



SPEECH

Speech to the Family Research Council

Alan Keyes
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MP3 audio

Good Afternoon. I want to say first of all what an honor and pleasure it is for me, as it always is, to be here and to have an opportunity to participate in, and second the work, of the Family Research Council. I think that there are individuals and organizations in America, though they are rare, that one can count on to stand consistently and without apology for those things which God requires of us as citizens. I wish there were more. And yet, if there were, like diamonds, I guess they would, in one sense, be less lustrous.

In that regard the FRC shines in this country today with the kind of integrity that I think we have also seen in its great progenitor, Jim Dobson. And I want to say sincerely, with all that is in me, that this is definitely--both from the point of view of Dr. Dobson and from that of the FRC, there are things in life which you go down on your knees, and on behalf of the country and the world you thank God for them. And I surely thank God for these folks, every day. And so I am privileged to stand before you today and share some thoughts. And yet, at the same time I guess, as I often have to do, I feel like I may end up in some ways seeming ungrateful. Because I really can't bring myself to get up in front of folks and just say what might be pleasing to them, when I know in my heart of hearts that there are more difficult things that need to be said. And folks always I was at the dinner the other night and there was a fellow there from the Wall Street Journal getting an award, and he asked me in a somewhat offhand fashion whether my speech that night was going to be fire or brimstone. And I understand that you go through life and the media gives you a reputation for things. But mostly the media give you a reputation for things because they neither listen to, nor care about, the things that we stand for and believe in.

But today, whatever you came expecting, I want to spend the next few minutes, if possible, trying to reason a little bit carefully about what I believe is a really difficult situation for folks who sincerely believe in the moral heritage of our nation, and in the relevance of faith to our responsibilities as citizens.

There is a tendency--confirmed, as I was being told today, by what many folks are saying and doing--there has been a tendency in the last little while for people to be standing up and, I suppose, expressing all kinds of joy and elation and satisfaction and release, and so forth. And being as how I was one of the most outspoken critics and opponents of Bill Clinton, I can understand why everybody feels relief to have him out of the White House. But I hope that we are not going to mistake this result for some kind of real achievement or accomplishment in terms of the things we care about.

Truth to tell, even if other things weren't true, we would be forewarned against that belief by our own scripture. Since, as I recall, when Christ talked about driving the demons out, He was very clear, wasn't He, that it doesn't do a whole lot of good to drive them out, and sweep the house nice and clean, and leave it empty and devoid of truth. Do that, and before you know it, those demons will be back seven-fold. Now, Bill Clinton was bad enough. I can't imagine what it is going to be like when his spirit returns seven-fold. Although I have a feeling Hillary Clinton

will be glad to show me someday.

That being the case, we need to take stock of our present situation. And we can't be content with the fact that bad things are--at the moment--no longer going on in such evidence. As I always tried to tell people, during the course of all the crisis that was brought on by what Clinton exemplified, the issue before us in this country was not then, is not now, and cannot be, the issue of one man's character, one man's behavior, one man's difficulty. He was simply a sign and warning to us. And the fact that he comes or goes doesn't change our fundamental situation. He represented a situation of fundamental corruption in this nation's soul and spirit. And that corruption has not been dealt with. When are we going to see this?

I mean, we should see it easily enough. Because last time I looked, did the Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*? That too, of course, is just an emblem of our difficulty. But it is a very clear and decisive one, for it represents the truth--wherever you think you are living today, you are not living in the land of freedom that was founded by the great patriots who put this nation together.

I know that comes hard. You don't want to hear me say that. It would be much better if I said, "Well, there's wonderful hope! Everything is okay!" But it not. Because our problem is not the problem of one person's behavior. It is not the problem of some statistic about the family. It is not the problem of anything that you can just measure in a material way. The problem of this nation's life is exemplified in this, and this alone: when the nation was founded we understood that our rights come from God; today, we live under a regime that holds those rights to come from human will and human choice. It cannot be true.

And as long as that is the case, our liberties have no sure foundation. Our freedom has been gutted of its essential substance. And however relieved we may feel, our republic is not safe.

And I think we can also illustrate that, in turn, in some very practical ways. And that is the hard part, see? Some folks have noticed that I have actually been kind of quiet over the last several months. I've been working on a book, and have consciously chosen to back away from the public arena. I haven't appeared on too many talk shows, or anything like that. Now, why?

Well, see, partly because I think we are in a difficult situation. I am not one of those people who is going to show up at somebody's party in order to spoil the fun. And I sort of believe that if you can't say something nice on a nice day when everyone wants to celebrate, just stay away.

And I do it rather easily, because at the end of the day, I don't get my comfort from what folks tell me in the public spotlight. I can hear the voice I need to hear in the quiet of my own heart. And it never goes away. And I am therefore never alone. And never in fear for things I have to do.

