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MORAL OUTRAGE AND MORAL REPAIR:
Reflections on 9/11 and its Afterlife

PANEL IV:
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:
OUR POST-9/11 FUTURE

Moderator

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Panelists

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Rabbi Irwin Kula, *President of Clal — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership*

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PETER STEINFELS: Before beginning this session, I have an unsolicited, unpaid announcement. Don Shriver, who is here, who is the former president of Union Theological Seminary and himself has written about forgiveness and international relations, reminded me that next Sunday, which is Palm Sunday in the Christian tradition, in the West anyway, and Easter Sunday following that, each evening there is going to be a broadcast on PBS on the subject of forgiveness. The maker of the documentary, which will be organized around case studies, is Helen Whitney. I think it is very appropriate, because she made a prize-winning program, called *Where was God on 9/11?*, a very moving program. I just call that to your attention. I think it is at 10:00 p.m. in the New York area, but people may want to check their television schedules.

My job is made somewhat easier by the fact that I don't have to introduce anybody. They have all been introduced to you, and you can check your programs if you can't remember.

This is a little bit like “A Year in Movies” as you approach Oscar season and you try and remember “What was that great movie back in May that I saw?” Some of us are going to have to check our programs to remember who’s who and who was in the morning. I want to give all the panelists a chance to converse with one another, to raise questions about one another’s presentations. However, we have been over the course of the day probably given several dozen questions. The questions in some ways are reflections, not only of things that you would like to know, but of things that you care deeply about. So sometimes the questions can be as interesting and informative as the answers.

What I am going to do, and if the panelists will pay attention — I’m very demanding — is to read a number of the questions. They can just take notes on any that in the course of the discussion, should there be time, they might want to speak to that particular question. Some of them we absolutely may not get to, but it will be enlightening to have them in front of us. They run quite a gamut.

“The day began with a panel discussing the stages of radicalization of terrorists. After all the panels, it is clear that in the last decade much of American society has been radicalized. Is it possible to compare these twin developments? Does the opening discussion provide any clues to de-radicalizing the current world?”

Another question: “I struggle with what, if anything, we can do to prevent another 9/11, whether the violence is ideology-driven, religion-driven, economics, etc. What, if anything, can we do to foster a dialogue in our youth that will help guide them in the right direction? Is it more discussion like this in our universities, in our communities, in our churches, etc.? What can we do about this?”

Another question: “Attempts for justice via peaceful means have not been successfully applied to the terrorism of 9/11 and continued al Qaeda forms of violence. Why have international courts not been involved? Have war responses arisen from this vacuum of peaceful justice or did it prevent this vacuum from performing its own functions?”

There is a question here about adults in a democracy who are noncombatants. I’ll summarize the question: How can they treat themselves as exceptions — that is, as people who should be immune to terror attacks — when they have something to do with the policies of their nations?

There are several questions that turn to some of the things that were addressed in the last discussion about the role of the United States. One calls the attacks on 9/11 “a minor event” and goes on to outline a whole list of harms that have been done by the U.S. and the world in terms of other nations — environment, warfare, and so on. Another similar one is: “Our response to 9/11 has intensified the outrage and our own morality has been diluted as seen in the corruption and crumbling of values, as witnessed in Congress, Wall Street, and the suffering since the recent recession. How can we change our path as a nation and superpower?” There were a number of questions that also talked about the recent economic breakdown. One last one: “How can moral outrage be constructive as we move forward and strive to promote world peace?”

There are other major good questions, but I’ll stop there. Any panelist at any time may be able to twist the remarks that they are making into answering one or the other of those questions. I know you’ll be skilled at doing that. But before you do that, I want to give everybody a chance to speak to other points made by other speakers in the course of the day.

Michael, you’ve got your hand up.

MICHAEL PERRY: This will be very brief. On the question about the international courts, the International Criminal Court only has jurisdiction over acts that were committed since 2002, when the court began to function. So it wouldn’t have jurisdiction over acts that were committed before 2002.

