



March 7, 2008

BILL MOYERS: Welcome to the Journal. When John McCain cinched the Republican nomination Tuesday night, mainstream journalists sounded as if he had walked across the waters:

KEITH OLBERMANN: The parallel here between the career of John McCain and perhaps the career of Winston Churchill...

BRIAN WILLIAMS: I heard you make that comparison earlier and I loved it, because it's such great reading and people should go back now and see [...]

BILL MOYERS: It's a fact: McCain has long been a favorite of the establishment press, mainly as one journalist puts it, because of his ingenious strategy of talking ad infinitum to the reporters covering him. But it's also because he sometimes stood against the grain of his own party, including what he called 'agents of intolerance' who had turned Republicans into the party of God. Here is John McCain back in the year 2000, when he was running against George W. Bush:

JOHN MCCAIN: Neither party should be defined by pandering to the outer reaches of American politics and the agents of intolerance, whether they be Louis Farrakhan or Al Sharpton on the left, or Pat Robertson or Jerry Falwell on the right.

BILL MOYERS: That denunciation of religious extremism cost McCain the bible belt eight years ago; the fundamentalist forces of Robertson and Falwell threw their support to Bush and McCain was finished. But this time around McCain knows he can't win in November without Bush's born-again base, so he's been singing a different tune — one that sounds a lot like that old militant hymn, 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. McCain started reaching out to the religious right when he threw himself at the feet of his old nemesis, Jerry Falwell. But Falwell has since gone to his heavenly reward. Pat Robertson is aging out, and James Dobson of Christian radio fame still regards McCain as suspect. But new stars are rising in the religious firmament, and one of them is shining brightly on McCain.

PASTOR JOHN HAGEE: John McCain will be a strong courageous and effective leader from the first day...

BILL MOYERS: That's John Hagee, pastor of a conservative mega church in Texas and one of television's most powerful prophets of the end times, anointing John McCain for the White House:

PASTOR JOHN HAGEE: To lead America into a bright and promising future. Ladies and gentleman ...

BILL MOYERS: Who is John Hagee? And why has John McCain been courting him? You're about to find out, as we revisit a remarkable event last year in our nation's capitol:

SINGING VOICE: The lord utters his voice before his army...The lord utters his voice before his army.

BILL MOYERS: Washington. July 17th. A Night to Honor Israel.

SINGING VOICE: Blow the trumpet in Zion, Zion!

BILL MOYERS: Over 4,500 people from every state in the union and ten countries ...celebrate their solidarity with Israel...They call their organization Christians United for Israel...Most are evangelical Christians...CUFI — as it's known — is not even two years old, and it's already a force to be reckoned with. The man behind it is pastor John Hagee.

JOHN HAGEE (at NIGHT TO HONOR ISRAEL): When 50 million evangelical bible-believing Christians unite with five million American Jews standing together on behalf of Israel, it is a match made in heaven.

BILL MOYERS: Pastor Hagee is one of the Christian right's most powerful preachers. Israel is his passion.

JOHN HAGEE: Let us shout it from the housetops that a new day has been born in America. The sleeping giant of Christian Zionism has awakened. If a line has to be drawn, draw the line around Christians and Jews. We are united. We are indivisible. And together we can reshape history.

BILL MOYERS: Christian Zionists believe Jews are God's chosen people, that God promised the land of Israel to their patriarchs and their descendants. They say that the bible requires Christians to give unconditional support to the Jewish people, to be a "good friend" to Christianity's "big brother."

GREG STEPHENS: Israel is the only country that God ever established. Every other country has been established by a king or a queen or a congress or a parliament. It's the only country that God ever established

BILL MOYERS: John Hagee says you need look no further than the scriptures...

JOHN HAGEE: The biblical mandates for supporting Israel began with Genesis 12:3. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you. Secondly, David said in Psalms 122:6, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love you." Because of the fact that this: in history, if Jerusalem is at war, the world is at war. If there's peace in Jerusalem there's peace in the world.

JOHN HAGEE:(Hagee preaches): Free is free indeed! Give me praise and glory in the house of God!

BILL MOYERS: From the 18,000 people who belong to his church in San Antonio, TX, to the 99 million homes he says tune into his weekly radio and television broadcasts, John Hagee has built an empire sharing the gospel of Israel with evangelicals around the world. And as the leader of CUFI his power extends from the pulpit to politics.

JOHN HAGEE: (at CUFI CONFERENCE) I would like to read you the greeting from the President of the United States. I appreciate CUFI members and all event participants for your passion and dedication to enhancing the relationship between the United States and Israel. Your efforts set a shining example for others and help lay the foundation of peace for generations to come. Laura and I send our best wishes for a memorable event. May God bless you. George W. Bush, president of the United States.

BILL MOYERS: At their July gathering in Washington, CUFI delegates focused on Israel's security and the threat of radical Islam.

CLIFFORD MAY: ...Islamic imperialists and supremacists...

