not individualistic.” So when their kids are growing up and they come and they say to you, “Why should we be Christian?” you say to them, “Because we’re a Christian family, because we’re Christian people” — they give a collectivistic answer.

But then they send them off to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton — and they *will* go to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, if you’re Korean —

(Laughter.)

— and then they come out but they are not just Asian, they are Asian-American. They are still more collectivistic. In other words, they are not like white people, but they are not just like their parents either.

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And so basically they come to Redeemer where I don't assume they will believe because of cultural pressure — I give people reasons. I give them individual reasons. I say, “Christianity makes emotional sense. Christianity makes cultural sense. And Christianity makes rational and intellectual sense, too.” But unless you can show them the first two, nobody is going to sit around to ask, what is the evidence for the resurrection.

So we have a way of doing that that helps a lot of people make the jump. Not everybody makes the jump. Like I said, the country is getting more multi-ethnic. Non-white people tend to be more communal, less individualistic.

My non-white members are way more respectful of me as a pastor than my white members. Way more. It's unbelievable.

(Laughter.)

It is unbelievable. White people, they say, “What are you doing?” And everybody else says, “Pastor, pastor,” and so — we'll get back to that. Anyway, so the point is —

(Laughter.)

But here is the point. The point is that Pentecostal churches are the most — as far as I know right now — the most multi-ethnic human institutions in the world. They bring together white people, black people, Hispanic people, and Asian people, better than non-Pentecostal evangelical churches, which don't do that as well.

We tend to be Asian-Anglo right on the ground. If you're not into charismatic worship, basically Anglo/Asian and Black/Hispanic tend to mix well, because they like the same kind of choices, like the same kind of music. But if you are Pentecostal, it just brings the whole thing together.

But, increasingly, the evangelical Pentecostal communities are going to be led by non-white people, they are going to have a lot of moral authority because of that — so I see, basically, conservative Protestantism in this country is growing slowly, but not much, not a great deal, but the needle is not going down to zero, or not down to five percent or two

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percent. It is not going in the European direction, at least not in the next generation or two. Okay. Number one.

Number two, I said consciously outside the box politically, but not theologically. And it's because of what I am going to call the inertia of the Bible. That's a new term, and I just made it up last night.

(Laughter.)

So I want you to know, if it ever becomes au courant, you'll say, “I was there.”

(Laughter.)

Except the more I think about it, the more I don't think it is going to go anywhere. But anyway —

(Laughter.)

Here is what I mean. First of all, it is true that younger evangelicals are not wedded that much to the Christian right. To me, the Christian right was conservative politics, which would mean smaller government, lower taxes, strong national defense, a pretty high value on free market capitalism. To me the Christian right was that, along with traditional 2,000-year-old Christian values of anti-abortion, no easy divorce, homosexuality is wrong. And you put that together you had the Christian right.

Now, there is no doubt that on the economic and political side that younger evangelicals just are not as wedded to the high value of the free market, super strong national defense, or small government. They are very sensitive to issues of what they would call justice and the needs of the poor. And if they see public policies that don't seem to take that into account, they are not happy.

It is also true that conservative politics tends to say that race isn't a big problem anymore. But increasing numbers of the evangelicals are not white. And even my Asian members, of which we have many, who have gone off to Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, come back and have great jobs in the city, and so on — they know race is an issue.

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It doesn't make any sense to non-white people to say, “Well, we are past that. We don't have to pay any attention to it in public policy anymore,” which seems to be what they hear from conservatives. So because some of the evangelicals — and the younger evangelicals are multi-ethnic — so many are not white, because of their concerns about justice and the poor, they do perceive the conservatism as being kind of clueless and heartless to some degree.

However, in spite of the fact that there are a very small number of very vocal people saying, “I'm evangelical and I think homosexuality is all right,” I don't believe the vast majority of younger evangelicals are going to change theologically — I just don't see the needle moving in the area of the social issues. I see it in the political issues.

And here is what I mean by the “inertia of the Bible.” Because of the cacophony of voices about what the Bible means now — and I have never heard anything like it in my whole life, how many people are arguing over how to interpret the Bible, and there are so many voices out there saying you can get anything you want to believe out of it — I have to admit, a lot of people just throw up their hands.

If you're not really reading the Bible through, you throw up your hands and say, “Who is to say?” There is no way to interpret it. Anybody can get anything out of it they want.

But if you actually read the Bible — and that's my job, I read it and I work through with laypeople who read it all the time — I'd say that about 20 percent of the Bible is really not very easy to understand. In other words, when you read it, it just doesn't make much sense. It takes background, it is questionable, there are people who have different views.

But if you take the 80 percent that actually is relatively clear, especially if both liberal and conservative commentators say, “Here is what the author meant,” it's not that hard to tell what the author was getting at. And the 80 percent actually, I would say, comes out looking kind of like Catholic social theory or African-Americans' way of reading it.

Why? Because on the one hand there is a lot of emphasis on the poor and redistribution of wealth. I really don't think it's that hard to make the case. In spite of the Old Testament

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Holy War stuff, by and large, you read the Bible canonically all the way through, Old and New Testament as a Christian, and there is an awful lot of emphasis on peace-making.

It is very hard to get, I think, nationalism out of the Bible, especially when nationalism is constantly being undermined, especially in the New Testament. And even in the Old — the Christian understanding of the Old Testament was that the people of God existed as a nation state for a period of time, and now the people of God is actually a kind of multi-ethnic international fellowship.

And so at that point, that’s why when Jesus says, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, God the things that are God’s”, that is a change, and saying Christians don’t exist as a nation state anymore, and they shouldn’t exist as a nation state anymore. That you’re a Christian first, and you’re white or black or Asian or Hispanic second.

You’re a Christian first, and you’re from Ohio or Pennsylvania or Texas second. And when you do that — and I think that’s what Ephesians is all about — when you start to read the Bible through, on the one hand, it looks liberal in those areas. It is not great on nationalism, and it’s not great on keeping all of your money for yourself. It is big, big, big on helping the poor.

But on the other hand, it is really very clear on marriage and sex, and stuff like that. And the seven times the Bible mentions homosexuality, it is always negative. The Bible opens and closes with a heterosexual marriage. Everybody knows when you read it, it privileges heterosexuality. It is very obvious.

So I think that basically the common sense reading of the Bible is going to bring you out — and this is the inertia — of not really being, I don’t think, the Christian right, but on the other hand really not becoming liberal Protestants either. There is a tendency to say, “Where are evangelicals going?”

I think they are going to look more and more politically, actually, like conservative Roman Catholics. And like African-Americans. I think that’s where they’re going. But the inertia of the Bible keeps them from, I think, getting really very liberal when it comes to theology and social ethics.

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And let me just give you a good example of this. Jonathan Rauch, in *The Advocate*, two years ago made a really good point. As you all know, he would certainly be a gay activist. He says this: “Gay people believe that to say homosexuality is a sin is just as bigoted as saying black people are inferior. It’s the same thing.”

He says, then, here is the problem. If you go to the Quran and the Old Testament and the New Testament, even though racists can get — you can get anything you want out of any text, that is, to some degree, true. But he says white supremacy is not a core teaching of the Bible. No matter how you read it, you just can’t get white supremacy out of there. It’s just not there.

He says, on the other hand, it is really pretty obvious that the Bible has a problem with homosexuality. So he says you might want to say that both of these views are equally bigoted. But, on the one hand, you can go to Christians with white supremacy and say, “You are not being true to your own Bible.”

What I was trying to say yesterday in response to Reuel Gerecht — is the way to be persuasive is not just to beat on people from the outside, but to come inside to say if you’re trying to change an Islamic person’s practice, you go inside and say, “You’re not being true to your own beliefs, to your own Islam.” That is what you do.

So David Chappell, who wrote a book called *A Stone of Hope*, which is about the civil rights movement, says it is amazing how fast broad backing for segregation in the South collapsed when you went and you said, “You’re not being true to your own beliefs.”

I remember I got to my church in Hopewell, Virginia, a little blue collar church, in 1975, and some of my older people — segregation had been in the town almost up until like five years before that — but most of my older people said, “You know, I’m embarrassed that we were part of that.” It’s amazing how fast it collapsed.

But to a great degree, it is because you can’t get white supremacy out of the Bible. But Jonathan Rauch says the problem is, if you say to everybody, “Anyone who thinks homosexuality is a sin is a bigot,” he says, “You are going to have to ask them to

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completely disassemble the way in which they read the Bible.” Completely disassemble their whole approach to authority.

You are basically going to have to ask them to completely kick their entire faith out the door. Rauch acknowledges that’s not going to happen very fast. Now he hopes it happens eventually. He did say that, but he says to think that in two or three decades the needle — how many white supremacists are there anymore that are really out there? Not many. And to think that the same thing is going to happen about reservations of homosexuality is just — it’s just lala land.

And I think what Jonathan is saying has certainly been ignored by the media. Aren’t you the media? So don’t ignore it.

(Laughter.)

That’s what I’m here to tell you.

But, you see, I’m saying there’s an inertia in the Bible that I think allows a person to get a lot of leeway on politics. You can be politically, economically, kind of liberal/conservative. There’s a whole lot of ways of going, but it doesn’t give you a whole lot of leeway on those social issues and your basic theology.

Lastly, I think that conservative Protestant Christianity is going to get both more and less culturally influential at the same time. And this is going to be a problem. Here’s why.

I’m old enough to know that the basic discourse inside evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and not so much the Pentecostal but certainly non-Pentecostal churches, has really shifted, because 30 years ago the expectation was this — if you’re really sold out for Jesus, you’ll go into the ministry or the mission field. If you’re not sold out for Jesus, just get a job and give us the money, because we are doing the Lord’s work. That has utterly changed, totally changed.

MR. CROMARTIE: There’s a book about that, right?

DR. KELLER: Well, yeah.

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(Laughter.)

Yes. I’m opportunistic. Well, actually, the first chapter of the book, which ended up not ever getting in there, I started to do research on. There is a huge movement inside conservative Protestantism right now to say, “The best thing you can possibly do with your faith is just go get a job and be a thoughtful, non-triumphalistic, but also non-assimilated Christian in the major cultural industries.”

Did you hear that? It’s a very powerful movement that says the best thing you can do is not try to take over the country. After all, we’re not supposed to be a Christian nation. All right? “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” We don’t do that. We’re a pluralistic nation.

On the other hand, we don’t want to just assimilate. The Bible gives us views of human nature and human thriving and human good and the purpose of life that are very different than the secular. So go out there and get involved and be very thoughtful Christians in your job. Serve other people, but do it on the basis of what your own understandings are, your own moral intuitions are, and integrate your faith with your work, and in a non-triumphalistic way, but a non-assimilations way, get out there.

You have to ask the question, if Tribe X — if thousands and thousands of young people from Tribe X get into Hollywood trying to make it in the movies, how many thousands have to try to get in at the bottom for there to be one Tribe X Steven Spielberg?