So I have sort of sat back and watched, because people aren't always of a mind to hear the truth. And sometimes you shouldn't be of a mind to din it into them when they don't want to listen.

And it is difficult, too, to get up when everybody is feeling all wonderful and hopeful, and sort of point them in a direction of things that are like shadows, no bigger than a man's hand, as the scripture says, but nonetheless ominous.

I want to point to two of those ominous shadows, just to give you some food for thought. I would assume, from the stance that the FRC has taken, that most folks in this room are supporters of some kind of school choice--vouchers, this or that. Now, I think that is a good thing, and always have. Do you ever ask yourself why, though? I mean, there are different reasons that people might have for thinking that the idea of school choice was a good one. Some people interpret it just in the way of thinking that, "Well, that way we won't have to pay twice for our children's education." I'm in that position myself. I have my children going to a Catholic school, and I have to pay for it, and then there is all the taxes we pay to support the public school--it does get to be kind of a burden; it seems unfair.

But am I in favor of school choice just because I want to be taken out from under that burden? To tell you the truth, no. No. If we think money is the motive, then we are mistaken. If we think, at the end of the day, that this is a good idea because that way some people are going to get some money, then we don't understand what is going on.

As I often tried to make clear in the course of my little efforts, I think that the reason one looks at school choice as an alternative you want to take seriously is not because it puts money in people's pockets, but because it puts responsibility and authority back in the hands of parents, where it belongs. That is the objective.

Now, this is what I mean by "reasoning," though. Because very often it is good to remind yourself of what the objective is. The objective is to put authority and responsibility into the hands of parents, because we believe--and I deeply believe--that a school system which throughout the country was based on parental initiative, parental responsibility, parental authority, is going to work better for our children, and better for our society. Everyone will behave more responsibly. And what is most important of all, we will restore the connection between faith and education--a connection, without which, I believe education has no real substance. So that is why it is a good thing.

And then I come along--and I'm not talking here about personalities or names or parties or anything else. Just put a proposal on the table in front of me, and what should I judge it in light of? Shouldn't I judge it in light of that overall goal? I should ask myself, "Will the proposal in front of me contribute to what is my real goal, which is to restore the authority of parents over the schools in America?"

Now, I don't know if some of you have looked at the proposals that have been bandied about and put on the table on behalf of the new administration. How many of you think that they will, in fact, contribute to that overall goal? Think about it. You must have read about them. Because if you look at it carefully, what are we being told? "Well, we are going to have vouchers; isn't that wonderful!"

Well, how to we get to them? Well, you'll get to them because we are going to have tests and standards. Administered by whom? By the federal government. And then, schools that don't measure up, those schools will be given--we'll wag our finger at them and we'll say, "You better shape up!" And we'll give them a few years, to see if they turn around. And THEN, if they don't, then we will consider letting the parents take over and send their kids [somewhere else].

Now, we all know, of course, that by the time all that is over, many children will be long out of those schools, and all the damage will have already been done to them. But leave that aside; I'm not even thinking about that, just in terms of those results.

What am I thinking about--well, I'm thinking about the fact that before we get to the vouchers, we had to go through the federal authority. Oh. Now, let me pause here for a moment. My objective is to put authority in the hands of parents. I have a proposal in front of me that actually establishes who as the authority? The federal government. And then somebody puts a label on that and says, "But you all should be happy, because at the end of that road there are vouchers." Frankly, I think we have to be awfully silly, and rather superficial, if we are willing to accept something that has the label "voucher" on it, in exchange for a policy that actually defeats the purpose and principle for the sake of which we support that approach. Have we lost our minds? Are we in fact that blind? Because I'm not, I'm sorry.

I know I'm not going to make myself popular here, but this is not my objective. My objective is to try to remind us that if we have a purpose, we need to try to make sure policy serves that purpose. And if it doesn't serve that purpose, but in fact uses our allegiance to a label in order to manipulate us into supporting a result that defeats the purpose that we have declared for our policy, then in point of fact we are not dealing here with somebody who is helping us. We are dealing here with somebody who is manipulating us into destroying ourselves. This isn't the best way to do it, you know.

That's why, these days, I am often wont to remind people of that old military saying: "It's not the bullet that you hear that kills you." Bill Clinton was a bullet we could hear. As a matter of fact, unless we were awfully blind, we could see that one coming a long way off. And we could take our time--I actually will have to admit that, like a lot of people, I may end up missing the Clinton era just a little bit, because, come on, y'all, it is kind of fun to stand on a podium and have a target so big that anywhere you look you are going to strike home. This makes the job easier.