In any event, the principle of complementarity is such that the International Court would always prefer the applicable domestic courts to prosecute. The International Criminal Court is understood to be a backup when the domestic courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute. And of course, in the case of the

United States, our courts are both willing and able to prosecute. We just don't have possession of the chief people that we would like to prosecute.

MUQTEDAR KHAN: Has Bush left the country?

PETER STEINFELS: Are there points that the panel would like to address to other questions that arose in the course of the day by other speakers?

MARGARET WALKER: I appreciated E.J. Dionne's brighter side, if I may say, where you called our attention to many things that emerged in the immediate wake of 9/11. I had a whole list of them: selflessness as opposed to materialism, solidarity as opposed to fracture. But what struck me was that every item on that list seemed to be a temporary outpouring and that the larger negative trend is in every case something that clearly preceded 9/11. So it may have been true that 9/11 brought out a better kind of American identity or a better aspect of the American identity, but that might be seen as a temporary interruption that then rather quickly returned to the normal trajectory, which was not so great by that point.

PETER STEINFELS: Just a housekeeping remark. It is normal courtesy that we are all trained to observe to turn toward the person that we are talking to. Unfortunately, it means that the sound level goes up and down as you turn away from the microphones. I would ask the panelists to try to speak into the microphone even when they are addressing another member up here on this crowded stage.

E.J. DIONNE: Could I reply to that briefly? And thank you for being courteous and looking at me when you were talking. I want to say I think that if you look at the long trajectory of our history — we may not be unique in this — Americans are defined both by our love of individualism and our deep affection for community. It's kind of what Robert Bellah wrote about in *Habits of the Heart*.

I think there are moments when individualism is more powerful in the culture and moments when solidarity or community is more powerful in the culture. I think we have been through, since the 1980s, a fairly long period where the balance leaned toward individualism. I think the reaction to 9/11 pushed back against that. I think that President Bush — and again, this is not a party comment at all — had an opening to call us to service. He did that occasionally.

He certainly talked a lot more, with a lot more gratitude, about our men and women in uniform. I actually think that the response to our soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq was actually much better than our response to our soldiers in Vietnam. During Vietnam, those of us — I was against the war — but there was a tendency in the antiwar movement to blame the soldiers for a policy that people opposed. You didn't see that.

I think Obama spoke a very powerful communitarian language at times. I think we are due for a communitarian correction, just if you look at this ebb and flow.

Could I just say one other quick thing? How can moral outrage be constructive? I just had three quick ones. The civil rights advances in the country were the product of moral outrage directed at segregation that had largely been invisible to lots of Americans. It was also a response to the fact that African-Americans served in such large numbers in World War II, and the country said, "Wait a minute. There's something unfair here." Abolition itself was the product of slowly building outrage in the beginning in the 1930s, and growing until the time of the Civil War.

Partly just because I read a very good review this weekend by Frank Foer of the new book on the Eichmann trial, I think outrage over the Holocaust has not ended anti-Semitism, alas. And yet, I think there is a much stronger response against anti-Semitism in our country and in the world than there was. That too was a case where outrage led to a moral response. So I think again it's what you do with outrage that is the test.

PETER STEINFELS: Dr. Khan?

MUQTEDAR KHAN: One of the interesting things is that, just as a lot of bad things manifested themselves after 9/11, a lot of good things have also manifested themselves. For example, now you hear a lot of people protesting every time there is a mosque that is being built or if Muslims do anything. But what you will also notice is that when Muslims hold press conferences in response to these allegations, you will find a rabbi, a priest, a professor, standing with them. In the last two years, you have not seen Muslims standing alone. This is also a new development.

I think Muslims are very aware of this whole fact that we have friends. In our own lives — and I get accused of a lot of things. You won't be surprised that someone who will see the tape of this event will accuse me of being a terrorist, etc. But we find unexpected allies. I applied for citizenship after 9/11. I saw all these accusations against me that the government levied. It was shocking. They wanted me to portray all my life.

So I went to a lawyer who was on the board of ADL. She did hundreds of hours of work building my life. She knew more about my life than I did. When I saw her report, I told my wife, "Oh my God, at a discounted price of \$350 an hour, this means that our house is gone."