So how many of a particular group of people would have to be trying to get into Hollywood — the Darwinian thing happens, and who makes it to the top of the food chain. I don’t know, but I think, frankly, my guess is a critical mass of evangelicals for the first time in modern history are trying to get into those various cultural industries now.

Peter Berger, in one of your Faith Angle transcripts, thought it was very, very significant. He said if the evangelicals become assimilated then they will just become like everybody else, which they might. They might. There’s a lot of pressure out there. And if they’re triumphalistic, they will be just thrown out. In other words, if they just start to beat people

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over the head with a Bible, they just get thrown out. But it’s possible that it might have a big effect, and it might, and I do think there is something like that going on out there.

That’s on the one hand. On the other hand, as I mentioned, the roof came off. That is, you had the devout, you had the secular, and you had that middle ground that made it hard to speak disrespectfully of traditional values. That middle ground now has not so much gone secular, but they more identified with this side. They are identified with expressive individualism, and so they don’t want to tell anybody how to live their lives.

And so what that means now of course is that the devout suddenly realize that they are out there, that the umbrella is gone, and they are taking a lot of flak for their views, just public flak.

And there was no doubt, by the way, the Louie Giglio thing, when he was sort of disinvited because of his traditional views on homosexuality from giving the invocation at the Inauguration, that was so clear. No matter how I add it up, I look at the mainline churches and I take out the quarter that are probably evangelical, my guess is that 80 percent of the clergy of this country would have some reservations about homosexuality — 75, 80 percent, something like that.

But what we were being told was that you are beyond the pale, not just that you’re wrong, but that respect for you is wrong. And so that was heard loud and clear in the conservative Protestant world. Loud and clear. It was enormously discouraging. It was sort of a sense of it’s not just that you’re going to disagree with us, but basically you are saying we really don’t even have a right to be in the public square.

So when you have, on the one hand, that kind of pushback in the public square because now the middle is with the secular rather than with the devout, you have both — more people from conservative Protestantism trying to get into the cultural industries than ever before, instead of just staying out and being in their own subculture; on the other hand, getting more pushback for their views than ever. What will happen?

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I would think if you were in the media you would say this is a story, and I’m just going to have to keep an eye on it. Right now there is a tension between people wanting influence and people wanting to have less influence. And the end result is in doubt.

Now, lastly, and briefly, I said my belief as a conservative Protestant, is that Christianity is going to stay where it is pretty much, or grow a bit. I think it is not going to become less influential. It is going to be more embattled, I suppose.

But there are some things that could move the needle in a pretty good way. For example, when *New York* magazine wrote a snarky article, because they write only snarky articles, about Redeemer some years ago, they said it was kind of striking. The reporter came in and was kind of shocked by the number of normal people. They expected, first of all, a small evangelical church in a place like Manhattan. And, secondly, they expected people that really weren’t Manhattanites, but they walked around and they said, “Wait a minute. This is us.”

But they did say this is a fringe phenomenon. I have already quoted them a couple of times, and it stayed in my head. “This is a fringe phenomenon.”

Now, as some of you know, the Speech Act theory thing, that was an illocutionary hope. In other words, to say it’s a fringe phenomenon, you could just tell what the reporter was trying to say was, “I hope” — it was a marginalizing comment. It was something of a way of saying, “I hope that this stays a fringe phenomenon.”

(Laughter.)

And by calling it a fringe phenomenon, I am helping it stay a fringe phenomenon.

(Laughter.)

But he is also right, because honestly three percent of the population isn’t — to me, if something captures the cultural imagination, the needle really starts to move. It means it gets to 15, 20, 25 percent. I don’t know if that is going to happen, but it could happen if a couple of things happen.

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Number one, something outside, usually. Korea went from zero to 40 percent Christian partly because there was a cultural problem that a lot of people felt. And it was the Japanese domination and the humiliation that the Koreans felt and the very idea that their way of life wasn't working. And in some ways, Christianity filled a vacuum, and I think Christianity, because I believe it's true, on its own merits, will always have a great appeal, and it's never going to go away. It is always going to have a lot of appeal.

Revivals happen because not only has the church got some vitality, but something happens out in the culture that creates a vacuum. And a lot of people look at it who wouldn't have otherwise. I'm not sure what is going on in China. When I have gone to China and talked to Christians there, they said they thought for a lot of younger people Tiananmen Square — the scales fell from their eyes and they realized socialism isn't necessarily the just system we thought it was.

And as one person told me, “Everybody my age, after Tiananmen Square, one-third became Christian, one-third just tried to get out, and one-third just tried to make money.” And he said about five percent now are still true believers in socialism.

So something has to happen in the culture for there to be a major change. I don't know whether something like that is going to happen in America or not. I don't foresee anything. But if there is some kind of upheaval, very often it really helps religion. Frankly, it is stability and materialism and material prosperity that tends to not help it so much. But on the church side, one of the things the church has to do is it has to learn how to reason differently.

As I have already said, you have to connect to baseline cultural narratives. You have to say that Christianity is better than secularism at dealing with cultural difference. I'll give you an example of that. It is better at making sense out of suffering. It is better at actually giving you a basis for human rights and justice.

You have to learn to go inside and say these are things you want. Charles Taylor's great book *Secular Age* says secularism actually doesn't have the intellectual resources to support many of its own commitments.

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You’ve got to learn how to say that in more accessible language. And if you learn how to reason and not just say, “Jesus will make you happy,” but, on the other hand, not just beat on people from the outside but come inside their own beliefs, find their own cultural narratives and say, “Look, Christianity can...” — your life narrative will only have a happy ending in Jesus. And whatever your narrative is, there is no happy ending except in Jesus.

There is a way of doing that, and a lot of churches don’t know how to do it. I think if they do do that they are going to get a lot of traction. Secondly, you’ve got to pull off creating real communities that at least take seriously the fact that people are individualists.

For example, I knew a Korean pastor once. We have a large church and I have a big staff. So when I was in a meeting, if we had a decision to make, we would talk. After one of the meetings a Korean pastor said, “You know, in a Korean church, if we had a decision to make, the first person to speak would be the senior pastor. He would say, ‘Here’s what I think.’ The next person would be the next senior person, and then down from the senior pastor down to the youngest.”

So by the time the youngest person spoke, all you’re doing is just saying “yea” to what everybody else has said. In other words, basically, the first person who speaks is the authority, and he basically sets the framework. And then everybody else just tweaks it, until you get down to the bottom and all you can do is cheer.

He says what he noticed was in our church that I spoke last and what I would do is I would mask my views, because I was really trying to bring out what everybody was trying to say.

And then it was my job to be an arbiter between them, to try to find the solution that I knew would have the greatest amount of ownership, because I was the only one with the capital to say, “Look, seven of you want this, two of you want something like this, one of you doesn’t, and I think we just have to go — one of you is just going to have to realize that you are just not going to get your way this time, but I’m hearing you.”

That’s a whole different approach to authority, and you’ve got to be able to do that. One of the reasons why the ethnic churches lose their kids is because they are still maintaining authority as if you are not in an individualistic place — there needs to be more

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transparency, more communication, more persuasion, but you can still have authority, but it has to be wielded in a very different way.

Also, the churches have to be much more joyful, not just dour. The churches also have to not beat up on other churches. There are a whole lot of ways in which you can create communities that I think appeal to individualistic people and still be communities. It’s still a struggle.

And here is one last thing, and the last thing is I think conservative Protestantism could really thrive if they learned and reasoned better. Secondly, if they create those — people want communities and then they hate them. So they want them, but then they are so individualistic they can’t stand them.

(Laughter.)

But they want them. So you have to create communities that to some degree adapt, institutions that to some degree adapt to an anti-institutional environment. You have to split the difference.

Thirdly —

MR. CROMARTIE: Mention your point about small groups.

DR. KELLER: What about them?

MR. CROMARTIE: What you said the other night, that —

DR. KELLER: Oh, yeah.

MR. CROMARTIE: Go ahead.

DR. KELLER: Yeah. I mean, for example, we have 6,000 people coming, but we have about 3,000 people in small groups. If a person goes in the hospital, the group goes to see them, tells the pastor about them, tells me. So what I have said to people is I said, “If you come

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to my church and you're not in a small group, and you go in the hospital and nobody knows about it, don't be surprised.”

(Laughter.)

I said, “Unless you put yourself not just in this massive church community but in a small community, you are not going to be on our radar. And I'm warning you right now, if you are not in one of those small groups, I don't want to hear it if I don't hear about it.” So, anyway, there's ways of doing it.

There is one last thing, and that is I think Christians, on sex and gender, just need to lovingly challenge the culture to what has been called a wisdom contest. A wisdom contest is a proof in the pudding thing. You sit down and say, look, we have such radically different understandings of the purpose of sexuality and what gender is — so radical — that let's agree to this. We're going to create communities based on a couple of different assumptions about sex and gender. And let's give it 30 years. Let's just see what the outcomes of the children are. Let's see how people feel about the relationships. Let's just see. That's it.

Instead of arguing about it — obviously, politically, whoever gets the most votes wins and gets public policy. But I do think there needs to be a kind of respect for the fact that we are now not so much a secular place as a polarized place.

If we really do believe we are a pluralistic society, then we need to recognize there are different moral communities that are going to go at this thing differently, and we ought to give goodwill to each other on those things, and then watch, and to some degree the proof will be in the pudding.

So if some of these things happen, I would say my belief as a conservative Protestant is it will at least maintain its own. It could actually become a bigger party and a bigger player in the culture, if some of those things happen. So that's it.

MR. CROMARTIE: Thank you very much. Thank you, Tim. I have a huge list. Fred you're — five minutes into the presentation raised his hand.

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FRED BARNES, *The Weekly Standard*: I can’t believe I was first, but I want to —

MR. CROMARTIE: It was two minutes in, Fred.

MR. BARNES: Gee.

(Laughter.)

Have to be opportunistic. One of the things that you have been very involved in, Dr. Keller, is planting churches.

DR. KELLER: Yes.

MR. BARNES: I think you planted dozens, hundreds, scores, so on. Could you elaborate on that a little and how important that is in keeping evangelical Christianity from shrinking, and, rather, you say growing moderately.

DR. KELLER: Real quick, generally speaking, when you start a new church, how do you do that? There are several ways of doing it, but basically you’re starting a church largely from scratch. You gather a few Christians, they reach out to non-Christian unchurched friends. You have to get startup capital for two or three years before the church grows to the place where it is funding itself.

Studies have shown that — and I can bear this out, because I started my church 24 years ago — studies have shown that churches that are less than 10 years old assimilate non-church people at six to 10 times the rate of older churches. There are a lot of reasons for that, and that’s exactly what happened to me.

In other words, for the first 10 years, pound for pound far more people from outside — people who didn’t like church or weren’t part of any church at all or weren’t believers in Christianity at all — were the majority of people who were there on a Sunday. And that slowly changes. There are a lot of reasons why.

In the very beginning, churches completely focus on their non-members and attenders, just to survive. And also, there is no tradition that says “we’ve always done it this way.”