But that target, the one that you can use to rally the troops, that you can warn folks, "Look at how bad things are," that you can actually use to remind people of where we really are--that's not the danger. We don't have to worry about the devil when he shows up looking like the devil. Gotta worry about him when he shows up looking like the nice guy who lives next door. Then you have to look carefully. I think it was in medieval times--what did they tell you to look for? What did they tell you to look for? The one thing the devil couldn't hide. His tail. See, the devil is going to show up, smiling and telling you all kinds of things you want to hear, and handing you things that you think are wonderful, and seducing you with wonderful promises that the things you hope for and believe are going to come to pass. He'll speak your language; he'll quote your scriptures; he'll fall down on his knees and pretend to worship your God. And meanwhile, he'll be leading you off down a road that goes in just the opposite direction. But he'll look good. And so they always used to say, he can't, however, hide that tail. He's got to find a place to put it. He can dress up like us, but at the end of the day, he's got to find a place to put that tail. So you always want to look for the devil's tail.

Now, what I was just trying to explain to you, in terms of education policy, that business of where this voucher thing comes into play--that's the devil's tail. It sounds good. It looks good. It ain't good. And if you then go out and you say, "Well, there's hope in this, because they are doing vouchers. . . ." No, they're not. There's not hope in it, because at the end of the day, what you must sacrifice to get there is exactly what you aim to achieve. And this makes no sense at all.

Now, I wish I could say that this is the only area where I see this kind of possibility. But I'm not at all sure it is. I was sitting here, for instance, applauding with heartfelt applause the awards that y'all just gave to folks who have stood up with courage to deal with what, in some ways, is the most difficult moral issue of our time. In some ways, even now, even more difficult than abortion. At one level, in terms of moral argument, I don't know whether you have noticed it, but we actually won the abortion argument. The people out there doing it now are doing it knowing that it is wicked--doing it knowing that it violates fundamental principles of American life and belief. And they are just insisting that they have the right to do this wrong, that's all; they can't, any longer, try to pretend that it is not wrong. And that is progress.

But then there is still another area where we are being told that right and wrong are irrelevant, nobody's business, it's a private affair, you can't interfere, this and that--and where, in point of fact, values are being stood on their head. And if you actually stand for the right position, you are being stigmatized as a bigot, as no better than one of those bad old racists, and all of this.

I look at the landscape today, and on the moral front, in terms of the moral conservative issues, I would advise you to look carefully at what people say and do on the issue of sexual responsibility and sexual conduct. Because that whole issue--how we deal with the demands of the radical homosexual movement--that is the devil's tail. There will be folks who will come to you and they will have all the right words in their mouths, and all the right gestures, everything else. And then you will get to this issue, and suddenly they'll go quiet. They'll be in the back room somewhere, waiting for somebody to come get them, and hoping that they won't.

The ones who don't show up, the ones who won't speak out, the ones who cannot stand forward to articulate the right position--what makes you think that you can trust them? And what is worse, what if they say and do things that actually support the legitimacy of the position that is now being used to stigmatize the moral conscience of Christian people on these issues.

I was put in mind of this, of course, by something the other day that actually lured me out of my position of sort of prudent restraint. Because on Hannity and Colmes, Alan Colmes took my name in vain a few days ago. And he mentioned my name in connection with the Cellucci nomination, and he left the impression--after one of the folks from Massachusetts had made it clear that I had been up there, I had been supporting the folks who were trying to draw attention to the abuse of Massachusetts state funds in support of the proselytizing efforts of the radical homosexuals among the children of Massachusetts, and had gone up there and the Governor hadn't met with me. And he had pointed this out, and then Alan Colmes comes forth and says, "No, he met with Alan Keyes five or six times in the last couple of years." Which, of course . . . I called my scheduler to find out whether I was somehow showing early signs of Alzheimer's, or something, because I didn't remember a single thing about those meetings. And she assured me that they had not taken place. This is good; I felt more comfortable after that. I also felt heartened to go on the program and make this point, which was my only reason for appearing there.

But in the course of it, of course, I could not only correct the record on that point. I actually had to also, of course, say a little bit about why I thought that rewarding Governor Cellucci with an ambassadorial appointment was rather out of place. Because I frankly think that, for those of us who stand for an agenda that is supposedly in favor of strong family values--how are you going to have strong families if you encourage an understanding of human sexuality that puts personal, individual, selfish gratification at the center of the agenda? How can you do this?

And you can talk about homosexuality this way and that--at the end of the day, what it is about is a redefinition of our understanding of human sexuality. And instead of seeing it in terms of God, and parenting, and family, and responsibility, you see it in terms of self and selfishness. And it is not just about a few individuals and what they do--because at the end of the day, they are just the vanguard, the vanguard of an effort aimed at redefining all of our approaches to human sexuality, to conform with that understanding which divorces them from God's plan for family and procreation.