So I went to her and I signed her up. Her name is Jane Goldblum from Philadelphia. At the end of it, she said, "And by the way, Dr. Khan, I think it was an honor to defend you. This is free." To me that shows that there are Americans who will stand up and fight for me and consider it an honor. So everything is not that bad really.

PETER STEINFELS: Dr. McCauley?

CLARK McCAULEY: I would like to highlight one thing I find very positive about the day's proceedings, which flows directly out of something my friend Jim Jones said, which is rational choice kinds of analyses won't take us very far for understanding intergroup conflict and intergroup violence, things like martyrdom or suicide bombing.

I want to tell you what a pleasure it is to be at a meeting where all day long people feel free to talk about emotions as causes, because I can't tell you how many meetings I have gone to with international relations people, political science people, economists, for whom rational choice is the only allowed discourse, for which emotions are, when they are referred to at all, considered something epiphenomenal. No, I'm not kidding you — the very word epiphenomenal. So I want to say how very pleasant it has been here, how very interesting it has been, to be part of a day in which the rational choice bolt has not been pressed down upon us so heavily.

IRWIN KULA: We appreciate the sharing.

CLARK McCAULEY: I want to point out one more emotion we haven't I think gotten to enough. You know, we talked about the result of 9/11, we talked fear, we talked anger. We haven't yet got to humiliation. I think we have got to recognize that as a people, as a country, as a nation, as a political identity group, we were humiliated on 9/11. I will feel like we are making some progress toward coming back from 9/11 when we finally get around to thinking out loud about humiliation in addition to those other two emotions.

Last, I want to say that although I certainly am not against a rights discourse, I think it's very limited and limiting. It's a very Western kind of moral discourse, this harm/rights/justice discourse, and the emotion associated with violation is anger. But in much of the world there are at least two other discourses that are very powerful. One is community, and in the violation of community contempt is the emotion that goes with that. There is still a third version of morality, another domain of morality, which is divinity, with the divine and the pure at one end and the animal-like at the bottom. The emotion associated with violations on that domain of morality is disgust.

So I just want to say that, with all the value that we can find in a moral discourse based in harm/rights/justice, I think we are never going to make a really serious dent in man's inhumanity to man

unless we are ready to engage these other two domains of morality with the same vigor that we find so easy with harm/rights/justice.

JAMES JONES: Let me just comment. Even though we disagreed earlier, we are on the same wavelength here. I want to go to the question about radicalization of Americans as a society. If you look at research across many studies that I have done, written from very different perspectives, there are at least three things that virtually everybody points to, and then I'll just point to some other eccentric things as well, like religion and so on and so forth.

- One of them is economic injustice.
- One of them is exactly what Professor McCauley was saying, humiliation. There's all kinds of forensic psychology research on the connection between humiliation and violence.
- The third is abjecting the other person, completely, as James Waller calls it demonizing the other, or what I would call a kind of apocalyptic rhetoric.

Economic injustice, humiliation, and demonizing the other — all of those are present now in the United States, period, the end. If we're going to talk about repair, it seems to me we need to talk about how can we combat the tremendous economic injustice in this country, how can we begin — this is piggybacking on Professor McCauley — to come to deal with our sense of humiliation as the emasculated superpower by these people from who knows where, and how can we begin to cut against the rhetoric in this society, whether it's in the media or not, which demonizes and abjects the other. It seems to me those are the ways in which you might think about moving past all of the mistakes we made in the past and moving into the future.

PETER STEINFELS: Dr. Appleby?

SCOTT APPLEBY: Let me build on that comment by addressing a similar question: How can we be guided in the right direction? I'll start inductively by indicating that even though the World Bank only has the word "religion" in 1,000 pages of its history on two occasions, and therefore we don't collect great data about religion. There are estimates ranging from 40 to 70 percent of healthcare in sub-Saharan Africa is delivered by faith-based religious groups, primarily Christians and Muslims. So health care religious is a religious as well as a secular enterprise in sub-Saharan Africa and much of the world.

If we want to make progress on questions of gender rights, duties, and obligations, it is certainly not going to come from one specific segment or sector of the world. Nor on the questions of violence. We know today, as someone mentioned today, ten people can kill thousands of people, and the centers of violence are not simply the nation-states anymore.