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What happens of course is a church that is, say, 30 years old represents the leadership of the community 30 years ago, because they are the people that got involved in the church.

And so, the easiest one to see is the ethnic church plant. For example, in Astoria Queens it was very Greek and now it's more Hispanic. But what happens is the Greeks are in charge of the churches. The Hispanics come along and they can't get in, and so the Greek churches start getting smaller and smaller because the Greek leaders are not really opening up to Hispanics, yet the reality on the ground is there are more Hispanics in the neighborhood.

So unless you have new churches, you are not winning new people, you are not winning new generations, you are not winning the actual community as it is. And so if you have 100 churches in a town, and, say, 20 of them or 25 are under 10 years old, the overall Christian body will be growing in numbers.

If you only have one or two new churches, the overall body will be shrinking in numbers. If there's like 10, it will be about the same. So whether Christianity in a particular town grows or shrinks completely depends on church planting. Otherwise, some churches get a hotter pastor, better music, and then pull people from other churches, and you have a recirculation of existing church members, but you don't actually grow the overall footprint.

MR. CROMARTIE: Could you define a “hotter pastor”?

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: Well, it could refer to many things.

(Laughter.)

By the way, mainline churches, for example, just don't start new churches. And part of the problem — Lyle Schaller, who was kind of a church consultant pundit, said years ago because mainline churches flooded the country, so that almost every square inch was part of some parish, it made it almost impossible to start a new church, even when there were all sorts of populations in a community that couldn't be reached by the older

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Episcopal church, but you couldn't start a new Episcopal church because we're the Episcopal church of this area.

But Lyle Schaller said that evangelicals like to say mainline churches declined because of their liberal theology. But, actually, he says they declined because they stop starting churches, whereas evangelicals have always started new churches.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. Rob Gifford? Rob is the China editor for *The Economist*. And when you spoke about China, I saw his eyebrows go up.

ROB GIFFORD, *The Economist*: Well, yes I think you raised my hand for me.

MR. CROMARTIE: I did.

(Laughter.)

MR. GIFFORD: Now I've got to think of something to say. But I think just a comment on China. I think it probably fits with my own situation, actually, as someone who came to faith rather surprised to come to faith, probably like lots of the people in your church who, in spite of everything, came to understand the Bebbington five, as you put it.

I think some of that is happening in China. I think the things that you say are true. What it is is it's just the Christian faith shorn of all its baggage. So as soon as I got rid of all of the baggage of the Middle Ages and then the baggage of the Christian right, it is like, what? You mean there's a God who is interested in me?

DR. KELLER: Now, as a British person, you've got a history that you've got to live down. And a Chinese person thinking about Christianity doesn't have that much.

MR. GIFFORD: That's right. And so what is happening in China is a lot of the things you say. People don't believe in Maoism and Marxism anymore. They are looking for something to believe in, but they don't really have all the baggage that, oh, if I believe in this weird stuff, does that mean I have to be like Jerry Falwell, or if I believe in all of this stuff, does that mean that — the Crusades and all of the sort of crazy stuff?

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And I see it in Britain as well. I mean, just last Christmas, you go to these carol services and carol concerts. And there are just a lot of people sort of sitting there. You can tell they are saying, “Wouldn’t it be great if this were true? Isn’t it tragic that it’s not true?”

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: By the way, do you really think there are British people sitting out there thinking like that?

MR. GIFFORD: Absolutely. Absolutely. But to our shame, we in the church have unfortunately gotten sort of taken down roads that have — and I’m not just saying the Christian right, the madness of the Christian right. Just everyone, because we are all human beings. We have been taken down roads that don’t show the gospel as it is.

And what Chinese people are doing is they are saying, “So tell me about that Christian stuff.” And you go, “Well, here’s the thing. There’s a God who created the universe, not in six 24-hour spans, and he loves mankind and he wants to enter into a relationship with mankind.”

And they go, “Well, that’s kind of interesting.” And they sort of take it on what it is, and many of them will reject it, as many people in the West will. But it is just shorn of all the sort of associated stuff that makes people reject it in the West.

DR. KELLER: Right. And now the only other thing I would add is surely the Chinese would say, “Isn’t Christianity an instrument of Western oppression?” But, see, if you’re in China, you are being given the gospel from another Chinese person. You are not getting some Western missionary there. It’s already very Chinese-ified.

MR. GIFFORD: That’s right. And there are more Chinese Christians than there are members of the Communist party, and as you say, that is going to increase substantially.

DR. KELLER: I was going to say, Lamin Sanneh, who teaches at Yale, is an African, Gambian. He has written a book called *Whose Religion is Christianity?* And he tells something fascinating about the deep cultural diversity of Christianity.

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He would make an argument that Christianity is more open to cultural difference than any other religion — probably — but certainly more open to cultural difference than secularism, because he would say this, he says, “To be African is to believe that the world is filled with spirits.” He says, “Africans have always believed the world is filled with good spirits and evil spirits. It’s a supernatural place.”

He says, “And yet the problem has been superstition, the problem has been fear, what do we do about the evil spirits. How do we overcome them?” He says, “If I send an African off to Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, or Oxford or Cambridge, they are going to come back European because they are going to be told, ‘Oh, everything has a scientific explanation.’”

They are also going to be saying, “Oh, we love multi-culturalism. Wear your African dress and eat your African food, but we are going to destroy your Africanness, because we are going to tell you that everything has got a scientific explanation.”

And Lamin Sanneh says, “But Christianity comes along and says it respects my Africanness, it lets me stay African, because it says, yes, there are evil spirits and good spirits. But Jesus Christ has overcome the evil spirits, and through him you don’t have to be afraid of them.”

“In the end,” he says, “it renews my Africanness. Admittedly, as a Christian, I’m not the same as I was as an animist, but,” he says, “I’m closer to being an African.” And he says, “Africans recognize that if I become a secularist, I will really be stepping away from being African. If I become a Christian, I am not.”

And then he makes the case that basically Christianity has made that move because Christianity does not give you a book of Leviticus or Sharia law. Why? Well, because we believe you are saved by grace, and, therefore, even though there are moral norms, there are actually a limited number of moral norms, and there is enormous cultural freedom.

So, whereas, 96 percent of all Muslims are in this band right here, not in the Western, and 88 percent of Buddhists are right here, and 90 percent of Hindus are right here, like 22 percent of Christianity is in South America, 22 percent or something like that is in Africa, almost 20 percent is in Asia, 12 percent North America.

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So Lamin Sanneh’s point is the idea is that now Christianity is really indigenous. It is really Africanized, Chinese-ified, every place. And so now if a person hears the gospel where they are they don’t have the Western baggage.

The only people dealing with that baggage is us, the white people, and it’s one of the reasons why it is very hard for me — I try to talk to a non-Christian white person in New York, and I spend the whole time apologizing.

(Laughter.)

I say, “I’m going to prove that Christianity enables you to really repent and humble yourself,” because the person just gives me all of the church history and everything, and I spend all my time apologizing. But in China you don’t have to do that.

MR. GIFFORD: That’s true. Can I just add one thing? Because, again, as a non-American, just from your talk, especially talking about sexuality, and this is such a huge issue, I think you probably believe this, but I think in the American context the culture wars have taken on such a sort of ferocity about homosexuality, that it is not going to change, the Christian teaching on that is not going to change, the one thing that you didn’t say, which I think you could easily have said — that needs to be said — is that it is not a culture wars issue and the Christian God loves gay people.

So when you are talking about this, it is always sort of presented as —

DR. KELLER: Sure.

MR. GIFFORD: — “it’s wrong, you’re wrong, you’re gay, you’re outside here.” It is possible to be an evangelical Christian and a homosexually inclined person. And that is because God utterly loves gay people, and just as he loves straight people.

And that sometimes gets lost in the sort of ferocity of the — you were not ferocious on this point at all, but the danger is I think that gets lost, and that creates the animosity, again, that somehow representing some faith that is saying to gay people, “You are lesser, you can’t come in, you can’t take part in anything of what we are doing in here,” when of course the whole point of the gospel is that anybody can.

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It doesn't mean it's a blank check of any sort for gay people or straight people, but it's a faith into which anybody can come.

DR. KELLER: We are going to keep talking about that. There is no reason to —

MR. CROMARTIE: Do you have a short answer?

DR. KELLER: My guess is somebody else is going to ask —

MR. CROMARTIE: Ask the same?

DR. KELLER: Yes.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay.

DR. KELLER: I mean, the only thing to say, of course, is when I say there are moral norms, when the Bible says sex is for — and I think it's the most common sense reading of it — two things. One is sex is not a consumer good. It's a way of self-donation. It's a way of giving yourself to somebody else inside marriage. It's a glue that creates a relationship that is long-lasting.

The second thing I think the Bible teaches pretty clearly is that male and female both have their own unique glories. Therefore, they are not interchangeable. And that any long-term community, family community, in which people are going to thrive, especially children are going to thrive, is you need all of the glories.

In other words, if male and female both have unique glories, and together they really show us the image of God better, that if you are going to have a long-term community, you need to have all of the glories.

And so on the one hand, Christians who are abusive or disdainful to gay people, or who say that even to have the attraction to the same-sex means you are “immediately out, I don't want to talk to you, you can't be here,” of course, you're saved by grace. You're not saved by having perfect motives and having all of your desires in the right order.

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But the basic idea that sex is for marriage, and that marriage should have the full glories of both male and female, I think is the most common sense reading of the Bible. And so that has to be put forth in a respectful way. That’s all.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. Carl Cannon, and then Sally.

CARL CANNON, RealClearPolitics.com: I would like to follow up on that discussion that we have been having.

DR. KELLER: That’s not a surprise.

MR. CANNON: I covered the White House for years, and follow up questions are a lost art, so I’m actually —

(Laughter.)

I’m endearing myself to my brethren here.

You didn’t dwell on this, but you talked about evangelical Christians gravitating towards the cultural establishments. And I thought of Hollywood so let’s just talk about that for a minute.

There are going to be evangelical Christians in Hollywood. There already are. We know Micheal Flaherty, there are others. And if you get some kind of critical mass there, they are going to produce art that is an amalgamation of both cultures — evangelical Christianity and Hollywood liberalism, social liberalism.

And there will be TV programs and movies about this. Notwithstanding Jonathan Rauch’s point, and his faith tradition is Jewish, so the Old Testament, and what you just said just now to our friend from Britain, do you see — to use a term of another colleague of ours — a third way, an accommodation that would allow really for gay evangelicals, is what I’m saying, to be prominent in the church, have a voice in the culture?

DR. KELLER: Well, we’ll see. We’ll see. This isn’t the kind of wisdom contest I was talking about. If you can say, “I’m gay, and I have a high view of the Bible” — in other words, if

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you feel like you can say, “I’m gay, and I’m an evangelical,” and all I have to do is say, “Great, tell me how you read these various texts.”

And if you say, “Here is how I would read these various texts,” I would say, “Okay. What I want to know is, why are you being so selective? If you are going to read those texts that way, why are you” — I would come back and say, “If the Bible is actually a divine revelation, and if Christianity is essentially not the product of one culture but is really from God,” then it would stand to reason that the Bible would offend every culture somewhere, that is, if it wasn’t the product of Western culture, it would have to offend somebody in Western culture.