Now if somebody is doing that, and not only doing it, but standing by while government money flows into the hands of folks who not only want to teach folks the general concept that you should not heed Christian conscience when it comes to making judgments about human sexual activity, but actually then wants to go even further than that, and lure folks into the life, and show them the techniques, in explicit detail, when they are 12 and 13 and 14 years old--I am so outraged by the very thought of this, that I actually cannot believe that somebody would seriously put forward such an individual and say, "In this context, this person will represent us to somebody overseas." Does that make sense to you? This is your ambassador, is it?

Now somebody was joking with me earlier, and said, "Well, this is just ambassador to Canada; maybe they kind of deserve it." Now I've got to confess . . . But actually, I wouldn't agree with that. I'm rather fond of Canada, myself. And I don't believe that in any case we should be contributing to the corruption of minors. And so we don't want to do it in America, and we shouldn't want folks to be encouraged to do it in Canada, or anyplace else.

But the key thing is, does this represent the values we want to project? Does this represent what we are? Does this represent the approach we are going to hold up to our own people and to the world on this extremely important issue of moral judgment and conscience? At the end of the day, people are policy.

People are policy. It is one of the reasons why some folks stood up in rejoicing--and I'm going through the litany today of reasons why I am not cheering, but I can't help it. Because some folks wanted everybody to stand up and cheer when the announcement was made that we were going to restore the Reagan era ban on funds flowing to UN organizations that do family planning and abortion, and all of this. Now, in concept this is a great idea. And I not only applaud it; I was one of the people who helped put it in place in the first place, and carry it out. So yes, I think it is right.

But I also know, from my experience in the UN, a little something about that whole organization and that whole system. And one of the things I know is that money is fungible. In the context of an overall approach where we were actually withholding money across the board from UN organizations, and where if you started messing with us over here to support something we didn't like, we could pull the money out of that pot, too. A policy like that works. In the context of an effort that doesn't restore that kind of global restraint, and global discretion, you look good but you may not necessarily do good--because money is fungible. We can take it from over here, and they just restore it from some other pot that we are not going to take money from. And then they vote and ask us to put a little more money into that pot--and who knows? Nobody's the wiser. That's how things work at the UN. We used to have a hard time keeping track of all their tricks. And we didn't really do it, necessarily.

But since I know that can go on, and does go on, what I look for is then not the question, "What policy did you declare?" What I look for is the question, "What people are you choosing to carry out that policy?" Because people are policy. I can't listen to the words; I'm just looking at the people.

And at the moment, no personal disrespect meant to anyone (as you know, that's not my way), but I look at the foreign policy establishment--not the national security one, not the one that deals with defense, but the one that deals with diplomacy and the State Department--and I don't see any reason why people of moral conservative conviction should take any comfort in that team: people who are committed to the pro-abortion position, who reluctantly declare that they will carry out the policy that reflects the Republican platform, but who in their hearts we know to have no real commitment to that.

Now, do you really think that half-hearted people are going to give you whole-hearted results? Because they don't, my friends. And they won't.

So, again, reasons I'm not cheering: it is because I want to keep my eyes open. And in this time I especially want to keep my eyes open, because I understand that those of us who really care for America, we can't be about party; we can't be about individual; we can't be about anything except trying clearly to discern what God requires of us, and do it. That's what we can be concerned about.

If we get led down any other path, if we follow any other hope, we will not only be disappointed, so will our nation. And that is a hard road, just like what I'm doing right now--kind of difficult. Doesn't make you popular. People aren't going to like you afterwards. But if we are not willing to look facts in the eye, then we are going to be duped into supporting outcomes and results that are contrary to what we hope to achieve. And worse than that--worse than that, my friends. Because in what form do you think a bad idea is harder to defeat? When somebody who has clearly been opposed to the right principles puts their label on it? Or when folks who claim to be for the right principles put their label on it? It's one of the reasons I fought so hard to maintain the integrity of the Republican Party's platform, and the Republican Party's position, because I know good and well that once you have legitimized something by putting on it a label of "Republican" and "conservative" in America, then the forces that understand what really needs to be done can be demoralized into accepting a result that falls far short of what is required for the nation's survival.

Is that the position we are going to be in over the next several years? I warn you that it is the position you are being quite consciously maneuvered into. If you wish to avoid that result, then you must think through every issue, not in terms of this or that person who is offering it to you, but in terms of the principles and the goals to which you are truly committed. That which serves those principles and goals, we can support wholeheartedly. That which does not, we must look askance at, and in the end be prepared to oppose. It's a hard saying.

