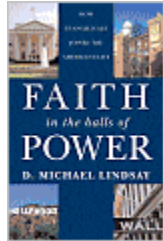




## Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite

D. Michael Lindsay , Joanne J. Myers

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### Introduction

**JOANNE MYERS:** Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, Director of Public Affairs Programs, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council I would like to welcome our members and guests and thank you all for joining us.

Today our discussion will be one that I know will be a welcome addition to our growing library of resources on religion and politics. Our guest today is D. Michael Lindsay, and his book, [Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite](#), is what his discussion will be based on.

Since the founding of our country, America has always had a deep and historical guide for religious faith. In fact, one could argue that religion has always been a major influence, shaping our nation's character, helping us to form our ideas about the world, and influencing the way we as Americans respond to events beyond our borders.

Still, the relationship between religion and public life is a controversial one. Over the past few years, expressions of faith have become increasingly visible in the public sphere, especially since the election of [Jimmy Carter](#) and [George Bush](#), two born-again Christian presidents. Their ascendancy in politics has often added to the controversy and confusion about the extent to which the role evangelical Christians actually have and are playing in American social and political life.

At one time, evangelicals were looked down upon, conjuring up a very negative picture to both foreigners and Americans alike. But in recent decades it seems that not only has their influence been on the rise in all spheres of public life, but their numbers have increased as well.

Just today as I was walking to work, two men from [Gideons International](#) stopped me on 70th Street between Lexington and Third to hand me this pocket-size *New Testament Psalms and Proverbs*. Believe me, I kid you not. I told Michael, and he said it was divine intervention.

Yet the reality, as pointed out in Professor Lindsay's book, is that the number of evangelicals has actually remained quite stable since the 1970s. In *Faith in the Halls of Power*, our speaker presents an extraordinary, fascinating examination of evangelical participation in American political and cultural affairs. He explains how the evangelical Christian movement has played a pivotal role in reshaping the country's political landscape by broadening its agenda to include humanitarian issues as well as environmental concerns.

Based on interviews with 360 leaders from our country's political, intellectual, cultural, and economic

spheres, Professor Lindsay traces the evangelicals' rise to power. United by their faith, this group of Christians has been building networks, acquiring assets, and embracing the call to remake America's politics and culture.

In writing this book, Professor Lindsay said that he hoped to present "a balanced and full perspective about prominent evangelicals, the life they lead, and the world they inhabit," and I believe he has done just that.

Please join me in welcoming our guest today, D. Michael Lindsay. So nice to have you here.

## Remarks

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Thank you very much, Joanne. It's great to be here with you. I very much appreciate the opportunity to talk about how evangelicals have become the new internationalists.

When Jimmy Carter was in office and was elected president, he said that upholding human rights would be a centerpiece of his agenda. For him, evangelical faith and human rights went hand in hand, they were related to one another. In many ways, President Carter's personal faith really came alive when he was playing out on the international scene, much more so than we saw domestically.

When I sat down with him at the [Carter Center](#), I asked him a little bit about his experience in brokering the [Camp David Accords](#). I had heard a rumor and wanted to ask him specifically about what was the first thing that he did when he got to Camp David, when [Menachem Begin](#) and [Anwar Sadat](#) reached the presidential retreat site.

You may be surprised to find out what the first thing was that they did. It wasn't offering a joint statement to the press or answering media questions. The very first thing that Jimmy Carter did at the Camp David Accords was to issue a worldwide call for prayer. You see, President Carter says that his evangelical faith and the respect that he had for Begin and Sadat as men of faith as well drew them together in powerful, important ways. The Camp David Accords resulted in the most lasting peace that Israel has known with one of its Arab neighbors. At the start of it, an evangelical was issuing a call to prayer. In many ways, this embodies the way that evangelicals have sought to become more important, more prominent players on the international scene.

As Joanne mentioned, I have spent the last five years interviewing a full range of leaders, including members from the diplomatic community, governmental leaders, as well as corporate and intellectual leaders, cultural icons—360 leaders in all. I traveled the country, about 300,000 miles, talking to a lot of different people. In all, I gathered about 5,000 pages worth of data. The book, *Faith in the Halls of Power*, condenses what I learned over those five years of study.

Now, I won't give away all the secrets today, so you'll have to buy the book, and I hope that you will, but I did want to share some of the interesting things that I learned, as it particularly relates to evangelical activism on the foreign policy scene in international affairs.

There is one definitional issue, though, that we have to get straight early on. That is, there is a distinction between evangelicals and fundamentalists. This applies particularly in the Christian case.

Whereas when fundamentalists engage people who are of different faiths, they interact with them and they decide this is not who they want to be with, and they'll retreat from cultural life, evangelicals, on the other hand, interact with people of different faiths or of no faith at all, and that actually compels them to further engage in cultural life. So instead of retreating from it, they become more further committed to being fully engaged in the process.

I found that evangelicals have been active all over American life, not just in politics, as we commonly

think, but also in American corporate life, in entertainment, in Hollywood, on the campuses of some of America's most prestigious universities. But when you think about evangelical influence, invariably we think about politics, what is going on in Washington. We focus a lot of times on domestic politics, what evangelicals have done on the debate about abortion, same-sex marriage, as well as the faith-based initiatives.

But did you know that they have been just as active on the international scene? It hasn't attracted nearly the same media fanfare or scholarly attention, but there has been just as much activism, if not more. So I am going to argue that evangelicals are becoming the new internationalists, and in the process they are changing the way foreign affairs happen, at least from the American side, and changing the evangelical movement as well.