Every single culture would have texts of terror. It would have these texts that just are outrageous, that are terrible. If the Bible was true, and if Christianity was God’s revelation, you would expect that, so you shouldn’t say, “Well, it can’t be true.” Well, of course it could be true. In fact, if it wasn’t — if you aren’t outraged by anything, that would mitigate against the idea that Christianity is true.

So these are your texts of terror. They don’t fit in with your view of things. So you have now loosened I think your way of reading the Bible to say, “Well, you know, that was culturally relative” or “People back then believed that, but we believe this now.” So what about all of this stuff about the poor? Why are you taking that seriously? So much of that stuff is from the Old Testament. It’s primitive, agrarian theocracy. Why are you taking that and not taking this?

And whenever I have talked to people who say, “I’m gay and I’m evangelical,” I’ll say, “You are going to be gay, and you’re going to be a Christian, but you’re not going to be an evangelical because the Bebbington four, the first one says, ‘The Bible trumps reason and experience.’”

And the Christianity you have will have a very, very different kind of passion and a very different kind of drive, a very different kind of feel. I’m not saying that isn’t Christianity, but it will be different. It is certainly not going to be the evangelical Pentecostal Christianity that is out there. That’s all.

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MR. GIFFORD: Sorry. Can I just jump in on that?

DR. KELLER: Sure.

MR. GIFFORD: Sorry to get down into the details here, but you are talking about sexually active homosexuals.

DR. KELLER: I think that’s — Carl, I think that’s what he was talking about.

MR. CANNON: I’m going further now and talking about married evangelical homosexuals.

DR. KELLER: That’s what I thought. He was trying to say, “If I say I am gay, I can be gay, I can be married.”

MR. GIFFORD: You might as well get that — because I agree with Dr. Keller, but I don’t think you are ever going to have in an evangelical church gay marriage, where sexually active homosexuality is accepted.

But the danger with taking that line on the issue is that everything becomes sort of anti-gay. Of course it comes down to celibacy in the end. You can be homosexually inclined and be an evangelical, right?

DR. KELLER: Of course. But, in other words, the idea — it’s the practice, not the —

MR. CROMARTIE: There are people jumping the queue and we —

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: No, no. You’re the boss.

MR. CROMARTIE: Sally, you’re up next. Pull the mic. See if you can illuminate this. If not, we’ll move to someone else.

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: That’s a challenge.

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SALLY QUINN, *The Washington Post*: Just to say something about what has been going on. I think everyone cherry-picks the Bible. Evangelicals and Christians cherry-pick the Bible just the way secularists cherry-pick the Bible. You take the stuff you like and you eliminate the stuff you don't like.

MR. CROMARTIE: Is that a question?

MS. QUINN: No. That was just sort of continuing on this. Well, what I was interested in is when you started out you kept saying in terms of your church, “We hold our own.” You said it two or three times. “We hold our own, we're holding our own.”

DR. KELLER: Yes.

MS. QUINN: And then you talked about the Harvard/Yale/Princeton people who come back and they sort of gave up their faith, and then they sort of came to you. And you were trying to explain why. But I'm more interested in, what do you mean by “holding your own”? And how do you do that? Why don't you pretend that I am one of those people who has now just graduated from Harvard and I really am not all that interested. I've got some great job at Goldman Sachs and I'm not all that interested.

MR. CROMARTIE: We don't have to pretend.

MS. QUINN: Right.

(Laughter.)

And so, what have you got for me? I want to hear your spiel.

DR. KELLER: Well, I don't know — frankly, I don't know that I have an elevator speech. I guess I'm enough of a Christian and a liberal arts major that —

MS. QUINN: But you're hot.

MR. CROMARTIE: Go ahead and give us an answer.

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DR. KELLER: No, no. I actually alluded to it, Sally. I alluded to it. I say that if a person has no particular need — in other words, they say, “Hey, look, my life is going along fine, and I really feel like I am competent to run my own life. What have you got for me?” I still could say something.

I could say, “Well, look, let me give you a couple books to read that say if there — do you believe in God?” And usually they will say, “Well, I don’t know.” And I’ll say, “Well, without God,” for example, I could give you some arguments and say — right now there is a lot of discussion — George Marsden some years ago wrote a book called *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*. And he used a true example of a woman who is a cultural anthropologist, University of Rhode Island, who was basically studying some African cultures about how they treated women.

And she was infuriated, but she actually wrote this article that said, “I realize that I’m a secular person, I really do believe that values are culturally relative, I don’t believe that I have the right to tell other people how to live their lives, but I was just infuriated by the way women were treated.”

So when she started talking to some of the people in power in those cultures where she was studying, they immediately said, “Don’t put that white Western enlightenment” — some of them obviously had gone to Harvard — “Don’t lay your white Western individualist human rights thing on us. That doesn’t go here.”

And she writes this article, which Marsden quotes, and she says, “I realize that actually even though I believe my moral sense comes from evolution, I believe that some people are evolved to feel good about loving other people. I don’t believe in God. But I realize that if there is no God, I can account for moral feeling but not for moral obligation.”

So I can account why I feel like certain things are right, but I have no basis on which to tell another culture you must stop doing that even though you don’t feel it’s wrong. My feelings trump your feelings. I have no basis for making any kind of moral appeal. I have no basis for saying what you are doing is unjust.

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But then here is what she said at the bottom. She realizes, “I don’t believe in God. Therefore, I have no basis for doing this, but I’m going to do it anyway.” So George Marsden says, okay, if your premise is that there is no God, it leads you to a conclusion you know isn’t true, and that there is nothing wrong with oppressing women in Africa. Why not change your premise?

Now, I want you to know that if a person is absolutely smugly happy, they say, “Oh, that’s interesting. An evangelical with more than a third grade education is kind of interesting.” And so you sit there and you talk and all of that.

But here is what happened. Miroslav Volf wrote a book called *Exclusion & Embrace*, and he makes a case there that Christianity gives you the most non-oppressive basis for self-image and identity. In traditional cultures, you feel good about yourself if you are doing what your parents want. In Western cultures, you feel good about yourself if you are achieving and you went to Harvard and you got an M.B.A. and now you’re at Goldman Sachs and you’re doing well.

But I can tell you this, I’ll say as a pastor, at some point you are going to find that your identity is going to crush you, because it’s based on achievement or it’s based on parental expectations. It is enslaving, it will crush you, you will identify with your work, and you will also look down your nose at people because your identity is based not only on performance but also on difference. It is based on the idea that I am better than other people who haven’t got what I’ve got.

So Christianity gives you a basis of identity that is based on the love of God, it is a gift, it is not something you earn. It is not something that goes up or down based on your performance. It is something you can actually experience. It is extraordinarily non-oppressive. It is extraordinarily different.

And some day you are probably going to need it, so I wish you would just take a look at this, read these books, and come if you can. If not, you know where I am.

MS. QUINN: I’m in.

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MR. CROMARTIE: You’re in. The book is called *The Reason for God* by Tim Keller. It’s a wonderful start. But by the way, Tim, her first question was, why did you say we are holding our own?

DR. KELLER: Because in Manhattan I see a lot of people who were raised in churches and who now I meet, and they are like the person you just posed to me.

They may have grown up in the Midwest at a Methodist church, First Methodist Church of Indianapolis. They go off to college; their Christianity falls apart. And if they are world-beaters, doing things well, they just aren’t interested anymore. I see that all the time. But I also see people who do show up and some respond even to the first argument, which is more of an intellectual argument. More people respond to the second argument, which is, yes, I do sense that. I do realize I need a ballast in my life that I just don’t have.

I don’t feel like we are moving the needle. One to three percent is hardly a revival. It might go down to two percent; it might go up to four percent. I think at this point the kind of Christianity that we have established in Manhattan will hold its own where it is right now I think in the future. But I don’t know whether or not it will make a big difference in the end.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. Amy Sullivan.

AMY SULLIVAN, *National Journal*: Thank you. Well, I wanted to preface my comments by saying, as a member of an urban evangelical church, I have a lot of admiration for what you have done, because it is not necessarily a natural environment and can be, as we have learned, hard to bring professionals in, maybe even harder than recent college grads.

But — and there was of course a but — I wanted to protest a few points, and also give you a chance to maybe elaborate a little bit, without getting into any sort of seminary-type debate over scriptural interpretation.

The first was that you seem to use interchangeably the terms “conservative Protestant” and “conservative evangelical,” and I just want to clarify and see if you meant to do that, because Luis is not here right now, but I —

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DR. LUIS LUGO, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: I’m out here where the people are. I’m a man of the people.

(Laughter.)

MS. SULLIVAN: Oh, okay. With the people.

DR. KELLER: He’s on the back pew, which shows he’s no Presbyterian.

MS. SULLIVAN: Well, I’m just remembering from the Pew data that there is a fairly significant chunk of particularly white conservative Protestants who are mainliners and who don’t actually self-identify as evangelical. So I don’t want to ask you necessarily to speak for the future of that tradition, but that’s in there.

DR. KELLER: Good point, Amy. No, you’re right. They are not really identical. No, I see what you’re saying. For example, I was trying to put black Protestants in there. Black Protestants are not really evangelicals, I don’t think, in some ways. But I also did the Bebbington five, and I think Luis actually said probably a quarter maybe of the mainline churches would be conservative in that sense, that they would be able to believe those five things. So nice catch.

MS. SULLIVAN: Particularly on the conversion point I think there are a fair number of mainliners who get a little twitchy about that.

DR. KELLER: Yes, right. And, of course, a lot of evangelicals do think of conversion as a pretty dramatic thing. I do think that there is a tradition that says — in fact, I am Presbyterian, so we do infant baptism.

And if you look at the Princeton theologians, like Charles Hodge and people like that from the 19th century, they were very, very conservative. But they brought their revivalism in with more of an ecclesial church-oriented approach that didn’t necessarily expect dramatic conversions in order to really be a truly born-again saved person.

And that is actually more my background, so I have a tendency to move back and forth, and sometimes I get out there and realize that some evangelicals’ view of a conversion is

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different than mine. It tends to be more phenomenological. That is more dramatic. And I think you're right that there are a number of people that don't go there and wouldn't, therefore, feel like they are evangelicals, but I would say they are because of the Bebbington five.

So you're right. Nice catch. Good to point that out.

MS. SULLIVAN: Well, and on the Bebbington five, I wanted to point out that I would probably define myself as an evangelical. I would define myself as an evangelical who can be described by the Bebbington five. And I have a very different position than you do on homosexuality and gay marriage, and I think traditionally that view has been framed, as you say, as people not actually being evangelicals and having a perhaps distorted reading of the Bible.

Whereas, I think it's possible to say that I support gay marriage because of my evangelical faith, and that you can take the specific number of instances when something is mentioned in the Bible against kind of the totality of my common sense reading of the Bible is the poor are mentioned hundreds of times, and so that seems to me to be a larger theme of the scripture.