But it's not so hard for folks who read the bible. After all, didn't scripture tell us not to put our faith in princes? Except, of course, the Prince of Peace. And that is not a jocular admonition; it's a serious one. It doesn't mean that you disobey the law, disrespect the king, or anything. It just means that you remember who is the real king, and what law you really serve, so that you can never, ever, be abused into walking a path that leads in a direction opposed to His will. And that requires discernment, and it requires prayer, and it requires courage, and it

requires conviction. And sometimes it requires a willingness, even amongst your friends, to be less than popular in what you say.

And I think we are in that position right now. And I say it here, today--I haven't written it, and I haven't proclaimed it in some general way, because I'm not sure that everybody is going to respond, or even think about the need to respond. But I believe deeply that the Family Research Council, the people who understand it, and are dedicated to it and support it--what I have just said comes as no news to you. It has been your way through all these years. And all that I am really saying is that we must hold fast to that approach, even if some folks tell us there is a good guy in the White House. Because it is not the good guy in the White House we need to serve. The Being we need to serve is the One who represents the greatest good, Who will not be deterred or in any way distracted by their own narrow ambitions and agendas.

I don't know who else will have the courage to take this sort of stand, if folks in the FRC universe do not, to exercise this kind of discernment. Because I look around over the course of the last several years, and I know for true that there is not a moral conservative voice anywhere on the horizon that has not, at some point wavered, backed away from, confused, obliterated, served some other agenda. The only one I've seen that never wavered, that never moved, that took the heat and still stood fast, was Jim Dobson and the people who understand what he understands, and who therefore never backed away.

Final point. We can, after the outcome of recent times, be tempted by the belief that the crisis is over, we go the bad guys out, and now we move on. And there are some good things and some bad things, but everything is okay. Not so. The crisis was not the crisis of an administration, but the crisis of our republic--the crisis of our republic's allegiance to its godly principles, starting with the principle that rights come from God, and therefore have no significance or meaning if God does not exist, and if His authority commands no respect. This nation perishes once that faith-based allegiance to God's authority is extirpated. Once it is removed, once it is rendered a matter of indifference, our liberty cannot be sustained. Therefore, we fight still on the front lines of this nation's survival and liberty.

That battle is far from over, and indeed, as I have said, you know that the worst time has come when you have to look in your midst for the danger. It's what, in a mythical sort of way, I guess, always being told to people who understood by the famous story of how ancient Troy ultimately fell. It was after the enemy appeared to pack up their bags and go home. And everything was right, and people were ready to celebrate. And while they were lying around in blissful sleep, imbibing the fruits of that celebration, the enemy crept out of the belly of the horse, and wiped their city from existence.

I don't think that those of us who base our understanding on God's word in scripture need that kind of mythical help to remind us of what God has told us repeatedly in the first place--that our reliance must not be on worldly powers, but on Him; that our service is not to worldly goods, but to Him; and that, in the end, the greatest prosperity and success will be achieved for our society when it is done in the context of our faithful service to Him.

I think that this was the spirit that animated the founding of America, the spirit that made it possible to get rid of slavery, and make advances in terms of the respect that we have for human life and individual dignity. I think that every great advance made by America on the moral front--including our courageous willingness to stand up for liberty in the last century, in far flung places and at great cost--it was all of it rooted in the end in the fact that the conscience of the American people is shaped by our reliance on and faith in almighty God.

Our goal in the end is to restore that allegiance, to revive that source of strength, and to reconnect it with the political reality of our nation's life--making it clear, therefore, that in our vocation as citizens we will be faithful to the calling of our Lord, which is our true vocation.

Do this, and I believe there is great hope for America's future. But it does not come from new administrations, and political promises. It comes rather from the heart and faith of those people who because they love their country will only act on the basis of their love of God.

Thank you very much.

Question: Sir, I appreciate so much what you've done to promote the awareness of the Declaration of Independence throughout our country--and one of those who chairs the Arizona Family Policy Council was responsible last year for implementation of a bill that would call for the recital of the opening words of the Declaration at the beginning of the school day. We hope in Louisiana to replicate that this legislative session. I would ask for your comment on an interesting idea that was presented to me by one at a meeting of the National Lawyers Association--a very refreshing group that is essentially an anti-ABA group--that would call for office-holders to take a pledge linking their oath of office to support and defend the Constitution with the transcendent principles of the Declaration of Independence. The recently elected mayor of Baton Rouge has done that, and he has signed a declaration that says that, "I pledge that I shall recognize and honor and respect the fact that my oath to support the Constitution means that I will support the Constitution in light of the moral principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence, and I pledge that I shall not consciously take any official action that I believe to be in violation of these principles." Do you think that would have any salutary impact?