Interest in foreign affairs for evangelicals can be traced back a lot longer than 30 years ago. In fact, we can see that it really comes back from their involvement in the foreign missionary movement. You see, in the 19th century evangelicals were really at the heart of the flowering of all the different missionary agencies, the different organizations that sent American citizens out to the far corners of the globe to spread the Christian gospel in lots of different ways.

Through correspondence with missionaries who were out in the field, and then extended conversations when those missionaries came back to the United States, average, ordinary American evangelicals would be staying informed about the latest developments. They knew, oftentimes before other folks did, about regional conflicts and natural disasters, as well as personal and political tribulations. Tales about the persecution of evangelical missionaries became part of the evangelical lore, became part of their core fabric of what they knew.

But then technology began to make communication happen a lot more rapidly and reliably. In the process, evangelicals would learn about some of these episodes in a matter of hours and days instead of weeks and months. In the process, evangelicals became mobilized around the idea of religious persecution. This is a very significant development.

One of the leaders who engaged evangelicals early on is a Jewish man, named [Michael Horowitz](#). Michael Horowitz was a lawyer in the [Reagan](#) Administration. One of the contributions that he made is he really maintained pressure within the White House so that persecuted Jews in the Soviet Union could actually emigrate out of the Soviet Union. But by the 1990s, he became engaged on concerns not just about persecuted Jews, but also persecuted Christians. You see, when he was in the White House, he started interacting with a whole range of evangelical leaders. He started building friendships. He realized, you know, they're not these crazy whackos that you read about in the newspaper, but there are actually some very smart, savvy people that are interested in issues of the common good. During the 1990s, Horowitz started to form some of these alliances with evangelicals. He was faxing them constantly, trying to build up these alliances.

By 1996, his efforts had paid off. In January of that year, the [National Association of Evangelicals](#) [NAE] issued a Statement of Conscience. This particular statement outlined the steps that they believed to be necessary to secure religious liberty for people all around the world. It was really a landmark statement for evangelicals, because by doing it they made the idea of religious liberty a key driver of evangelical political action.

So a lot of us were paying attention in the 1990s about evangelicals being around the [Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky scandal](#), the impeachment trials. But there was actually a whole other side of evangelical involvement occurring on the international front, and big things were happening.

In many ways, the rhetoric about religious liberty not only reflected changes going on within the evangelical movement, but it also demonstrated the ways in which evangelicals were moving into the mainstream. You see, instead of talking about always being interested in converting others, they began to frame their concerns around issues of human rights. This was a part of the movement's maturation.

The evangelical embrace of human rights became a foundation for American foreign policy. It started with President Carter, where he said human rights is really important, but it took off in a big-time way about ten years ago.

After the NAE issued this Statement of Conscience, they began lobbying Members of Congress to pass a sweeping piece of legislation, which eventually was signed into law in 1998. This was the [International Religious Freedom Act](#). Evangelicals were at the forefront of getting this particular piece of legislation passed. It was the most sweeping kind of legislation. As a result of it, three important things happened:

- (1)** The federal government established an independent [Commission on International Religious Freedom](#).
- (2)** They also established an Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom that would be based at the State Department.
- (3)** They required the Department to issue an annual report on the status of religious freedom in every country of the world. The idea here was that American foreign policy could shape the extent to which people around the world had religious freedom through the "name them and shame them" technique. They would identify those countries that didn't allow religious freedom, put them on a list, and say, "We don't like this fact."

One of the more recent developments was the decision by the State Department to include Saudi Arabia. One of America's allies in the Middle East has actually been added to that list. So there is an extent to which this doesn't just reflect all of America's key allies. They are willing to take them to task if religious freedom is not a part of a country that they are studying.

Gradually, the notion of religious liberty for evangelicals didn't just center on protecting their own missionaries abroad. It became an issue where they said, "We've got to protect religious liberty for all kinds of people—for Muslims, for Hindus, for Jews."

Several months ago, you may have read the [article in Foreign Affairs](#) that [Walter Mead](#) wrote. He suggested there that evangelicals have become the foreign policy conscience of political conservatives.

I have to say that his assessment jibes with the interviews that I conducted. I interviewed [Michael Gerson](#) in his West Wing office before he left the Bush Administration. While we were talking, most of the conversation revolved not around the President's speech-making—you remember Gerson is one of President Bush's lead speech writers—but instead he wanted to talk about a thing that he was really passionate about, debt relief and aid going to Africa, and specifically concern about the AIDS pandemic on the African continent. Gerson, you see, has become the informal in-house guardian of the President's agenda for compassionate conservatism. This was one of the things that was really burning on his heart—not just because it served political aims, but for Gerson, and he said for the President as well, it had become an issue of religious commitment.

Gerson said to me, "Christianity is not just a statement about personal piety. It's also a statement about social justice." Now, that's not a term we often associate with evangelicals. Evangelicals have not always been the ones at the forefront of social justice issues. This is a big change within the movement.

Gerson started working with [Joshua Bolten](#), who was at the time the Deputy White House Chief of Staff. They started floating the idea that the White House ought to back a major initiative to try and provide aid to alleviate the pandemic of AIDS on the African continent. The very fact that Gerson and evangelicals are willing to go to bat for this issue just shows how much evangelicals change in a very short span of time.

Just take a side note. I interviewed [C. Everett Koop](#). He was the Surgeon General in the Reagan Administration. He is also an evangelical. In 1986 he made the decision that the Administration had to talk about AIDS as a public health crisis. When he made that decision, all of the evangelicals who had supported his nomination in 1981 began to speak out against him. In fact, there was a dinner that was being held in his honor, and all of the evangelical leaders withdrew their acceptance to attend the reception and issued statements about how Koop had betrayed them because he was now seeing AIDS as a public health crisis. You see, for many evangelicals in the 1980s, they saw AIDS as basically a form of divine punishment for homosexual lifestyle, and they were not interested in supporting any kind of federal initiatives to make the situation better.