I don't want to go back and forth about that, because I don't want to call you a Christian who is not actually an evangelical because of your position on that. I would just protest against having my evangelicalism questioned because of my faith reading of this. And maybe that is being Baptist, where we have the priesthood of the believer, and so I get to decide what the Bible means for me. But that's my take.

DR. KELLER: First of all, this is a good spot to point out something — which is that you *could* believe homosexuality is a sin and still believe that same-sex marriage should be legal. You know that. Those are not the same issues. They overlap.

And I do think it would be fair to say, like people more in an Anabaptist tradition, like Duke University and Stanley Hauerwas and those folks would be saying, “If you try to make the world like the church, you end up making the church like the world.” As

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Christians, we think you shouldn't bow down and worship little statues, but we wouldn't want a law out there in America to say it's illegal to worship statues.

So that view is to say, look, for Christians we believe this, but for same-sex marriage it shouldn't be a problem, because it's not our position to try to legislate Christian morality.

MS. SULLIVAN: Okay. Well, I would say that I also —

DR. KELLER: Now I know that is not quite what you — it might be a good opportunity to point out I do agree that even if you think the Bible teaches homosexuality is wrong, you have to have a somewhat separate set of arguments to then go ahead and say it should be public policy, too.

And I do know that Christians who are very evangelical in every way do differ on that. You didn't quite say that, but I thought it was a good opportunity to make that statement.

MS. SULLIVAN: Sure. Yes. And I'm glad you distinguished between the two, because I would also say I don't believe homosexuality is a sin.

DR. KELLER: Right.

MS. SULLIVAN: And I certainly would not characterize my position on that as having been a matter of trying to fit in in secular society or being influenced by the culture at large so much as being influenced by my evangelical faith.

DR. KELLER: Well, I respond this way. First of all, I can see that your motivations have been questioned by people. In other words, I didn't, but I do know that what happens is if you have your position, people will question your motivation, saying you're a sellout. You're selling out to the culture, right? That's one. I'm not saying that.

MS. SULLIVAN: But you just said that we are not here to become the culture but to stand against it, or at least that was —

DR. KELLER: Well, I don't want to assimilate. Actually, I have been trying to say we do have to — frankly, the heart of good Christian ministry is to accommodate without

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capitulating. That’s the heart of all ministry is to connect to the moment and to the culture right now, so that what you’re saying isn’t unnecessarily culturally alien, but at the same time to be true to your roots, to be true to the tradition. Otherwise, you are not a Christian any more, obviously.

I would say, and I think you would, too, that if you say, “Well, Jesus was just a nice man, because we can’t believe in miracles, but I’m still a Christian,” you would question whether that person had to accommodate the enlightenment, you would.

Now, I wouldn’t go on motives, Amy. I would never question — not only your motives, but I don’t think anybody’s. I really wouldn’t. I don’t see the word “evangelical” as a compliment. I don’t use it a lot. I’m using it here because there is no way out of it. I don’t use it much in New York. It does mean Christian Right to most people in New York. So to say I’m an evangelical immediately makes them think I am something I’m not.

MS. SULLIVAN: But that’s why I use it, because it has come to mean something other than a description of my theological orientation.

DR. KELLER: Well, you’re sensitive, and rightly so, because when I said I think if you believe homosexuality is right, is okay, that you loosen your understanding of how you read the scripture to the place where not just that gets through but other things get through.

And I listened to what you said about let’s not get into a seminary discussion, so I won’t. I’m not saying that you’re not a real Christian all the way through, regenerated, adopted, all that. I would just say that, in the end, that Christianity I think would lose a lot of the evangelical dynamic, because it comes from a very high view of the authority of the Bible. That’s what I see out there.

And if you bring it down to the place where that gets through, I’m not saying you’re not a Christian. I wouldn’t question your motives. And certainly you’re evangelical, by and large, but I would say that there is some change that has happened. That’s all.

And I know that you probably don’t agree, but I would take at least an hour to talk about — for me to try to at least make the case that you have — it has morphed into something

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else. I’m not trying to say, “You are not a true evangelical like me,” because I don’t see the word “evangelical” as a compliment. I’m not using it like that. I’m just saying I think there has been a change in the dynamic if you make that move.

MS. SULLIVAN: Well, just for the record, yes, I have had my evangelical cred questioned in the past. I was this morning just —

DR. KELLER: I’m sure.

MS. SULLIVAN: — reacting to your response to the hypothetical about what do you say to a gay evangelical Christian and you had said maybe you aren’t real clear on the first point.

This was all just a prelude to a request, which is I think it is absolutely fair and right to say that people who believe homosexuality is a sin should not be described as bigots. You used the word “shrill” to describe Christians who do support homosexuality as not a sin, and I would just request that maybe a word like “shrill” is not the most useful for the conversation.

DR. KELLER: Okay.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. Tim Dalrymple.

TIMOTHY DALRYMPLE, Patheos.com: Thank you, Dr. Keller. My question, coming also from an evangelical community, as you know, there has just been a great deal of I think amongst younger generations of evangelicals, kind of groping after a different expression of faith from the one that they inherited and that they, to an extent, do associate with the religious right.

But I see that while movements like Shane Clayborn and his community, David Platt’s book *Radical*, and there was actually an article in *Christianity Today* about this in the most recent issue called “The New Radicals.”

It’s not merely politically defined, right? The two questions I have are, number one, what do you think it is exactly that younger generations of evangelicals are striving after in this

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kind of what feels to me at the moment like a kind of inchoate movement in the same general direction that hasn't really come together into something cohesive yet, into kind of a single voice yet. That's number one, because Redeemer has obviously been very effective at reaching that generation.

And, number two, what kind of attitude would you encourage that younger generation of evangelicals to have toward the older generation of evangelicals who got involved in the political process, as they saw it, to defend certain values and truths that they held dear? Does that make sense, those two questions?

DR. KELLER: Well, the second question is a little I think easier. I think they ought to be grateful to them. I am ambivalent about the Christian right, and most people outside of the leaders are, I think, and always have been.

MR. DALRYMPLE: I'm kind of a full-fledged member of the Christian right.

DR. KELLER: Yes.

MR. DALRYMPLE: And so I'm not assuming any criticism of —

DR. KELLER: Yes. So I'm not — that's why I said I think people ought to be grateful, and so they made their effort and they tried very hard, and history is pretty brutal in an awful lot of things. In a historical perspective, it is scary.

One of the things I disarm people with, and I always say, if you read the op-ed pieces of *The New York Times*, say, about 80 years ago, 50 years ago, there are a lot of things in there that the current editors would just cringe at.

And guess what? Fifty years from now the same thing is going to be true. See, there is a tendency for us to all say we have arrived at THE MOMENT. It is all downhill from here, and it was all uphill until here, that we alone can see these people were benighted and these people are unenlightened and these people weren't progressive and these people were this or these people were sellouts, and we and we alone know.

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And the answer is, you’ve heard the story that says, your 20-year-old self thinks your 15-year-old self was a jerk, your 30-year-old self thinks your 20-year-old self was a jerk. Well, you’re a jerk now.

(Laughter.)

Yes. Even now. You just feel like, if I do live to 90, I’ll think that I’m an idiot right now, but hopefully I won’t live probably to 90.

But I think we ought to be much more kind to people, and I always say the people who were involved with the Christian right were really trying hard. And in hindsight we are going to say it wasn’t so good. Of course there are some bad motives in there. There has to be. There always are.

The first question is a harder one. It’s interesting, Amy caught me because actually in my paper I said the younger evangelicals, at one end have some shrill people, who are saying, “See, I could be a Christian and evangelical and have all of these views.”

And there are shrill people, on the other hand – there are a lot of younger evangelicals who are more militant and more angry than their parents. Actually, I had the word “shrill” in both, but probably Amy caught me in a Freudian slip and I only used “shrill” on one side. Oh well, thank you, Lord. You speak to me through many ways.

But it was actually written down on both sides, and I do think that to me most of the younger evangelicals are trying to say, “I do want to be culturally engaged, but mainly I want to be a Francis of Assisi kind of person.” That’s why it’s intriguing that the new Pope named himself Francis.

Younger evangelicals at this point are maybe naïve. They are kind of captivated. You mentioned Shane Clayborn and David Platt. That stuff is kind of over the top. It reminds me of a younger person — they are making a lot of commitments they are not going to be able to keep. And they are seeing everything in terms of black and white.

But they sort of see — that is their way forward. They don’t want to be pietists, which is I’m just privatizing my Christianity, I have nothing to do with the world, I’m not making

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the world a better place, I’m just getting on my way to heaven. And they also don’t want to be triumphalists. They know that. They don’t say, “We are taking over the culture.” But they just are captivated by the idea of sacrificial service and pouring themselves out for the poor, and it’s just — that, along with the idea of not going into the mission field but going into the cultural industries and being a Christian there are the two things that are just sea changes, and they are huge ground notes right now in younger evangelicalism.

MS. SULLIVAN: Michael, can I just add a data point on younger evangelicals that might help the discussion? Because, Pastor Keller, you had talked about how you don’t think younger evangelicals will become more liberal on some of the hot button issues. And certainly on abortion that seems very much to be the case. In many cases, young evangelicals are even more pro-life than their parents.

But most of the numbers we have are on gay marriage. That’s not the case, and I understand that’s different than accepting homosexuality. But the latest survey I have from the GSS is that evangelicals ages 18 to 35, 56 percent support gay marriage, and that was from 2010.

DR. KELLER: Right. But what muddies the water, for example, I have people every year planting churches in New York. I have a program with them where they come in for a couple of hours once a month. They are reading syllabi I have written. And I have done this for like eight or nine years. And they are planting churches in New York, and I meet with them, and they are part of a program we do.

And what I see is no movement. Evangelicals used to be more Kuyperian. And Abraham Kuyper was a Transformationist. The Transformationists were people who said, “We are going to transform culture, according to the Christian world view.” Now they tend to be more neo-Anabaptist. It’s a much —

MR. CROMARTIE: Define the terms, please.

DR. KELLER: Well, James Davison Hunter in his book *To Change the World* says that probably most of the intellectual firepower amongst evangelicals is in that mode today. Neo-Anabaptists basically say — and they always have said — that the way to change the

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culture is you create countercultures of virtue that are signs of the kingdom, and you don't try to change the society.

So, Richard Hayes at Duke would say I think, unless he has changed, and maybe he has, he said, “Abortion is a sin,” but he does not believe that we should be going to the mat to try to have abortion illegal or restricted. I think. He used to be like that.

But, anyway, that would fit in with the neo-Anabaptist approach, and that is what muddies the waters I think on those numbers. If you ask them, is there any problem with homosexuality, it would be a different question. A lot of my own younger leaders are saying, why are we fighting about gay marriage? We are not trying to make the nation into a Christian nation. People should have civil rights.

That really doesn't change the way of reading the Bible. That's all. I feel like some of that kind of question masks the difference between those two issues.