Keyes: I think that's a beautiful idea. I can foresee a rocky road for it, though. And foreseeing that road, I might make a tactical suggestion, that we first restore the principle in our education, before we seek to restore it in our implementation. Am I making sense here? Because I think that it is possible that some of the opponents--and there are such. I used to be naïve enough to believe that, being as how the allegiance of most Americans in a nodding fashion to the Declaration is still pretty clear, that it would be rather hard to find people who had the courage to just stand up and make clear that they disavow it. But the extremists in the Democrat Party always take my breath away with their willingness to go to extremes. In some places, like New Jersey and such, you actually found people willing to dump all over it. Thankfully, most Americans understand that on the day we get rid of it, all of us will stand naked, once again, to a world in which might makes right. And some of you may think that that will be all right, but I think most of us understand that we'll, at some point, be on the short end of that one.

So I think that we should focus first on trying to make sure that we have reestablished our clear allegiance to it. And I think that the effort that is going on, and has started in various places, to introduce it into the schools, to make it a little bit like the pledge of allegiance, something that we kind of take for granted as a statement of American principles, as the Founders did--that's great.

In those cases where, as in this case, you can find folks in a local area who are ready to move forward, I wouldn't stand against this idea. But I am not sure that I would want, at this point, to put it on the agenda for our enemies to shoot at--because there is one thing that they would come forward with, then, immediately. They would ask whether or not we are trying to establish a religious test for office, a religious test that is explicitly forbidden under our Constitution. Now, you and I know that we are not. And that there is nothing in the Declaration that would establish such a test. I am simply saying that that would then be used to say, "Aha! You see what these folks are up to? They only want to get it back into the heads of our children so they can clamp some religious tyranny on our people." It's a lie. And I never like, in the steps that I take, to play into the hands of those who are going to lie about me.

So in the first instance, I would suggest that we concentrate on bringing back before our people the truth of our allegiance to these principles. I think that the rest will follow, if we can succeed in that effort.

Question: Ambassador Keyes, I have a question regarding education. Apart from the abolition of the Department of Education, which is probably not going to happen, and with the purpose in mind that children must be educated in a viable way, and that it is the parental responsibility to educate the child--aside from the voucher proposal in its current form, what ideas might you have that would promote parental choice and also promote vital education of

young people?

Keyes: Well, I'm glad you put it that way, "The voucher idea in its present form," because I think that in its right form, it represents the only answer I am willing to give--because I think that what we need to do for education is, in principle, very clear. We need to put it back under the control of parents, for two reasons: one, because better results are achieved when that intimate connection between home and school is reestablished; and two, because we need to get parents back to the point where they understand that it is their responsibility. I find it appalling that the present system has encouraged many folks to believe that this is somebody else's job. And it may be the most deleterious effect of the whole system that it has led some parents, tempted in that direction anyway, to abdicate.

So how do we do that? I think it is very simple. They have got to be restored to a position where, when they make the choice as to what school is right for their child, the resources follow that choice. And whatever form is going to achieve that objective, whatever seems most compatible with local practices and habits within a given area or state that will achieve that objective--money that follows the choice of parents, not the choice of government bureaucrats--that's what I support.

I raised questions about the present proposals because they obviously don't do that. As a matter of fact, "will we, nil we," we don't get to the point where we are willing to respect parental authority under these proposals until we have totally surrendered initiative to the government bureaucrats. We are in fact, with this proposal, standing our objective on its head, and we don't want to do that.

So I would say is that what we need to do is not let bad policy drive out good. Instead, insist, "Yes, this is a good idea. But let's put the implementation of it in the right order. First we give the choice to parents, and then we let parents be the arbiters of which schools are good, and which schools are bad. And through their choices determine which schools fail, and which schools succeed." Then we don't need a government bureaucrat to set up a thing, and test everybody, and all of this. I think it is the wrong direction to go, and I always have. And so I put the emphasis on putting the parental authority first.

Second, once we do that, there is something--and from the point of view of people on a public platform, I would only exhort and encourage people in this direction--but I believe that once you have done that, we then need to look at the extent to which, particularly in the faith sector, we have actually gotten to a point where, because of the said influence of the whole approach of the last fifty years, we've actually seen people in the faith sector back away from what was once considered to be their prime responsibility.

The education of the young was once considered to be, not the government's business, but primarily the business of families and churches. And that was the case to such an extent, of course, that the first schoolhouses--people talk about "one room schoolhouses." Well, often that one room was also the place where people worshiped on Sunday. So close, in fact, was this understanding.

I think we need to get back to that. But that is not something that government can do. Government needs to get out of the way, and give us our money. Not even our money, no. Give us control of our money back; not the money, but the control of the money--they need to get it back to us. And then, WE need to understand that this is our responsibility.

And I would say that, in conclusion, not just about education. Ultimately, I think it is the truth . . . this whole initiative that's being debated, faith-based this's and that's--let's get the principle right first. My personal, ultimate goal--when I say "personal," it's the one I have espoused, as a person, over the course of several years--has been clear. I want to put the responsibility for welfare and charity and mutual help back in the hands of the private, faith-based institutions of our society. That is where it belongs.