But by 2003, the tide had turned in an entirely different direction for the evangelical community, and Gerson was at the forefront of that. When President Bush announced his intention to dedicate \$15 billion to fight the spread of AIDS, evangelical leaders praised it as a bold and courageous move. The irony is that some of these leaders were the very same ones who 20 years earlier had excoriated Koop for making AIDS a part of the public health discussion.

What had happened is that Bush's announcement took a glaring omission from the public agenda of conservative evangelicals and made it into a celebrated cause. It was a new day for evangelicals.

One of the most intriguing developments I found has been that evangelicals have embraced the foreign governments as well as the political infrastructure to bring about some of their agenda.

Evangelicals, like I said, have been concerned about foreign affairs and international concerns all the way back to the missionary movement of the 19th century, but most of the time their interest and their activities were centered around nongovernmental organizations, typically para-church organizations that they founded or big congregations. But no longer. There is now significant evangelical involvement in all types of federal government agencies, including [USAID](#) [U.S. Agency for International Development] and the State Department.

In the book, I open by telling a story about William Inboden, a smart, winsome evangelical who graduated from Stanford and earned a Ph.D. in diplomatic history from Yale. He worked for Senator [Sam Nunn](#), a Democrat from Georgia, and later helped craft the legislation that became known as the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

In many ways, Inboden is not really different from the professional diplomats that populate the State Department. He had all the right credentials to join the Mandarin class that we associate with the Department's establishment—except, for him, religion was not just a variable that needed to be thrown into the mix when you are considering international conflicts. For him, religion is intensely personal; it's a faith commitment that orients all that he is about. As he told me, it gives him a sense of calling to the work he is doing at the State Department. He said, "It gives me a passion. It compels me to look after the interests of others."

And I found that this happened time after time as I interviewed different evangelical leaders. Now, some will say, "Oh my gosh, that's scary. They're co-opting the government for their sectarian goals and they are going to use it to evangelize all the world."

I suppose that could happen if they were merely religious zealots. But to be honest, they are far more complex, far more nuanced, and frankly far more savvy, than that. These are what I call in the book "cosmopolitan evangelicals." Their vision for cultural change is not about the "Christianization" of the world. They are concerned about issues that all of us care about—human trafficking, sex slavery, and debt relief. In many ways, the social gospel that we knew with the mainline Protestants at the turn of the 20th century has become part of the evangelical mission.

The leaders that I interview are still all committed to bearing witness to their faith, but they make a distinction between what they can do through governmental means and what they can do through

religious means. In many ways, this represents a broadening of the evangelical agenda.

They still send missionaries out by the droves, but they have also decided that the federal government can be a way in which they help alleviate suffering and help the poor around the world.

This kind of development is not all game for the United States or for evangelicals. Fights that used to just take place domestically have now been elevated to the international scene. Evangelicals, for example, have been able to keep federal support from going through groups like the [UN Population Fund](#), whose policies on abortion and contraception run counter to what evangelicals hold to be some of their core convictions. In some ways, battles over sexual politics that used to just be housed here in the United States have now been elevated to the international stage.

In terms of how this has cost evangelicals, it is entirely possible that this development will lead to a very significant rift within the evangelical movement. I found, for example, that there are some evangelicals who are basically fiscal conservatives, and there is an entirely different group of evangelicals who have much more liberal notions about economic policies. And these don't just influence how you think about economics. They influence how you think about the world stage. They influence ideas about debt relief in Africa, about foreign aid, and even environmental policy.

Evangelicals have succeeded in the extent that they have moved into the halls of power because in large part they have been united. They have maintained really strict discipline around a small number of issues. The fact that they are broadening their agenda, or at least there is a possibility that the agenda is broadening in significant ways, could in fact lead to the crumbling of that unity and lose some of the central contributions or advances that they have made in recent years.

One of the more contentious issues that I found has to do with the relationship between evangelical support of economic globalization. There are groups all over the evangelical constellation that are very committed to economic development. Groups like [World Relief](#), which was once a subsidiary of the National Association of Evangelicals, provide assistance in poor countries through micro-enterprise development and financial assistance. In many ways, you can say some of these evangelical initiatives are just basically endorsements of neo-conservative economic policy.

A lot of the evangelical leaders—I'd say several dozen that I interviewed—seem to endorse globalization carte blanche, claiming that globalization always benefits the poor. One leader told me, for example, "The resources in the First World did not become the resources in the First World because we stole it from the developing Third World. No, the resources of the First World became the resources of the First World because we discovered the miracle of the creation of wealth, and that's how we got where we are today." Now, not all Americans, and in fact not all evangelicals, would agree.

A couple of months after I did that interview, I was observing a high-level meeting of evangelical philanthropists. Several evangelical leaders were at that meeting, and they preached messages that were condemning this notion of just baptizing the economic imperialism of the West.

A number of evangelical groups have started to develop in the last five years that are speaking out against some of these globalizing effects. So even as evangelicals have been pushing the U.S. government in certain policy initiatives, I have to say that there are really strong differences of opinion. Evangelicals are far from a monolithic group. You have to pay attention to the nuances and differences within them.

Nonetheless, evangelicals, and especially the cosmopolitan evangelicals that I write about in this book, have become the new internationalists, becoming really strong advocates for American engagement abroad. I think this shows an extent to which the evangelical movement is maturing.

I was highly impressed, for example, with the number of alliances and coalitions that evangelicals have built. These have helped further their aims, of course, but not to the exclusion of others.