And the fact that between the more pietistic approach, which is just go be a missionary and bring people to heaven, the Dwight Moody idea of the lifeboats, the Transformationist idea, which is more like let's transform the culture, and the neo-Anabaptists, which is put all of the emphasis — that is, by the way, where Shane Clayborn is, is you create these communities of virtue where the racial reconciliation, caring for the poor, simple living, that has got far more traction and intellectual firepower right now.

So that is the reason why you are going to see the needle move on young evangelicals saying same-sex marriage should be legal and is fine.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. Rebecca.

REBECCA SINDERBRAND, CNN: So in the interest of brevity, I will limit myself to one question. Actually, not even a question, more of an observation that I am very much interested in your reaction to. I was struck when you were talking about the difference between 1989 and today in terms of the numbers of churches in that area you are describing, the area of lower Manhattan, western Queens, northern Brooklyn. And, of

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course, anyone who was in the city in 1989 or anyone who read the paper in 1989 knows that New York today is a very different city than it was back then.

And, very specifically, those areas that you are talking about, a lot of people are living there, mostly white, mostly educated —

DR. KELLER: Right. And they have come from elsewhere.

MS. SINDERBRAND: More of them are coming to the city and they are staying longer than they did in the past. So these are people who grew up in the suburbs, elsewhere, with more of — a church, evangelical tradition.

DR. KELLER: Right.

MS. SINDERBRAND: So is it possible that this is more of just a transfer, not necessarily a growth, but just a transfer of people who —

DR. KELLER: Well, no, definitely partly. Somewhere like 1997, I suddenly realized that people who are already Christian and conservative Protestants were moving to New York City. I remember it was a shock, because when I got there in the '80s, people from the Midwest and the South didn't move to New York City. They didn't want to have anything to do with it.

So what that has done is it has done two things. I would say that Redeemer would be about a third of the size it is if it wasn't for that move. What happened was *Seinfeld* and *Friends* and the crime going down, and suddenly people wanted to live there.

MS. SINDERBRAND: So *Seinfeld* is responsible for the growth of your church, basically.

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: Well, I would say two out of three. Two out of three new people, yes. And it's also true of the other new churches.

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Now, what that means is that there is a certain percentage of people who are actually coming in out of more secular backgrounds, but there are also a fair number of people who are coming to live their lives in New York.

But the fact is that if conservative Protestants are living their lives in L.A., New York, Silicon Valley, if they are living their lives out in the cultural centers instead of where they were, which was staying into the sunbelt suburbs, that is going to have an impact.

MS. SINDERBRAND: Well, and that was just — not to take up more time, but that was just the second part of my question, which was, these people grew up in that faith tradition in areas where there was probably a much stronger sense of church than other areas in New York City.

DR. KELLER: Right.

MS. SINDERBRAND: Much stronger impact on the culture. Their kids, if they stay in New York City, will not be growing up in that environment.

DR. KELLER: No. They are different even if they live their lives there. They will be different.

MS. SINDERBRAND: Right.

DR. KELLER: Sure. The real question was what Peter Berger said. If they assimilate too much, then, in a sense, they will become non-factors. But the fact that they’re there is going to have an impact.

But you are still thinking of white people coming, and there are white people who come. But there are a terrific number of Asians, Latinos. For example, there was a — Luis might find this an interesting example — a Hispanic pastor — this dynamic is very much there.

There is a Hispanic pastor from New Jersey somewhere — Newark — came up to me at a pastor’s conference at one point and said to me, “Reverend Keller, glad to meet you, and I’ve really gotten over my resentment of you recently.” I guess this is Latino transparency. I said, “Oh, I didn’t know you were having a problem, actually. In fact, I have never met you.”

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(Laughter.)

He said, “Well, my daughter who is a paralegal, first person in my family to go to college, and who lives in Manhattan, stopped coming to my church, the church that she grew up in. And it really upset me at first, and I said I didn’t understand that.”

And at one point she said, “Dad, you live in a completely Latino world, but at least half of my friends or more are not.” And she said, “I can’t bring my non-Latino, non-Christian friend to a three-hour Spanish language Pentecostal service in Newark.”

(Laughter.)

“I can’t do it. It won’t work.”

And so what I have in New York is not just people who — I’d say a good third of the folks that have come into the evangelical churches of, say, Manhattan, are people that have migrated there, that in the past wouldn’t have migrated. They wouldn’t have wanted to live their lives there.

There is another third that are people who have Christian roots but they are in the ethnic churches, and they come from the other parts of the world. They either came here as Christians or they were won to faith through these ethnic churches and they grew up. And unless you have churches in Manhattan to help them make the jump — so I gave you some examples of a kind of Christianity that is not as traditional, not as collectivistic, that is more in line with the cultural narratives of that life, so there are a lot of those folks.

There are African-American, Caribbean, Hispanic, and Asian, people who are making the jump, too. And then there are a third of people who are what you and I would call secular people who have found faith. So it’s to some degree the migration, to some degree the cultural shift from first generation to second generation, and they tend to be more spiritual and religious and Bebbington five-ish.

And then there are some converts, but it’s not all converts. No, no. You’re right. Good catch.

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MR. CROMARTIE: Kirsten Powers.

KIRSTEN POWERS, Fox News/The Daily Beast/USA Today: Okay. So I don’t know what I am, if I’m an evangelical. I guess I’m an evangelical. I went to your church for years. I am constantly frustrated with the obsession over gay marriage on both sides, among evangelicals and among the secular media.

And I always feel like the wrong question is being asked, and I’m interested to know what you think about this, because I think it’s not about homosexuality. It’s about sexuality. And so 95 percent of our country is actually heterosexual, and I think your church teaches, my church teaches, that sex is for marriage, and if you are living with your boyfriend, you couldn’t join my church.

So why are we always talking about homosexuality and not just talking about the fact that the Bible teaches us on sexuality — this is countercultural, we know it makes people uncomfortable, but we hold everybody to the same standard. And if I decide to have sex outside of marriage, I don’t go to my church and ask them to affirm it, as a heterosexual. I understand that that is in violation of their teaching, and so I’m interested to know what you think about that.

The other question is, if I believe theologically in everything that you believe, and I think I do, is it correct to call myself an Orthodox Christian? Which I have started to do because I don’t want to be loaded up with the political baggage of evangelicalism.

DR. KELLER: Well, again, the second question is easier than the first. I like the word “orthodox.” In fact, I originally had it here, but —

MR. CROMARTIE: Small O.

DR. KELLER: Yes, with a small O. But James Hunter, in his original book, *Culture Wars*, didn’t he use the word “orthodox” for — I’ve been using the word “devout.” I can’t find a good word.

The trouble is, there is a whole branch of Christianity called Orthodoxy that is actually pretty conservative, by the way, but it is different. There is Orthodoxy and Catholicism

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and Protestantism, and that is one problem with it. Orthodox is fine. It’s fine. Amy has already caught me in some bad locutions. It’s not that easy to figure out a good word that everybody identifies with — it’s not easy. But orthodox is actually good.

The first question —

MR. CROMARTIE: But that’s why you gave us the Bebbington five.

DR. KELLER: Well, I tried to do that. To say the supernatural rather than the naturalistic — that gets rid of the mainline thing. Amy is right in saying that the necessity of conversion, if it’s — depending on how you read it, that gets rid of some more ecclesial traditions. A lot of Lutherans would say, “We’re not evangelicals,” even though Luther invented the world, practically.

But Bebbington five I still think means that is orthodoxy, devout. Anybody who could agree to those things really rejects late modernity and the way in which they do their religion.

Your first question, Kirsten, I would say yes, it would be better for me — in fact, I am sometimes faulted for not talking about homosexuality enough. And it is because everybody says it is such an issue — basically, are you a coward? Are you hiding? And I always say I am a coward. It has nothing to do with homosexuality at all.

(Laughter.)

I just want you to know I am a coward. I am. But I’m an evangelical and I’m saved by grace, so I love to confess my sins. It’s just one of them.

But I think you’re right that, in fact, I think Ross Douthat rightly says that most of Christianity’s critique, you say, of homosexual practice would also fit for most heterosexuals, too. It would be better for us to narrate what the Bible says about sexuality in general, because that’s what the Bible talks about.

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It only talks about homosexuality, per se, seven times. And it is almost a footnote. The Bible says, “This is what sex is. This is what sex is for. It’s the reunion of the genders. It is a covenant renewal ceremony.”

In other words — this sounds weird, but — everybody, you can take this down — The Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, is a renewal of a covenant that we already have. So if you say, “I’m a Christian and I believe in Jesus,” the Lord’s Supper is a way of kind of renewing that covenant.

Sex is actually a kind of Eucharist for married people. It is a way of getting married again. It’s a way of putting yourself literally in each other’s arms the way you did socially, economically, emotionally, culturally, every other way.

And I have found that if I just simply narrate what the Bible says sexuality is supposed to be — it is the reunion of the alienated genders, it is a covenant renewal ceremony, and all that sort of thing — the vast majority of people out there who are using sex as a consumer good, who are heterosexual, and who usually are professing Christians, they are the ones who usually start to feel weird, and so I would think that, obviously, however, gay people do, too. Gay people feel that I am challenging them when I preach on sex. But heterosexual people should, too.

And if that’s what you mean, I agree. That’s probably the way we should be talking about it. In a way, I have to talk about homosexuality because I get asked about it. But then I don’t want anybody to tell me I’m obsessed with it. If *you’re* the one who asked me the question eight times —

(Laughter.)

If in the next two days I answer that question eight times, then you are the one obsessed about it, not me.

MS. POWERS: Well, I guess I’m saying I just wish that Christians would respond and say that’s the wrong question and let’s talk about sexuality. Let’s not get into a long conversation about homosexuality per se. Let’s talk about sexuality.

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MR. CROMARTIE: By the way, if I could just say, quickly, Tim, on your behalf, there is a wonderful book out — it came out about two years ago — called *The Meaning of Marriage* written by Tim Keller, where he addresses everything that —

DR. KELLER: And my wife.

MR. CROMARTIE: — and it’s written by your wife also. Tim and Kathy Keller. And you deal with all of that in the book, so if your answers are not sufficient, that book is — I underlined every sentence.

MS. POWERS: I just wanted to clarify, too, when you were saying you can be an evangelical and support gay marriage. You mean secular gay marriage, civil gay marriage.

DR. KELLER: Yes, that’s what I —

MS. POWERS: You don’t mean in the church.

DR. KELLER: No. See, in other words, I was trying to say that those are two different issues. And hopefully every Christian knows that, because there are all sorts of things the Bible forbids that we would be forbidding to Christians that we would never want to be legislated. Like I gave the perfect example — idol worship is the worst sin in the Bible, bowing down to little statues and worshipping them and asking them to give you favors and all that.

But I think it would be quite un-American to make that illegal. So anyway, yes, that’s what I meant.

MR. CROMARTIE: I’m going to let somebody jump the queue here, because we’ve just spoken on this very point. Reuel, can you jump in now? Why don’t you grab a microphone, though.