What is the point? The point is that the world has several what we'll call traditions of wisdom, several communities of discourse, each of which has deeply held and reflected and multi-generational perspectives touching on or directly relevant to a variety of the real concrete issues that we face as a universal human community — environmental sustainability, how to contain violence, how to deliver health care, a range of things.

So what can be done? What you can do is find a way to contribute to this project I am working on, called —

E.J. DIONNE: Call 1-800 —

SCOTT APPLEBY: I was waiting. But I use it as an example. I direct a peace institute, and we are asked this question all the time, "What can we do?" One thing we can do from our little corner of the world in the academy is we are working, not just in the academy but working on this project. It's called *Contending Modernities: Catholic, Muslim, Secular*. But it won't just be confined to those three communities of discourse or traditions of wisdom.

The idea is that Catholics and Muslims and Buddhists and folks from secular traditions, philosophical traditions — that there are source of wisdom and insight that require collaboration, and we can bring

together not simply an interreligious dialogue or religious-secular dialogue on doctrinal matters, which is important in and of itself, but rather how do we work together to solve concrete problems.

This is the good news about globalization, that it is very difficult now for any nation or region of the world to pretend any longer that the problems we all face can be dealt with in silos, whether those are philosophical or technical or other kinds of silos. So what we can do is begin to ask: What new and enterprising collaborative partnerships can be built across and within these religious and secular traditions on concrete problems? Because we are not going to solve these problems with one size fits all or one set of community priorities fits all.

The sooner we recognize that, the more we can have platforms — and they can be very modest, very targeted toward particular problems. But we need to get better at cross-cultural and cross-communal collaboration on technical problems. There are signs in the world that some of the leading philanthropists in the world are thinking this way now. That's very good news.

PETER STEINFELS: Rabbi Kula?

IRWIN KULA: Yes, some things. One of the things that I've learned to try to be careful about out in the world is that the largeness of the problems that we are facing very easily paralyze.

I think, at least what has been helpful to me, is to begin to assess much more realistically in the "I" — "Who am I in the drama and what influence do I actually have?" That is very humbling, because it turns up — and I wind up always having less influence and less importance in the drama than my mother told me. [Laughter]

The reason I say that is that so many of the problems we have — the security, human rights, terrorism, all these problems — in many ways they're not even our big problems. Adam and Eve were leaving the Garden of Eden and Adam turned to Eve and said, "Honey, we're living in a moment of transition." [Laughter]

It turns out there are a lot of things — democracy, capitalism, science — there is a whole range of structural ways of seeing the world. Now many, many people on the planet are beginning to see both their possibilities but also their limitations. No one promised that this was going to be a linear journey. Many of us — and I'm a Baby Boomer, I'm fifty-three years old — until very recently, every day and every year was better than the year before and better in a whole set of measurable terms — even though I'm not big on metrics — a whole set of measurable terms, in terms of health, psychological health; wealth; the place where I live relative to my grandparents, my parents; how my children are, the colleges they have gone to.

It turns out that linear progress — every step it will be okay, at most every so often there will be two steps back but then you'll take three steps ahead — it turns out that that was an illusion and it was a period piece, and it was a wonderful period. Now what we're going to have to do is all be a little more humble that the journey is really not linear and there are a lot of steps back. We better begin to prepare people, especially the people in our own families, that it's not going to be linear. That doesn't mean it has to be bad.

What it means is we're going to have to draw on other sources — I like, Scott, what you were saying — other sources of power, other sources of status, other sources of meaning, other sources of interior depth, other sources, or we are going to find ourselves in despair. That is a very bad place to be.

Finally, when I say who's in the drama, it means that none of us are going to solve — there may be somebody on this panel here, but most of us are not going to solve the problems. As a Jew, I am not into final solutions. I'm not even into big solutions. I'm into very, very, very, very minor solutions, step by step, and incremental solutions.