And that means that the ultimate goal isn't to funnel government money to faith institutions. The ultimate goal is to get the government up off control of our money, put that control back in the hands of our people, let THEM decide which institutions they will give their money to, and

then move forward to meet what is not the government's, but our responsibility for the welfare of our communities.

Question: I remember seeing, in 1996, images of you being denied entry into--we were living in Atlanta at the time, and the ABC affiliate blocked your entry into the presidential debates at that time. The same thing happened in 2000 in several instances, not all. Just a question with two parts. One, how did you handle that personally, and secondly, what can be done to open up the debate process during the primary time to candidates like yourself, who have more following in people than necessarily dollars that would generate the mass media that some particularly had?

Keyes: Well, it's interesting. I do need, though, to start by correcting the record--because in the last go-around I didn't feel that I was at any point ever excluded from the debate process. And, I'm sure, much to the dismay of some of my colleagues. As a matter of fact, I had kind of half-expected, when we got to California, that Bush and McCain would try to exclude me from that debate. But they didn't. I'm not sure on the basis of what calculation. I wish I could say I thought it was good will, but . . . I guess I don't believe that. So I am not sure that it was necessarily a problem.

What could we do to improve the debate process? Well, two things, just to think it through. Obviously, it is not going to serve a right purpose, if you have debates with 55 people on the stage because anybody who decides to do it can get up and say, "I'm running for President." My suggestion, not only in the primary season but overall, would be that you establish a threshold for qualification, and that everybody gets included in the discussion who meets that threshold. Because the threshold is intended, to some degree, to put order into the choice, you have to make it fairly high. But if people qualify, and they are on the ballot, and they are there to be available for choice--and by the way, getting on the ballots in these primaries, as we discovered, is no easy matter in a lot of states. And we were on the ballot in almost all of them, and in order to get there had to do an enormous amount of work, at the grass roots level. And these were people unpaid, not like some of these big campaigns. So it takes a lot of work. And I don't begrudge that work. I think that we have to have an orderly process, and we should set the threshold high.

But if people do all that work, satisfy the criteria, are on the ballots to be chosen, you're not being unfair to *candidates* when you don't let them be heard from. You are being unfair to *the people* who will go into that voting booth not knowing who the choices are. It's our own interest we protect as a people there. And I would say--partisan interest though it does not serve--that the same ought to be the criterion for the general debate in the final, general election.

Oh, yes, we have a two-party system. I think on most days of the week it is probably still functioning in our interest. On the other hand, though, fair is fair. And again, if I establish rules all over the country, with a very onerous process for a party to establish itself and gain legitimacy enough to have a candidate on the presidential ballot--set it high, yes. Make sure it's not something you can do in some fly-by-night way. But once people have gone out, and over the years have worked and organized to produce that result, you insult the initiative and integrity of our people when you exclude the result of their effort from the consideration of their fellow citizens. It's a travesty. And I don't care what partisans try to justify it.

At the end of the day, I'm a Republican--but I'm a partisan of America, a partisan of the Constitution, a partisan of self-government for our people. And self-government isn't going to survive if we throw away the initiative of our people, tell them that, when they get out and work and organize to put a legitimate choice before their fellow citizens, their work will not be respected.

Question: You have really opened a can of worms here today, I think, with a lot of things that aren't necessarily new ideas. For example, I do not think that there is anyone in this room that is under the illusion that because Bush won, our guy is in, that we can rest. In fact I think that is why we are here, is we know we have a hard fight to get back to where we'd like to be. But you bring up some points that make me wonder what you are thinking Bush is thinking in

appointing people like Christine Todd Whitman, and some of these other folks. What do you think is going on, why these people are being appointed to important positions in our government? And then secondly, now, what do we do about this?

Keyes: Let me be clear that part of the reason I haven't rushed out and taken podiums and been looking for spotlights in which to shoot off my mouth lately is that I really like to think things through and have some sense of what I conclude, before I talk. And I think that Sherlock Holmes, in his famous stories, actually had a good maxim. He says you shouldn't theorize in advance of the facts. That means that you should build your theories based on clear evidence, not just based on speculation.

Right now, the administration is still young. I see some things that I think we need to be careful of. But I don't think that the weight of the evidence is clear yet as to what is going on. There are some warnings, some good signs, and some bad signs, as there are wont to be. But the one that would lead me to go, "Aha!" and be absolutely clear about what the agenda is--I don't think the weight of the evidence has yet produced that conviction in me. I don't know about anybody else.