DR. KELLER: You could be a great preacher. You’ve got the voice for it.

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REUEL GERECHT, Foundation for Defense of Democracies: I was just wondering, do you think that the growth of singles, particularly single women, does that hurt your church or help your church?

DR. KELLER: The growth of singles?

MR. GERECHT: Yes.

DR. KELLER: In the long run, it’s not great because I do think marriage is good. People always say, how do you get all of those single people? And the answer is, I just set up shop in Manhattan. It’s a place of singleness.

Whenever we ask a question — we have taken a census every so often, “how many more years do you expect to live in New York?” And (Rebecca actually made a reference to this in a way) it used to be in the early days that the married people were more likely to say “not long.”

In other words, when we said, “How many more years...” — one or two, three to five — we asked them to check off — “how many more years do you expect to live here?” It used to be that the married people were more likely to be looking for a door, because “I don’t want to raise a child here; schools aren’t good, too expensive...”

And the single people stayed there, because singleness in Manhattan is more normalized. And when you leave Manhattan, you feel like a freak. Or if you leave the big cities you feel like a freak. It has changed. Now, married people are staying and they are raising their children there, and they are not leaving, and so now we realize that the best way to make sure that you are going to be here and be a stable part of the community would be getting married.

So I would say...but there are a lot of people scared of marriage. The Christian community is no different. The women and men are both afraid. That is another subject. I am not an expert to talk about that. The book *The Meaning of Marriage* was a way of trying to get people over their perfectionism. And so I do think I’ve got a problem. Yes, it is a problem for us.

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MR. CROMARTIE: Now, I called on Reuel because I thought he was going to ask a question about evangelicals in the Middle East and move us away from the question of human sexuality.

DR. KELLER: It wasn't quite sex. It wasn't quite sex. Give him credit.

MR. CROMARTIE: I thought he was going to ask about evangelicals in the Middle East and he didn't, but that's okay. If we have time, you can ask it later. But, Michael Gerson, you're next, and I have the others. I promise you're on the list, but we need to be concise.

DR. KELLER: Yes, and so do I.

MICHAEL GERSON, *The Washington Post*: One of the interesting things that you mentioned was how the inertia of the Bible leads to Catholic social thought as a model, and it fit my experience exactly when I went as a young evangelical to Capitol Hill and was looking for models of social engagement. I found Catholic social thought, I found the 19th century evangelical tradition of abolitionism and the civil rights movement, and found the Kuyperian tradition — just kind of all of those elements.

But I found in general that evangelicalism on all of those things was really, really weak, that modern evangelicalism offered almost nothing when it came to, what is your model of social engagement? How do you interpret changing the culture, living out the ideas of human rights and human dignity and other things?

Now, is that changing? What are people depending on? When I go to Christian college campuses and I ask, who is your model of social engagement, most of them don't answer, don't know how to answer. And then, almost everyone who does says “Bono.”

MR. CROMARTIE: Bono?

MR. GERSON: Bono. And I have great respect for Bono, but I wouldn't necessarily put him in that category.

DR. KELLER: How the Irish saved civilization. There you go.

(Laughter.)

MR. GERSON: Do you see any progress in those areas? When people in your church are looking for how is it that I relate to the world given this set of values, are there any evangelical sources of what they are —

DR. KELLER: Yes and no. No is they are not emerging yet. Yes is that part of the evangelical renaissance of saying I don't just have to be a missionary or a minister, I can go into the cultural industries.

As you know, there are an awful lot of conservative Protestants going into the academic world. There are an awful lot of them going a lot of different places, whether or not they are going to, in a sense, maintain their distinctive identity as they go through, because there is nothing more socializing than academia. There are just a tremendous number of forces that are at play there.

But, anyway, there are people who are talking about it, Michael. It's not just social thought. If you look at Alasdair McIntyre, we don't have any — evangelicals don't have anybody who has written anything like *After Virtue* or *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* or nobody like Charles Taylor, who is a Catholic as well.

We just don't — there is just no intellectual tradition, really, and I wouldn't say it has changed that much. I just feel like I do see glimmers of hope, but it hasn't changed that much. We have to borrow from other traditions.

MR. CROMARTIE: Jon Ward and then Brit Hume.

JON WARD, *The Huffington Post*: A two-part question about the response of conservative leaders to the gay marriage issue. If I'm John Boehner or Marco Rubio, what is your advice to me on the position I *should* take on the issue? That's the political question.

And then, as a religious leader yourself, what is going to be the response to the Louie Giglio upset? How are you going to process it? How are you going to respond?

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DR. KELLER: Wow, this time the second question isn't the easier one. Your first question — I think younger evangelicals are not incredibly exercised. I think they realize that there are at least three positions you could have as a professing Christian. You could say, “I believe the Bible, but I think the Bible doesn't really condemn homosexuality.” I have argued why I think there are some deep inconsistencies in that, but Amy and I are just going to have to have tea together sometime and work that out.

The second possibility is, “I believe homosexuality is wrong, but there is really no reason why to keep gay people out of the inherent conservatism of marriage.” As some of you know, there are plenty of people who say marriage is an inherently conservative institution. David Blankenhorn's whole point is, let's just keep it where it is. And if gay people want to get into it, fine. What the country needs is strong marriages.

And then, the third view is that it is bad for human flourishing, because it is not the way human beings are wired. It is not good for children — the French approach, which is every child has the right to a father and a mother. So you shouldn't enshrine a particular form of marriage that permanently keeps a child from having one or the other.

So those are three positions, and I would say younger evangelicals are just not incredibly strident about it. They just aren't, because they know there is a liberal view, a liberal Christian view, there's a kind of conservative Christian view that is okay with gay marriage, and so actually I don't know that I got good —

MR. WARD: Advice.

DR. KELLER: I would say that John Boehner and Marco Rubio ought to decide what they think is right instead of reading the polls, because they are going to be very confusing, and decide what is right and people will probably respect them more if they have a well thought out personal view.

The question about — well, your second question was —

MR. WARD: Your response to —

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DR. KELLER: To the Louie Giglio thing. I don’t know, other than to say one of the dictionary definitions of bigotry, one of them, is lack of respect for or an effort to silence contrary opinion.

Now, I know that the comeback is that, “We don’t let white supremacists have equal say in the public square. We won’t put you in prison for believing in white supremacy, but you are not going to have a license for your radio station, you’re not going to get an accreditation for your school. And we need to treat the view that homosexuality is a sin exactly the same way. It doesn’t deserve respect. It should be silenced.” That’s one view.

And that is the view I think that was represented by the people that said you can’t have anybody in the public square representing God and representing the faithful at a situation like this if you have a view that there is something wrong with homosexuality.

The only comeback would be Jonathan Rauch’s approach, which is to say if it’s really true — I doubt it, I personally don’t believe it at all — but if it’s really true that orthodox religion —

MR. CROMARTIE: Who are you quoting now?

DR. KELLER: Jonathan Rauch, yes, would say —

MR. CROMARTIE: Not you, him.

DR. KELLER: Yes.

MR. CROMARTIE: For the record.

DR. KELLER: For the record. He says if orthodox faith does morph to the place where people still have that high view of the text, they are still people “of the Book”, and we have completely embraced the idea of homosexuality as one way of loving and marriage, if that does happen, it will take a long time, a very long time. Not the sort of thing that could happen in 20 years or 50 years, in which case we need to learn to live together. We really have got to be civil to each other on the way.

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We can't do what we did in the civil rights movement, which is basically shame the one group out of the public sphere. Don't do that or you are going to find it is not going to work. It is going to create terrific civil strife because that 30 percent of devout people is a big number of people. Not enough to win an election, but you certainly can't just marginalize them and say you are beyond the pale. You've got to show respect. They have to show respect, too.

So I would just plead for civility and say to Christians, because of what Miroslav Volf says about Christian identity — it is not based on difference, at least it shouldn't be, it doesn't have to be — therefore, in some ways, we should be the peacemakers. We should be the people who are the least threatened. We should be the people who are most willing to say, “Let's talk” and be civil and the most gracious. And we should at least try to take the lead in that. We may not be listened to. So there are some ideas.

MR. CROMARTIE: Brit Hume is up.

BRIT HUME, Fox News: I know you keep trying to move on from the subject of sex, which seems hard to get away from. My thought about it would be that the sex act at least is proof that God has a sense of humor.

(Laughter.)

DR. KELLER: He could have done it some other way.

MR. HUME: Exactly. I know. I want to draw you out a little bit on something I have heard you mention in passing, Dr. Keller, which is music in the church. It's a subject which kind of fascinates me. I find myself enormously drawn to this little church we have been going to down here in Florida because all the hymns I know from boyhood. But what is it? You suggested — you talked about hot pastors, and I don't know whether you said “hot music” or “good music,” or whatever the phrase was.

But as an attraction to a church, as a feature of worship, the role of music, what is it? Is it because you've got a great pipe organ and a good organist? Is it because the choir is great?

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Is it because the hymns are familiar? What is it that makes music an attraction to a particular church? That moves things along nicely.

DR. KELLER: Well, yes, it does.

(Laughter.)

I have a friend named Bill Edgar who wrote a book on it, and actually there is one chapter called “How Does Music Mean?” It’s a great question. Music means things, but how does it mean things? Why is it so meaningful? How does it mean? I’ve read the chapter. I wasn’t really quite — you know Bill, don’t you?

MR. CROMARTIE: Yes, yes.

DR. KELLER: I wasn’t quite sure what he was saying at the end, but — I’m sorry, Bill. Don’t read the transcript. Is Bill going to get the transcript?

MR. CROMARTIE: Oh. He’ll get the transcript.

DR. KELLER: All right. Anyway, I don’t know, but here is the — it’s true, and somebody was pointing this out, that late modernity is not as rational, we are not as confident in reason. Certainly, younger people cannot — their eyes glaze over if you give them longer chains of reasoning. They just don’t do that.

They tend to be more impressionistic, more intuitive. Doesn’t mean they are irrational. There still need to be arguments. But actually in that it means that the appeal of Christianity and the appeal of worship means it just can’t be a talking head. I try to be as good a preacher as I possibly can be. But for there just to be a quick hymn and a prayer and then Tim Keller holding forth, no matter how rational and compelling I am, it’s not going to capture people’s hearts.

Worship has always been holistic, I think, but the evangelical world has gotten pretty rationalistic and heady, and very oriented toward long, expository sermons and lots of reasoning. And I don’t think that is going to capture younger people in the future.

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So I would say music has always been important. Obviously, you are asking a big, big question about, how does music mean? But I would — as a practitioner — I would say it is a very, very important place going forward.

But I’ll tell you one thing is the Christian world is not behind on great musicians and great writers. It’s just not behind on that at all. The scandal of the evangelical mind, yes, Michael is right. I don’t see anything. But when it comes to terrific music and great musicians, Christianity is — it’s an embarrassment of riches.

MR. HUME: So you don’t agree with the famous C.S. Lewis quote that it was fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music, speaking of the hymns?