For example, in 2000 there was a group of evangelicals that joined forces with [Gloria Steinem](#) and a number of other feminist organizations to lobby for the [Victims of Trafficking and Protection Act](#), legislation that was principally aimed at curbing the spread of sex slavery and human trafficking.

I found that over the last 30 years evangelicals have worked with all kinds of groups—liberal Jews, Tibetan Buddhists, secularists alike—to try and get some of their agenda pushed forward.

And they also demonstrate a real commitment to their political allies even when they have strong areas of disagreement. For example, in 2000 evangelicals lobbied the Bush White House to nominate [John Miller](#), a former Republican Congressman from Seattle, and a Jew, to be the first person to head the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Office. So they are not interested in only advancing their own people. Oftentimes they have done a good job of working well with others. They emphasize points of common connection and they tend to minimize some of those sectarian differences.

Evangelicals are becoming internationally minded in very significant ways. It is happening not just at the elite policy level; it is also happening at the grassroots level.

Let me just give you one important example. There is an important congregation that is sort of at the vanguard of a reformation within the evangelical movement. You maybe have heard of a pastor named [Rick Warren](#). He wrote a book that was nominally "well-performing", called [The Purpose-Driven Life](#). It actually broke publishing history. More copies of it have been printed than any other book except for the Bible. So it has done fairly well.

I went to a party here in New York where they were celebrating the 20 millionth copy of the book. [Rupert Murdoch](#) toasted Rick Warren. That was an interesting engagement. I hope you'll ask me about it.

Anyway, Rick Warren decided he wanted to do something significant with the royalties that he got from this book. He invested them in a couple of different NGOs that he founded.

One of them is an initiative that he calls [The PEACE Plan](#). It stands for Planting churches, Equipping leaders, Assisting the poor, Caring for the sick, and Educating the next generation. It is based out of his home congregation of Saddleback Church in Southern California. The goal is quite ambitious: It is to make Africa and the developing world more entrepreneurial and self-sustaining.

Warren, in the process of breaking publishing history, has built some friendships with all types of people, one of whom is [Paul Kagame](#), the Rwandan President. He and Kagame have gotten together and decided that they wanted to help Rwanda become the world's first what they call "purpose-driven nation." They really want to make Rwanda a leader on the African continent.

So Warren's PEACE Plan, funded in part by these royalties, is designed to try and link his congregation as well as a whole range of other congregations that he has influence on, which currently numbers about 400,000 worldwide, as well as evangelical organizations, NGOs, and foreign governments, in a shared agenda to help reduce poverty worldwide. I found that this trend of combining evangelistic projects with concerns such as famine and disease represents an important shift that had occurred in a relatively short span of time within the evangelical movement.

Now, these kinds of agendas often have detractors, and the PEACE Plan has its own. Some experts in foreign aid and development see Warren's plan as naïve and they say that he underestimates challenges that Rwanda will face, such as the West's restrictive agricultural trade policies. You see, even if Rwanda is able to produce enough agricultural goods for foreign export, under the current policy Western markets would be closed to them. So there are some significant issues that perhaps the PEACE Plan has to consider in addition to the five-point agenda that they are working on.

There are also some who have raised some concern about Warren's coziness with Kagame. In 1994

Kagame led the Tutsi forces that ended his country's genocide, but still to this day his forces occupy parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and human rights observers have accused these troops of both raping and murdering some innocent civilians.

So it is a complicated world, and Warren is a part of that. Nonetheless, it is pretty dramatic. His church has 3,000 small groups. Each of those small groups has adopted a village in Rwanda and committed as a small group that they will travel over to that village to help them—assist the sick, care for the poor, educate the next generation—and they are putting their money and their time behind it. So far, about 7,500 congregation members have traveled to Rwanda. And there is an ambitious agenda to travel to not just Rwanda, but about 35 other sites in the next year.

I find that Warren and his church are really at the vanguard of an entirely new army of compassion that is trying to go overseas. The fact that evangelicals are doing this is pretty dramatic.

Are they evangelizing as they go? Sure. That's a part of what they are interested in. But it is only actually 20 percent of the PEACE Plan. A lot of what they are doing is trying to help with relief and development that needs to be done.

Let me close with one final story. Two nights ago, I spoke at the [92nd Street Y](#) here in New York. I was talking about my book and moderating a conversation about how evangelicals have related to the Jewish community in recent years.

One of my conversation partners was Rabbi [David Saperstein](#), a venerable religious leader in Washington, who has been head of the [Religion Action Center](#) of the national Reform Jewish movement over the last 30 years. I knew that Rabbi Saperstein had served as the first chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, which was created by that Act I mentioned, in which Will Inboden and several other Evangelicals had been key players.

One of the evangelical leaders who was a principal in that agenda is a man named [Robert Seiple](#). Now, Seiple had served for a long time as a college administrator at Brown University, which was his alma mater. He then was tapped to be a college president in Philadelphia at an institution called Eastern College. Then he was named the head of [World Vision](#), which is a massive international relief and development agency. It's an evangelical organization based out of Seattle, Washington.

To give you a size of World Vision, last year their budget was \$1.3 billion and they were the largest handler of food aid, and have been on an annual basis worldwide for the last ten years. Most of that aid was donated by the U.S. government. You see, the whole debate about faith-based initiatives is entirely new on the domestic front, but the U.S. government has been using faith-based organizations to deliver aid worldwide for about five decades now.

After my session Tuesday night at the Y, I leaned over and asked Rabbi Saperstein what he thought about Bob Seiple and his kind of evangelicalism, the cosmopolitan evangelicalism I write about. The Rabbi said to me, "Oh, Bob, he's super. He's the kind of evangelical we can work with on lots of things."