What I mean by that is every single person in this room, there are practices we can begin right now, whether that is turning off, whether Right or Left, TV that is an adrenalin toxic narcotic that keeps us from seeing reality, whether it's Right or Left; whether it is talking to people one degree separated from us —

not the people we hate, that's too far; but the people who we disagree with who are 1 percent, 2 percent, 5 percent, and simply try to understand what is the partial truth.

Everyone every single week can read something from someone that they deeply disagree with who is smart — not the crazy people, but someone who's smart who's to the Right, or someone who's smart who's to the Left, or someone who's smart from another religious practice, or even in their own religion someone who's smart who they deeply disagree with, and try to locate what is the partial truth there.

Finally, we're going to have to practice the positive bias. It turns out the negative bias is built in. In an age in which there is a lot of destabilization and change, the negative bias gets heightened for good evolutionary reasons. Now what we're going to have to do — and religions historically have been fairly good at this, sometimes in repressive or coercive ways, but fairly good at it — and that is to have compassion practices, gratitude practices, so we can maintain the positive bias.

Because when all is said and done at the moment, it still is one of the greatest times in human history for more and more people. It may not be for us American upper-middle-class who are caught right now, but for many, many people on this planet it is still one of the best times that there has ever been to live. So there has to be some larger context in our own practices that keep us from despair.

PETER STEINFELS: Dr. Walker?

MARGARET WALKER: Yes, I'd just like to say something in response to Rabbi Kula's suggestion that we have to rethink the journey and whether it is progressive, and also Professor Khan's invitation for us to listen, perhaps just briefly, to what the world looks like from the point of view of Muslim people in many places in the world.

I think, in addition to being angering, outraging, humiliating, the post-9/11 experience for Americans, in particular, has been disorienting because it does ask: What is the story of the journey of humanity? It turns out, no matter whether we like it or not, it's not the story of Europe and America simply and only; or maybe even in the large case dominantly; and it's not just the story of Christian civilization; and it's not just the story of the white race, to be blunt; and it's not just the story of man — I just had to get that one in. And so I think this is an occasion of a reorientation, so right now disorienting in thinking about whose world is it and who are we paying attention to and who has claims on us and what have we done. It can't look the same.

PETER STEINFELS: I have a question for Dr. Jones. Several times in your remarks both during the presentation and when a question was posed to you after the next session, you spoke of an alternative religious vision being the appropriate response to the power of religion in its appeal or justification or motivating people toward terrorism. I wonder if you could expand upon what you meant by that.

JAMES JONES: In two sentences, right?

PETER STEINFELS: Preferably, yes.

JAMES JONES: I will just say two quick things. First of all, I think it has to have practices or disciplines that are disciplines and practices of profound spiritual transformation, and, to go back to something I said a moment ago, it has to be a religion that seeks justice. There may be other components, but it seems to me those are the two most powerful things. It has to lead to transformed, converted — whatever you want to say — individual lives and it has to manifest itself in the search for a just society.

PETER STEINFELS: But would this alternative religious vision be one —

JAMES JONES: It's not an alternative to religion. It's a way of the mainstream religions speaking powerfully. It seems to me you can only speak to co-religionists. It's not for me to go to the Muslims and say, "This is how you should be Muslim." It's for me to go — and this is what I do — and speak out against the violent tendencies within Christianity.

I can certainly when I lecture in public, because I'm a comparative religionist, talk about how — let me say this. One of the things that's so striking to me about doing research on religious terrorism is that religious terrorists have more in common thematically with other religious terrorists from other traditions than they do with the mainstream of their own traditions. I think that's a very important thing to recognize. I am talking about the Jews need to speak to Jews and Muslims need to speak to Muslims and Christians need to speak to Christians and Buddhists need to speak to Buddhists and Hindus need to speak to Hindus and so on and so forth. But I'm saying the message they should give has to be not just sort of flowery intellectual rhetoric; it has to have moments of personal transformation and moments of moral social transformation in terms of a just society.

PETER STEINFELS: I wonder if Dr. Khan could follow that up. But I would add a little other question. I agree with your statement about Christians speaking to Christians, Jews to Jews, and so on. Is there any way in which Christians can contribute to the discussion among Muslims? Is there any way in which Christians — can there be any helpful cross-religious tradition conversation, or in fact is it appropriate and necessary that we leave that only to be carried on within that tradition? Professor Khan?