DR. KELLER: Well, you know what? There is pressure on most churches now to — it is probably because of the internet and all of that that people don’t — put it this way: I used to say to my church planners, I’d say, historically, the people doing the music would be the faithful people, the people who are faithful to the church and they just love to use their musical gifts in church.

But, honestly, if eight-year-old Sally does her clarinet piece for the offertory, everybody who knows little Sally and her mother and her grandmother and her father feels very warm when they hear the — they actually feel lifted up to God. “Isn’t it wonderful, Sally is using her gifts.”

But anybody who comes in who doesn’t know Sally or the family is just checking out because it’s so awful.

(Laughter.)

And so what I say is, excellence in music is more inclusive. Poor music is exclusive. It only edifies the people who know the musician. And great music, terrific music, is transcendent.

And, actually, I had a dentist in New York City, years ago when we were in a little Seventh Day Adventist Church at 111 East 87th Street, very small church right up on the sidewalk.

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And we had somebody doing this wonderful trumpet solo. All the windows were open. It only seated 300 people. We were right in the very beginning.

A man I know who became a Christian was walking by on the sidewalk and heard this trumpet and it was unbelievably pretty. And he walked on in and sat down and listened, and 10 years later he died. However, he was in our church and he had become a Christian. And before that he had been raised without any faith at all, but he was attracted by the sound.

And he actually said for quite a long time he came just for the music, but he said the music was transcendent. “It made me feel closer to God.” And he said to me, “I really didn’t know what the heck you were talking about when you preached.” Because he had no vocabulary; he had never heard anything. And so I was cipher to him, but the music — and he could sense the music was Christian music, and he read some of the words in the hymns and all of that. And he was won through the music and slowly the sermons actually started to make sense.

MR. CROMARTIE: Let me just say for the record that Bill Edgar’s chapter is worth reading — for the record, for Bill. What is the title of that chapter again?

DR. KELLER: It was called “How Does Music Mean?”

MR. CROMARTIE: The name of the book?

DR. KELLER: It’s called *Taking Note of Music*. It’s out of print, though.

MR. CROMARTIE: By Dr. William Edgar. There you go. But Bill is a good friend.

MR. BARNES: What kind of music do you have at your church? Is it modern praise music? Old hymns?

DR. KELLER: Well, that’s another thing — eclectic. So, we have a lot of traditional music, Bach, Beethoven, traditional hymns. We also have jazz. We also have bluegrass. We do it all.

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MR. GIFFORD: When I went for the first time as a visitor to Manhattan just before Christmas, the music blew me away, as someone coming from an English tradition. It was spectacularly eclectic.

MR. CROMARTIE: Was it the bluegrass that got your attention?

MR. GIFFORD: I don't think I have ever heard “I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In” to bluegrass. It was a sort of mixture and it was wonderful.

MR. CROMARTIE: Elizabeth Dias, you're next.

ELIZABETH DIAS, TIME Magazine: Dr. Keller, in thinking about the rise of non-white populations in many evangelical churches and your own, I wondered how you are negotiating the following: many Latina churches, particularly, have both husband and wife as pastors, not the wife as the associate pastor or the women's pastor. Many of the largest Latina churches, Pentecostal churches in America, and in Latin America, are run solely by women.

And I'm wondering, how are you working that out on the ground at Redeemer? How are you counseling other pastors to work that out? I know the PCA doesn't ordain women. But is there an opening here? How do you see this?

DR. KELLER: Well, no, my denomination does not have women pastors, doesn't ordain women. First of all, our approach when we plant churches is that this is one of those — how do I say it? This is one of those areas that, like baptism, like tongues and healing and the other things, this is definitely one of those areas where the Christian church has always been divided and we really have to be civil to each other about that.

My feeling is that somebody has got to be right, but it is pretty remarkable the way in which God tends to — this is my Christian perspective — for example, being a Presbyterian, I look at Korea and I see the revival. There is enormous growth in Presbyterianism, or in Ghana where the Presbyterian church has just grown like crazy, I say, “Yes, that's it. Yeah, yeah.”

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But why does God give Pentecostals revivals in Latin America? And why does he give Anglicans revivals in East Africa? God seems to be kind of promiscuous about these things. It's sort of like...you feel like, why? On the other hand, I would say I have never seen a Unitarian revival, so my —

(Laughter.)

— my belief is that issues like women's ordination, where there are constant historic differences, that we need to be civil to each other, we need to recognize that each community has something to offer. There is a pressure I think that my denomination and my church that I put on men, otherwise, they'd just opt out.

I don't see it, frankly. The reason I like being in my own denomination is not because I like to put men on the throne, because actually I am forcing men — they just opt out of commitment and they tend to opt out of involvement.

But on the other hand, the problem is I do think that there are plenty of women who say, “I'm just not able to use my gifts, and I'm not able to do what I could do in your denomination.” So is there room for difference? Yes. The evangelical churches are not at one, and the Pentecostal churches are not at one. And I do feel that they all need to thrive and they all have something to do.

MS. DIAS: Just as a quick follow up, are there ways that you all are actively trying to preserve that Latina cultural heritage of women leadership?

DR. KELLER: We are working against history in this sense. There's lots of Korean Presbyterians, like no Chinese Presbyterians. There are lots of Brazilian Presbyterians. There's like no Hispanic Presbyterians.

Now, those are all exaggerations, but various denominational traditions for some reason thrive... The main Latin American Presbyterians are Brazilians that we have. We have a lot of Brazilians, and they are not quite the same. So the answer is, in a way it's not — if you are just asking Redeemer and my Presbyterianism, we don't have as many Hispanics there. I would love to have more and then maybe that would be more of an issue.

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MR. CROMARTIE: Paul Farhi.

PAUL FARHI, *The Washington Post*: This may be a can of worms, but you mentioned very early on about younger evangelicals and their emphasis, or greater concern perhaps, than older evangelicals and their concern for the poor. And given the Bible’s emphasis on redistribution of wealth, putting those two things together, does that portend some political implication for moving forward as these younger evangelicals grow older and become mainstream?

Does that mean conservative evangelicalism becomes a more liberal kind of evangelicalism — that the government should be in the business of redistributing wealth?

DR. KELLER: I think that younger evangelicals will be more open to that, yes. See, actually, that is almost a yes or no question. I would say the fact is younger evangelicals in some ways feel that the older people, the baby boomers and everybody, sits in the economic catbird seat.

A lot of them are resentful about the fact that they are having trouble moving ahead in their career. So I think personally, they may have trouble with this when they actually get to it, but theoretically, they don’t have a problem with higher taxes if they felt it was really redistributing wealth.

I think when it comes right down to it, they’d have the same issues that a lot of people have when government actually starts to grow — honestly, when business starts to get powerful, when government starts to get powerful, the corruption comes in and everybody gets upset.

And then there’s a backlash and somehow we morph, we kind of move along this way. But right now the answer is basically yes, it does have implications.

MR. FARHI: Interesting.

MR. CROMARTIE: Okay. David?

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DAVID BORNSTEIN, *The New York Times*: So my question kind of builds off Paul’s and also Michael’s, which is, at the beginning you said that in your tradition that salvation comes through Christ and not through acts of service.

DR. KELLER: Right.

MR. BORNSTEIN: And does this mitigate against the kind of public or social engagement that Michael was referring to? Or do we essentially have — we talk a lot about poverty, we care a lot about poverty, but we don’t really organize around doing anything about poverty.

DR. KELLER: Well, there is no doubt — that’s a great question, by the way, and it’s a very old question. It’s what the Medieval church — how it pushed back on Luther, the very idea that you are saved by grace and faith, not by your good works. Right away the Medieval church said you are destroying the motivation for good service. You’re destroying the motivation for service.

If I’m saved apart my works, what motivation have I got? The right comeback — and this is my comeback, because I’m a Protestant here — the problem with saying I’m saved by my works of service means that you are basically — and it is also Jonathan Edwards — motivated by fear and self-interest. That is, the reason I have to help the poor is so I go to heaven. So why am I helping the poor? For me. I’m not doing it out of love for the poor or love for God. I’m doing it out of self-interest.

And so you could say... and you’re afraid you’re going to get divinely judged if you don’t. If you say that once I take away all fear of God’s condemnation from you, you lose all motivation for living a good life, then the only motivation you had for living a good life was fear. And there is a better motivation. It’s love, it’s gratitude, it’s wanting to resemble the God who saved you. And actually I wrote a book called *Generous Justice*, and the subtitle was “How Grace Makes us Just.” Catholicism is a very complex phenomenon, but the Medieval church that the Protestants were reacting against basically said, “If you are just, if you live a just and righteous life, you’ll get God’s grace.” The Protestants were saying, “No. If you really, really grasp God’s grace, it will lead to a life of justice,” and that is my view and that’s how I argue in that book.

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MR. CROMARTIE: And at that point, Doyle, I’m not sure — the question you shared with me during the break could be answered as quickly as we might need it to be. Do you think?

DOYLE McMANUS, *Los Angeles Times*: To pull a couple of implicit threads together and come all the way back to the title that Michael imposed on you, I gather, which is the religious right, the Christian Right.

The great innovation of the Christian Right was to say that Christian believers shouldn’t merely be engaged in the world and shouldn’t merely do social activism and vote. They should actually explicitly engage in political activism and raise money and campaign and become a caucus.

You mentioned that the neo-Anabaptists kind of have the intellectual heat at the moment.

DR. KELLER: Right now.

MR. McMANUS: Right now. This is not about any particular policy; it is not about any particular doctrine. It is about the question of coherent, conscious, explicit political activism by Christians. How do younger evangelicals feel about that?

DR. KELLER: Well, they are very ambivalent now, but what is interesting is — it comes back in through the back door. The front door was — or the old approach was, the way you engage the culture is largely through politics. Actually, Michael Gerson and Pete Wehner wrote an interesting book on this.

MR. CROMARTIE: It’s called *The City of Man*.

DR. KELLER: It’s true evangelicals are backing away from that idea. Now the idea would be you get into the cultural industries and serve by just thinking out the implications of your Christian faith for where you are working. Now, that actually does get you — then why leave politics out? Why should you go into the academy and into Hollywood and that sort of thing and not go into government?

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So it comes in through the back door I think with a pretty different attitude. So it is still there. So I think that the older approach was more militant, frankly, and more triumphalistic, and maybe they are really afraid of that.

In some ways, I must say, there may be a dearth of them wanting to go into politics — there’s too few, frankly, because I always say, look, Hollywood, yes; Washington, no? Both places are difficult, and why not?

So I actually have to encourage people who do want to be involved in government and politics to consider it. So I actually have had to overcome that a little bit.

MR. CROMARTIE: It’s what you wrote about in your latest book about calling, different callings. Is that right, Tim?

DR. KELLER: Yes. You’re really good with books.

(Laughter.)

MR. CROMARTIE: I think the least I can do for you to fit us into your very busy schedule is at least to promote your latest book and to mention all of the others when we can.

DR. KELLER: I’m done, if you’re done.

MR. CROMARTIE: Thank you.

♦ END ♦

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