The good news is that the Bob Seiples of the evangelical world are growing in number and their influence is spreading. These cosmopolitan evangelicals I find are actually the new face of evangelicals.

One of the biggest changes they brought on the scene involves working with all kinds of groups, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and secularists alike. I think probably the best news for people of other faiths and of no faith at all is that these cosmopolitan evangelicals are building bridges and alliances that are motivated by a common commitment to the common good. I say, may their tribe increase and may their work for the common good bear much fruit.

Thank you.



**JOANNE MYERS:** Thank you very much for that terrific discussion. I would just say that that's just the tip of the iceberg of his book, so I hope that you all will purchase it at the end of the hour.

I'd like to open the floor to discussion.

## Questions and Answers

**QUESTION:** Would you comment on evangelical support for Israel, please?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Yes. It's interesting, because a lot of media attention has suggested that evangelical support behind Israel is in part motivated by sort of a theological idea of what's going to happen at the end times of the world. They make this close identification behind an apocalyptic scenario and evangelical involvement in Israel.

I find a lot of the cosmopolitan evangelicals that I interviewed actually are quite interested in some kind of relationship with Palestine and are concerned for the Palestinians, and yet they still believe that Israel has some favored status.

What I differentiate in the book is that there are two kinds of evangelicals, and you have to keep this in mind. Most of what we see in the media attention about evangelicals is what I call "populist evangelicalism." This populist evangelicalism believes in sort of mass mobilization through rallies. It's the domain of the mega-church. The populist evangelicals have a much more knee-jerk reaction to, say, support of Israel. The cosmopolitan evangelicals that I interviewed, in the ways in which they talked about foreign affairs, actually reflected a lot more nuanced and complex relationships between Israel and the Middle East.

So I would say that there have been some interesting developments that have been occurring, and you can't just make one kind of giant assertion about it. It is far more complex. It's a good point. Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Dr. Lindsay, I wonder if you could elaborate a little more on your last point, specifically how this came about, the evolution of the evangelical movement. You mentioned one interesting transition involving Everett Koop. Another interesting transition from the Reagan years is in the environment, which you also mentioned in passing. I thought as you spoke of another appointee of Reagan, [James Watt](#), who at one point famously observed in response to a question from someone in some setting I don't recall, that we didn't really have to worry about global environmental concerns because the end of the world was coming and the Lord would take care of such matters. Clearly things have evolved since then.

Could you talk a little bit about the nature of that, without giving away too many secrets of the book—this fairly remarkable transition, particularly perhaps with respect to environmental concerns that fly full in the face of obviously official policy within the White House?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Yes, I will. Thank you very much for the question.

The environmental issue is actually quite interesting to see, because there is some significant division within the evangelical movement currently. One of the chief spokespersons for the evangelical movement is a man named [Richard Cizik](#), who is a chief lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals in D.C. He has very much been personally motivated for a concern for what he calls "Creation care." He believes Christian stewardship theologically compels you to be concerned about environmental issues.

The concern has come that other, particularly conservative, evangelical leaders have felt that by paying attention to the environment—they don't disagree that the environment is an important issue to be concerned about, but they are concerned that by giving attention to the environmental issue that they will lose some of their unity and the singular focus around issues particularly related to human sexuality

and the body, and this has been driving the agenda. So that tension between "we're unified and this unity has helped us advance as a movement in significant ways" and the concern that it could splinter and fall apart in lots of different ways.

But I think that the concern about the environment actually points to this wider broadening of concerns about evangelicals. I mean just the way in which they have responded to AIDS, that's a very dramatic difference, and it happened in 20 short years.

I think one of the important things that I talk about in the book is the role that leaders can play in actually shaping the agenda. Rick Warren is probably the person who will assume the mantle of national pastoral leadership from [Billy Graham](#) because he just has that kind of reputation. He also has a mailing list of about 20,000 pastors who subscribe to a weekly update from him. If Rick Warren endorses something, it has ripples around the world in very significant ways. He is personally motivated by concerns about the AIDS pandemic and about poverty.

I have to say that this new face for evangelicals is so new that it catches a lot of people by surprise. So if I talk about these cosmopolitan evangelicals, it just runs in the face of what you think of when you hear the descriptions of evangelicals. But the complexity and nuance, I have to say, was so striking as I did some of these different interviews, and the ways in which they are able to sort of parse out some of these issues both internationally and domestically plays a really significant role. So leaders have played an important role.

I would also say that as evangelicals have risen in stature in lots of different domains, they have rubbed shoulders with people of lots of different faiths and of no faith at all, and in the process I would say that they have softened some of the edges. I didn't find that they have lost their zeal for their faith, but they talk about their faith in ways that are not quite as maybe off-putting or as offensive as you might think. So they will signal some of their evangelical allegiances without actually bringing up an evangelistic conversation or handing out the Bible. You do still have some of that activity, but it looks really different than it did in the past.

**QUESTION:** Dr. Lindsay, I wonder. You didn't comment on what evangelicals think about this idea of democratization and its connection to the Iraq war. I wonder if you could comment on that. Also related to that is what lessons are evangelicals drawing from the Iraq war?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** I would say the issue of democracy in many ways does go hand in hand with evangelical notions of what ought to take place abroad. So the sort of morass that the situation in Iraq has become has been really disconcerting to a lot of the evangelicals that I interviewed, along with the realization that democracy is a lot messier and more difficult to bring about from a different kind of totalitarian regime. I would say that it has been a process of a schooling in foreign affairs that a lot of evangelicals didn't know, or at least church leaders didn't know.