MUQTEDAR KHAN: I want to respond to this comment and the previous one too. I am going on sabbatical this year to write a book, called *Islam as Enlightenment: Religious Color in the Articulate Tradition of Islam*. I think, because Muslims have often not separated politics from religion, what they ended up doing was politicizing theology, to such an extent sometimes that when I read theology, I look at it and I say, "Okay, I get the politics, but where is the theology?" I think that it is hiding right there in Islamic sources. For example, there is a verse in Chapter 5 of the Qur'an, Verse 32, which I call "the 9/11 verse," which says: "He who has killed one innocent being is as if he has killed all humanity."

After 9/11, Muslims kept talking about it. The Qur'an has settled this issue whether Islam is for violence or Islam supports terrorism or not 1400 years ago. The question really is: Why haven't Muslims heard this verse more often before? That is a question that we need to pose to Muslims, not whether Islam teaches this. There is a verse in the Qur'an twice that says: "If you are a believer, if you are a Jew, if you are a Christian, if you are a Sabian, if you are one who believes in God, or if you are one who does good deeds, you have nothing to worry, nothing to fear. There is a reward for you with your God." It explicitly names various communities.

My argument is that the Qur'an has already recognized the spiritual equality of others. Muslims don't have a theological problem of the other. The question is: Why don't we talk about it? So I was in a debate with a lot of Muslims on this issue. Some would say, "No, those words have been abrogated, God changed his mind," things like that.

A non-Muslim professor slipped me a note during the discussion. He reminded me of a tradition of the Prophet that I had forgotten. That's where non-Muslim scholars can help Muslim scholars. That tradition is beautiful. The Prophet of Islam came down writing, he got tired, he got down, and he was sitting under a tree and watching a woman cook food on an open fire. There was a little boy who was playing around. Then the boy ran towards the fire and she jumped and grabbed the child and saved her from entering the fire. Then she turned and said, "Are you the man who is preaching about one God?"

He said, "Yes." She said, "I love my child so much I could never willingly throw my child into a fire. How will your God throw people into a fire?"

The Prophet started crying. His answer was interesting. He said, "God only puts in hell those who refused to go anywhere else." That's such an incredible answer. He settled this whole issue of Jews and Christians and atheists, etc., are going to hell. God will only send to hell those who refuse to go anywhere else.

PETER STEINFELS: I have a couple of panelists who would like to get into the discussion, E.J. Dionne and then Scott Appleby. I have a question here for Michael Perry, and then there are a couple more questions. I beg people to be as succinct as possible because we are heading for a finish line about seven minutes away.

E.J. DIONNE: I wanted to make another point, but I was inspired by this last exchange. I think we can tell each other, no matter what our religions are, this is what it means to be a moral human being. I can learn from Abraham Heschel, King could learn from Gandhi, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. could learn from Reinhold Niebuhr. I think we want to be careful that we are not building intellectual walls that we don't actually believe in, especially sitting here at a great university.

I wanted to appreciate Professor McCauley's critique of rational choice, which claims to explain many more things than any rational human being could possibly believe. But, maybe because I'm not a psychologist, or maybe because I am in denial or because I am insecure, I really didn't like those words. I had an instinctive reaction against the words "emasculated," "superpower," and "humiliation."

I guess I just don't believe that's how Americans felt about 9/11. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. I think that there was a powerful sense of injustice — yes, I do think the language of justice is relevant here — and there was a powerful sense that this was simply wrong. I don't think any Americans doubted that we were still a very powerful nation after 9/11.

That's the last point, in terms of preventing terrorism. I've always thought that we would have been better off if we had seen this action by bin Laden and his forces as a sign of weakness rather than strength on their part. You know, the caliphate is simply not on the agenda of most of the world's Muslims. Yes, there is a lot of anti-Americanism in the world. But I don't think bin Laden's world view represents the view of a significant majority, or even a significant minority, of Muslims. I just want to suggest that.

PETER STEINFELS: Scott?