So I am still in a sort of position of watchful waiting. It's not quite the position of elation and wonderful commitment some people would want me in, but it is where I am, and it is what I owe, I think, with integrity, to the things that I believe.

There are two possibilities on the front of these various appointments and other things that are going on. Among other possibilities, there are two that I see. On the one hand, we could give it a kind of positive interpretation, right? And the positive interpretation would clearly be that you want to move forward toward the goals that you believe in, in such a way that you build for those goals the widest possible support and the least intense opposition that you can, diffusing beforehand what might be sources of vocal opposition, first within your own camp, and then within the community at large. And that would, I think, be an interpretation that would explain some appointments that kind of reach over toward the Whitman side of the party. It would also explain going out of your way to pretend this week that you are getting buddy-buddy with the Black Caucus, and supporting Mr. Conyers in his effort to make sure that police don't act on what they see on the streets. [laughter] Things of this kind.

And under that charitable interpretation, you stand back and you say, "This is politics," right? And we do have to work with folks, and we want to build a coalition that is ultimately going to be successful in achieving the right results. And so I, at least, wouldn't want to get into a position where we prevent folks from acting in a way that we know is required for effectiveness, in order to achieve some kind of phony purity that prevents us from getting anything done. This would be ridiculous, and it is part of the reason I have been sort of restrained as I watch what is going on.

There is, however--and we need to keep this in mind--another, more disturbing possibility. When they send rockets off into space, I believe it is still the case, for the most part, that we do it by stages, right? And you send the rocket up, and then, one stage provides boost for a while, and it drops off, and then a second stage, and then it drops off, and then finally you get the package into orbit--having discarded the stages along the way.

I want all folks in this room, all folks who feel an allegiance to what I call the moral conservative cause in America--the cause of faith and freedom--to consider the possibility that some folks might regard us as a rocket stage, see? And we're to provide a boost to get a certain distance, and then, when the opportunity presents itself, you set off the explosive bolts, we drop away into the atmosphere, and you sustain yourself in orbit on other forces than those. And that would mean that you use your position of power in order to reach out and begin to pull together a coalition of support that will allow you to jettison those who insist upon embarrassing integrity when it comes to certain issues that you would rather be free to deal with as your ambition dictated.

Which is going on, right now, in terms of the Bush administration? As I say, I am in a position right now where I am not willing to be all gung ho one way or another. I am willing to make judgments about particular things, like the education proposals or whatever, just to look at the

policies and see whether they make sense in terms of the things we are supposed to be achieving. But I can come to no general conclusion at the moment. I look at the personnel choices, and it is kind of a mixed bag. It tilts a little more toward the left than I would like--but on the other hand, I think that the Ashcroft appointment was a courageous one, that actually required some work to get it through. Not as much work as some people pretend, but it was true, real work.

So I don't know that we should be eager to jump to conclusions. I think we just need to be careful, prayerful, discerning. And of course we need to continue, on the issues that most exemplify the integrity of the moral cause, to act according to clear principle--whether it is in the education area, the issue of homosexuality, appointments, whatever.

The one thing I would advise against is this notion that, somehow or another, prudence and patience and other things that I am suggesting mean that we have to be quiet and not express our views or our oppositions or our concerns. That's crazy. Because I know politics well enough to know that if you shut up, they will assume you don't matter. So whatever you do, just be honest and clear. Speak the truth in love, here as elsewhere. And just have the courage to keep doing it.

If and when we reach a point where you have to conclude that the evidence suggests some kind of systematic commitment in the wrong direction, I think some of us will just have to have the courage to say so. It's one of the reasons why, when folks came up to me in the course of the last several months--and the natural question people were always asking was, "Well, are you going to do something in the Bush administration?" Now, I had to disabuse people of two things. One, I had to disabuse them of the notion that anybody in George Bush's camp would have any desire whatsoever to have Alan Keyes in the Bush administration. I think that this was far fetched, in my opinion.

But second I had to disabuse them of the notion that I thought that would be the best place for me. Because I feel deeply, and I have prayed over this a lot, that whatever the cost and sacrifice, somebody's got to stand clear so that they are in a position to speak as the truth--so far as they can conscientiously determine it--requires. You can't do that when you are under the discipline of a government appointment. Once you take that position, your job is to support the president. And I'll be clear and honest with you: that's the only way I knew how to do it. When I reached a point in the Reagan administration where they started doing stuff I thought was wrong, I left the seat, rather than act in some nefarious way that would undermine policies that I thought were not right. Be open. Be honest. And that's what I tried to do. And I think in this case as well.

So I want to be with the forces that will be trying to think this thing through, be responsible advocates and voices for principle amongst our people, help to mobilize and organize our forces. And I think that is the position we should best take right now, in order to do what is right for our country in light of what God, in His wisdom, shows us to be right before our conscience.