I talk about the kinds of ways in which evangelicals have moved into the State Department and USAID. Those evangelicals are very smart. They are professional diplomats. They know what's involved.

But if you ask the average person in church on a Sunday morning in an evangelical congregation, they would say that democracy kind of runs hand in hand with religious freedom and with religious expression, and because of that they naturally want to support it.

An interesting sort of development that we have seen related to that has been the ways in which evangelicals have stayed beside President Bush in significant ways.

A lot of people ask me: Will evangelicals leave the Republican Party in 2008 because there's not a leading evangelical contender? In fact, just today [James Dobson](#), the founder of [Focus on the Family](#) and a prominent voice within the evangelical community, leaked an email correspondence that he had sent to some of his supporters in which he basically said he would not be supporting [Fred Thompson](#)'s candidacy.

A lot of people say: Well, is this a situation where evangelicals are going to leave Republicans en masse? Possibly. I have to say that there is enormous outreach occurring among some of the leading Democratic contenders to the evangelical community in very significant ways. It's not a coincidence that [Hillary Clinton](#) named not a Jewish leader or a Catholic leader to head up her religious outreach. No. She named [Burns Strider](#), a born-again evangelical Christian from Mississippi, to be the head of her religious outreach. He's quite savvy in knowing how to reach the evangelical community.

So I would say that there are some interesting developments that are occurring that I think will continue to play out in the run-up to the '08 election.

**QUESTION:** Is there a central organization, a governing body, that dictates or mandates? For instance, you say that 20 percent is proselytization. How do you get that number? Is it just your observation, or is there some kind of a governmental body?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** That's a good question. I get the 20 percent because there were five points of that PEACE Plan. The first one was planting churches, which is really about evangelism. But the other ones—that dealt with assisting the poor, caring for the sick, educating the next generation—those fall into a much broader range of issues.

But the question about is there some kind of central group that sort of sets the evangelical agenda, that often comes up. When I talk to people about my book, they all want to know who are the power players, who's pulling all the strings. The interesting thing is that there is no unified central body that is pulling the strings. It is far more diffuse. In fact, you find very sharp differences of opinion even within the small leadership cohort of the evangelical movement.

So a reference to C. Everett Koop. Here's Koop, who's a Surgeon General serving in the Reagan White House, an evangelical, and he is involved in a Bible study that meets regularly with different folks in the Administration. Incidentally, there has been a Bible study in the White House in both Democratic and Republican administrations for about 60 years. So it's not a new thing. That has been around.

He was in a Bible study with a guy named [Gary Bauer](#), who was President Reagan's Domestic Policy Advisor. Bauer strongly opposed any sort of credence given to AIDS or recognizing AIDS as a public health crisis. So Dr. Koop, in his interview with me, uses some very colorful language about describing—and you'll have to read the book to get the full story—but he basically says he did not care very much for Mr. Bauer and really did not have much desire to spend much time with him ever again.

So there are these kinds of interesting divisions that occur. And yet, evangelicals are united in very powerful ways. This is the intriguing development that I think we have to pay attention to.

If you study elites in American society, 100 years ago, 200 years ago, it was largely a unified class that were the captains of industry, the political leaders. They were the people who were going to the same kinds of schools. It was a very small network of people who ruled the country.

Over the 20th century, that small ruling class has broken up and there are different ways of getting to the top. So that somebody who rises to power in Hollywood goes through channels that are very different than the ways you rise up in, say, a Fortune 500 company. You can occasionally have folks like Fred Thompson and Ronald Reagan who make a jump from politics to Hollywood, or vice versa, but it doesn't happen very often. We tend to have separate silos of development so that people move up through different channels.

Because of that, many people in leadership positions are isolated from other leaders. They may know people who are in their small social network, or they know people who are in their same kind of organizational field, but they don't know people in all the different arenas.

But when it comes to faith, and particularly the evangelical faith, which is not a faith that you inherit from your parents—you're not born into evangelicalism and you stay with it the rest of your life. No. As part of the theology, you own it yourself. You make the decision that this is how you want to live your life. So it is something you willingly choose. So, because of that, it becomes a part of your identity that is really salient. It matters to you in meaningful ways.

And so evangelicals I found in Washington knew evangelicals in other places of elite cultural power. Evangelicals in Washington, for example, knew and interacted with evangelicals in Hollywood quite frequently. And perhaps most striking is that when I was doing the interviews in Washington the Republicans were in power, so I was talking to a lot of Republican evangelicals in Washington. They were talking very favorably about these evangelicals in Hollywood, none of whom were Republicans. So you have this interesting kind of cross-pollination of powerful figures. I find that evangelical faith becomes a binding ligament across the country.

**QUESTION:** You just started to touch on the question that I wanted to ask you initially, which was: Is one political party much more receptive to this kind of proselytizing, if you will, than the other? It seems to me as you've been answering questions here that both parties are sort of taking this whole movement on and using it for their own purposes. But what is the thinking, in terms of the strategic thinking, of both parties about how to use these groups for political power?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** It's interesting, because a lot of people say to me, "Don't these evangelical leaders know that the Republicans used them?" The answer is: Of course they did, and they liked it, because they were also using the White House, right? It gave them a way in which they had legitimacy and credibility.

So the fact that Hillary Clinton's campaign or [Barack Obama](#)'s campaign is actively courting evangelicals—the evangelical leaders love that. It's a way in which they have arrived.

There is a very interesting moment where [Jerry Falwell](#) gave an interview to a reporter. The reporter was saying, "How did you know that you had arrived on the national scene?"