SCOTT APPLEBY: Back to the question of these religious traditions, Christians can assist Muslims and vice versa and so on, back to Muqtadar Khan's comment. I'm not going to take the bait on the hell question. But as I think about whether these religious traditions can help one another, what comes to mind is this Contending Modernities project.

E.J. DIONNE: Call 1-888

SCOTT APPLEBY: Let me just say, quite seriously, one of the things in which Christians and Muslims and Jews, and for that matter Hindus and Buddhists, Neo-Confucians, and other religious traditions, have a shared experience of is in fact modernity, the modern world. Think for a moment about how these religious traditions, each in their own ways but in some very similar ways, have resisted, adapted to, accommodated, squirmed under, the rubric of the modern.

What we mean by "the modern" we don't have five hours to discuss, but things like the differentiation between spheres of life — not just religion and politics, but the economy and psychology, the movement away from a holistic sense of life around the sacred; the notion that religious matters out to be privatized; the loss and diminishment of religious authority in all of these communities; the challenge of youth; the fragmentation.

The point is religious communities on some issues seem to be at odds with one another — and indeed they are — but they have had a shared experience over the last 200 to 300 years, a historical memory of adjusting to a set of circumstances that is increasingly global. That's a direct challenge to faith.

What we learn from one another is how we have accommodated, resisted, adapted, and how we can move forward in a way to a firm faith, affirm the sacred, and at the same time participate in a conversation about the way forward with the other folks in the world who do not use the language any longer of "the sacred" and the "the transcendent." So there is actually quite a bit of common ground in shared history of resistance to and accommodation to modernity.

JAMES JONES: I did not suggest that religions had nothing to learn from each other. As someone who has been involved in interreligious dialogue for a very long time, that's clearly not my position. What I said was that when it comes to confronting the fanatics within a tradition, co-religionists are the people in

a position to do that, because the people who fanatics most despise are the members of their own tradition who disagree with them.

People sometimes say to me, “Don’t you feel your life is in danger?” I say, “Why?” They say, “Well, you’re speaking about terrorists. Don’t you think those jihadists will come after you?”

The only time I’ve ever been threatened has been from Christians who are more conservative than I am.

PETER STEINFELS: I want to get a question here to Michael Perry, two questions in fact. One, I hope easier, says: “You have talked about the importance of protecting and upholding human rights. But what about those that commit human rights violations themselves? Would those individuals be allowed to keep their own rights or do they forfeit them after violating the rights of others?” I think that’s the easy question.

MICHAEL PERRY: Let me just say, Peter, very quickly, of course that’s an easy question. Human rights are not things that people gain by anything they do, and they’re not things that people forfeit by anything they do. So the fact that somebody tortures and then murders somebody doesn’t mean that as punishment we get to torture them and execute them — certainly not torture them, even if we get to execute them. I think that’s an interesting question about execution. So yes, that’s an easy question.

PETER STEINFELS: The harder one, especially within our timeframe is: “You introduced the interesting helpful term ‘human rights culture’ and spoke of strengthening it. Could you” — just for a minute or so — “say a few things about how we would strengthen the human rights culture?”

MICHAEL PERRY: Well, that’s a difficult question and I’m not sure I’m up to saying anything very informative at this point. It’s just that if we Americans think that we are entitled or justified — as Dick Cheney, for example, does — in doing whatever is necessary to achieve the goal of preventing future harms, and that the human rights norms are not constraints on our action, that obviously is weakening the human rights culture. It is weakening what I called in my talk the “treat every human being in a spirit of brotherhood” culture.

How we cultivate that culture, how we teach ourselves and our children that culture, there are I’m sure many different ways to do that. But one crucial way to do that, of course, is to have our leaders at the highest levels model taking that responsibility extremely seriously and not penalizing them politically if they do so. We are not there yet.

PETER STEINFELS: Because we have many, many more questions that are worth pursuing and we don’t have time to do it, I’ll have to take the arbitrary rule of the clock, which is now at 3:45. We will have a reception for everyone out here in the Atrium. I want to thank the audience, the people who submitted questions, but I think we all owe another round of thanks to the speakers of the day. [Adjourned: 3:48 p.m.]