He said, "It occurred when Ronald Reagan called me to tell me about his nomination of [Sandra Day O'Connor](#) to the Supreme Court and to basically woo me, to say, 'Give me some time, I think that you'll like her.'" He said, "Before that I didn't know anybody was listening to us. But once you get a call from President Reagan saying, 'Please don't speak out against this until you have some time,' I knew I had made it."

I have to say that a lot of the evangelical leaders that I've talked with recognize that, particularly in the political arena, they are used by politicians all the time. But it's not always without their knowledge. They're fully aware.

And I think, in many ways, the institutional authority that the White House and other elite institutions have given to evangelicals has contributed in significant ways to their rising in public prominence. And it has led to a maturation of the movement as well.

**QUESTION:** Michael, I'm really taken by your framing of cosmopolitan, elaborately socially engaged evangelicalism as being new in a sense. But I'm sitting here thinking also that there is another book to write, which is about the secularization of the social gospel in the middle of the 20th century. This is in many ways an essentially Christian nation. We could talk about that in provocative or complicated ways if we wanted to. We could see the apex of that social gospel in some senses as being the black civil rights movement, which is sort of the sacred event for the 20th century left.

I'm wondering if you would sort of gesture toward a different book, or a different history, which would be about how we evacuated Protestant Christianity from the social gospel at a different point in the history that you're describing.

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Yes, that's an excellent point. In many ways, in the wake of the Great Depression, the U.S. government and other governmental agencies took over some of the responsibilities, such as a lot of the welfare care, that organized religion provided throughout the 19th century. To the extent that it occurred on a widespread scale, you've got the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant bodies that were really providing that. And so you do have this process of the secularization of the social gospel and a sort of watering-down of the evangelistic fervor.

One of the questions I'm often asked is that, as these evangelicals are rubbing shoulders with secularists and looking a little more part of the establishment, are they losing some of their religious zeal, are they losing some of their evangelistic edge? I have to say if you're talking about having direct evangelistic conversations with colleagues or coworkers, I'd say yes there is some of that that is occurring. You don't have quite that same kind of firebrand Christianity that you maybe associate with evangelicals historically.

The fact that Rick Warren is making his name more as someone who is interested in issues of social justice concern, more so than, say, as a pure evangelist in the model of Billy Graham, that's a significant development that we have to sort of pay attention to.

That said, I do think that Walter Mead is right, where he talks about how evangelicals have become the foreign policy conscience of political conservatives.

They still retain very strong kinds of religious commitments. I didn't find, for example, that the evangelicals I interviewed really gave different answers than probably their grandparents would have given on questions about beliefs about the Bible or about Jesus or heaven or hell or who gets there. I mean there are pretty orthodox traditional beliefs in that regard. But the way that they talk about it, the way that they frame it, looks really different.

**QUESTION:** My question follows on the previous one. That is, what has happened in essence to the mainline churches that has led to such a dramatic decrease in their memberships and the subsequent dynamic increase of the evangelical churches and their movement now into the halls of power?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** The straight kind of sociological explanation is that the mainline churches have become the sideline because they haven't maintained a core distinctive difference from the country club society, that you can't really tell a difference between some of the Episcopal churches that you go into and other kinds of social groups. You have some kind of religious vestments or liturgy, but it really doesn't maintain this kind of core distinctive difference.

The reason why evangelicals have been so successful is that they have this sense of orthodox belief that unites them and compels them to action. In many ways, mainliners have lost some of that zeal that sort of kept them going.

But the interesting thing—and I write about it in the book—is that this orthodoxy that evangelicals have is not unlike the orthodoxy of fundamentalists in terms of core beliefs. But whereas fundamentalist orthodoxy is very rigid and brittle, so that it can be easily broken and offended, evangelicals have what I call "elastic" orthodoxy, which allows them to work with a wider spectrum of groups, Reformed Jews being one of them, and they are willing to recognize that they can work together with people with whom they disagree on some core theological beliefs out of concern for the common good.

The language of this kind of common good, or sometimes what they would refer to as "common grace" theology, has become much more prominent in recent years. I would say 50 years ago evangelical leaders would have considered this to be, if not apostate, that it would be certainly something we ought not to endorse because it's a way of sort of endorsing the social gospel of the mainliners. That is not occurring today. In fact, in many ways they are trying to work and build those bridges, because they see it as kind of strategic alliances.

**QUESTION:** I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the group [The Fellowship](#) and its influence in Washington, and whether you see that increasing or decreasing as per your results?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** There is an organization that was started in the 1940s by a man named Abraham Vereide. It is called The Fellowship. There are different names. The formal title is The International Foundation. It has been around for 60 to 65 years. It has been extremely effective.

I write about it in one of my scholarly pieces, how The Fellowship has done a very effective job of ministering to the political elites in dramatic ways, particularly on Capitol Hill and in the White House. They have been part of the ministry to the nation's political elite for a long time, across administrations.

One of the things that The Fellowship administers—they don't actually sponsor, but they administer—is the National Prayer Breakfast, which started in 1953. It is a full Washington moment. It is held the first Thursday in February. I've been to a couple of them. Everyone comes. It's interesting because at the core it is a Christian event, reflecting the fact that in many ways America is a Christian nation. Eighty percent of Americans identify as Christian. And yet they oftentimes have Jewish leaders or Muslim leaders that participate in the event.

The Fellowship has come under some scrutiny in recent years because in many ways they have tried to remain under the radar screen, trying not to get press attention. They have been very important players on the international scene. The Fellowship is an informal group of prayer and fellowship groups that happen in Washington and its leader is a man named [Douglas Coe](#).

I'll tell a story. I never got this confirmed, but neither was it denied, by Secretary [James Baker](#). I interviewed Secretary Baker a couple of years ago for the book. I had heard this story that there was a moment when he was serving as Secretary of State that he was traveling and had the opportunity to go and visit Albania. Douglas Coe has extensive outreach to worldwide leaders. All around the globe leaders know him. Apparently, he had been very active, even in the Soviet era, in Albania.

Albania suddenly was outside of the Eastern European bloc and Soviet grip. Secretary Baker decided to make a surprise visit to the Foreign Minister of Albania for just eight hours. He said, "I got off of the plane there in Albania. The Foreign Minister was down at the end of the stairs. He extended his hand to me and he said, 'Secretary Baker, welcome to Albania. I greet you in the name of Doug Coe.'"

Secretary Baker knew Doug Coe, and so they had this instant sort of friendship. It shows the extent to which The Fellowship has really been extremely powerful in reaching out to leaders worldwide.

There are different areas of controversy associated with The Fellowship. In many ways, they have critics both inside the evangelical world and outside the evangelical world. They are constantly fighting on both fronts. But I will say that they have to be some of the most effective at reaching the political elite over the long haul.

**QUESTION:** I just wanted to ask you to elaborate a little bit more on this last point, that is, their presence overseas. Obviously, in Rian (sic) and Rwanda, the presidency has agreed with a very full program. But there must be some countries where these evangelicals are moving in, perhaps with not quite the same approbation from the government. I can't imagine them moving into the former Soviet Union or Iraq. You know, the South Koreans have just had this terrible flap with these folks.

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** You're referring to the missionaries?

**QUESTIONER:** Yes, the missionaries. That's a little bit different. But can you make any generalization about where else they are, besides in some friendly parts of Africa, where perhaps they haven't been so well received?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Well, gosh. Frankly, the evangelical influence is truly worldwide. So there's not this element that they are just going to the places where they are friendly. In fact, in many ways they were in those kinds of dangerous spots before a lot of other agencies were there.

For example, there was a lot of evangelical outreach through prayer groups and fellowship groups in the Eastern European bloc. One of them was a man named Bill Brown, who when he was serving in the Pentagon, told me an interesting story about how he actually visited a group of high-ranking East German officials in East Berlin and had to be snuck in because he wasn't representing the Pentagon but was there just as an ambassador of faith, is what he called it, and was building these kinds of relationships and friendships.

That's the interesting thing. Many people who observe evangelicalism think of it as a political movement, with a political structure and apparatus, and using formal organizations and NGOs. It's true that that is a part of the evangelical movement. But at the heart of most of what I found to be the truly significant work that had occurred among evangelicals, it is actually occurring in small networks of personal friendships. It is through those kind of small networks of personal friendships that they build alliances and relationships over the long haul.

Because it is not a political movement principally, it's more of a cultural or religious movement, they are able to withstand political setbacks. You know, if their person doesn't win an office, evangelicals don't go retreating into hiding. The 1990s are a great example of that—how they didn't go into retreat into hiding, and in fact came on stronger than ever on the political scene and were doing a lot of other activities worldwide.

**QUESTION:** I was wondering. In your opinion, does the increasing influence of evangelicals in the American government pose a danger to the separation of church and state?

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** You know, not a single person I interviewed said that they did not believe in the separation of church and state. In fact, President Carter, when I sat down with him, had a very elaborate discussion about things that he would do and would not do when he was president related to his strong convictions about the separation of church and state.

One of the things that I found, which I talk about in the book, that relates to my talk tonight is that if you want to look at an individual administration and say where is the most evangelical activity that occurs with the widest degree of latitude and the least amount of press attention, it's on the international scene.

I asked President Carter if he had ever had an evangelistic conversation, for example, with a world leader. He said, "Well, actually I did, and I made a point of never doing it on American soil." He had a conversation with the Chinese Premier about his faith, and that occurred when they were meeting somewhere in Asia. He had another conversation with the Premier of South Korea. The world's largest Christian church is actually in Seoul. He introduced the South Korean Premier to the pastor of that church and he had that meeting. He also had a meeting with the leader in Poland at the time, whose mother had been Catholic and wanted to know about Christianity. He cited these three individual world leaders. But for him it was very important that it never occurred on American soil. For him that was a way in which he could separate out his faith.

Now, not every evangelical in government is able to travel abroad to bear witness to their faith. But I did find that there were very careful ways in which evangelicals thought about the extent to which their faith penetrated into their professional life.

Things changed a little bit in 1997, because President Clinton issued an executive order that basically allowed religious expression to occur in the federal workplace. This was the first time that an administration had actually it was okay for you to talk about faith in the federal workplace. He did it as a form of free expression of ideas.

The executive order basically said: If you are able to talk about the big game on Saturday at work on Monday, then you should also be able to talk about the big church service on Sunday. If you are allowed to post up an email that has some funny quotes on it, you should also be able to post up an email that has Bible verses on it.

So things changed. The interesting thing is that not only did the federal workplace change after that executive order in 1997, but so did most of corporate America. After the federal government changed some of its policies related to the expression of faith—and it's not just strictly Christian; of course, there are lots of different religious groups that are talking about faith in the workplace—Fortune 500 companies and corporate America responded, so much so that there are now Torah classes that are held at Wall Street firms and there are Muslim groups that meet together for daily prayer in corporate boardrooms as well. So there are lots of intriguing developments that have happened, I'd say, in the last ten years.

**JOANNE MYERS:** Michael, I had anticipated that this would be a fascinating conversation, and you certainly didn't disappoint. I thank you all for coming.

**D. MICHAEL LINDSAY:** Thank you. It's a great honor to be here.

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