BILL MOYERS: And on their agenda: lobbying in Congress for their pro-Israel platform.

DAVID BROG: Ladies and gentlemen, we're in Washington, DC. We're going to talk to our congressmen so it's extremely important that we take our faith and our values and we marry it with knowledge and understanding of current events. And be able to speak in the language of Washington when we go and speak to our congressmen and senators.

BILL MOYERS: Many of Washington's political elites came to them, presidential contender Sen. John McCain:

JOHN MCCAIN: It's very hard trying to do the lords work in the city of Satan and I'm very grateful to have all of you here.

BILL MOYERS: Sen. McCain was joined by House minority whip Roy Blunt.

ROY BLUNT: This is a mission, this is a vision that I believe is a vision for God's time.

BILL MOYERS: Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.

NEWT GINGRICH: Because this group is made up of people who believe, they understand the passion that comes from belief.

BILL MOYERS: And Sen. Joe Lieberman.

JOSEPH LIEBERMAN: ...of describing Pastor Hagee in the words that the Torah uses to describe Moses, he is an "Ish Elokim," a man of God and those words really do fit him; and, I'd add something else, like Moses he's become the leader of a mighty multitude, even greater than the multitude that Moses led from Egypt to the promised land.

BILL MOYERS: With Hagee leading the way, CUFI delegates walked the halls of Congress. Armed with talking points, they divided into small groups to call on individual senators and representatives.

VOICE: Congressman Phil Gingrey, he's my Congressman.

BILL MOYERS: The delegates wasted no time getting to one of their top concerns — the disputed territories and the Israeli peace process.

FEMALE VOICE: The land for peace obviously didn't work in the Gaza Strip. And we're proponents that we don't give up any more land. It didn't work. And anything else was just going to cause further loss of land in the state of Israel.

PHIL GINGREY: Yeah. I mean, I think it's a good point. And but on the other hand, I would urge Israel not to put a stick in the eye of the Palestinians if they don't have to.

VICKI LEEMAN: I think you need to hear clearly, sir, that this group is totally against giving any of Israel's land for peace.

BILL MOYERS: There is no room for compromise here. Christians United for Israel opposes the Bush administration's roadmap for peace and urges American leaders to abandon it. The plan calls for a two-state solution in the region — if Palestinians lay down their arms and recognize Israel's right to exist, Israel will withdraw from certain disputed territories and move to help create an independent Palestine. For these believers the roadmap is inherently flawed because it is not biblically sound as Hagee often preaches to his congregation:

JOHN HAGEE: But the Palestinians have never owned the land. I want you to hear this very clearly. The Land of Israel was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed in an eternal covenant. It is recorded in the book of Genesis. The boundaries are there in the Bible. And that land belongs to the Jewish people today, tomorrow and forever because it is their covenant by the word of God.

BILL MOYERS: According to John Hagee, devastating consequences await those who violate God's word. God, he says, may already have sent hurricane Katrina to punish the U.S. for its role in helping Israel remove Jewish settlers from the Gaza strip.

JOHN HAGEE: I want to ask Washington a question. Is there a connection between the

9,000 Jewish refugees being forcibly removed from their homes in the Gaza Strip now living in tents and the thousands of Americans who have been expelled from their homes by this tremendous work of nature? Is there a connection there? If you've got a better answer, I'd like to hear it.

BILL MOYERS: Back in Washington, CUFI delegates were briefed on what the organizers now consider the defining issue — the challenge of radical Islam.

GARY BAUER: At this very moment there are evil men who worship death. It is a sick philosophy that goes by many names. But I haven't found a better name than Islamofascism because it summarizes what we are up against.

FRANK GAFFNEY: The Islamofascists have Israel in mind as an appetizer. We are the main course.

BRIGITTE GABRIEL: The difference, my friends, between Israel and the Arabic world is a difference between civilization and barbarism. It's a difference between goodness and evil. And this is what we're witnessing in the Arabic world. They have no soul. They are dead set on killing and destruction. Israel's enemies are our enemies.

BILL MOYERS: Brigitte Gabriel was one of the most popular speakers here. Her "American Congress for Truth" is devoted to fighting "the spread of militant Islam" in America.

BRIGITTE GABRIEL: Here's what we're doing. We're taking cities and state and organizing them into chapters. We are appointing people to monitor the media in your local community. Your local newspaper that is anti-Israel, anti-America.

BILL MOYERS: Gabriel is a Maronite Christian from Lebanon. She called on the CUFI delegates to keep their eyes open for the enemy within.

BRIGITTE GABRIEL: Another thing you can do is monitor universities. Monitor what the professor is saying about the Middle East policy and our foreign policy. The students cannot challenge their professors because they get bad grades. But you can. It's your job and your civic duty to do so. Another thing you can do — another thing you can do — if you know there is a suspicious mosque in your community or suspicious Islamic organization, find out who owns the deed to that mosque. Is it some Saudi sheiks or Islamic sheiks outside of America? Write their names down. Come home. Call your local FBI office. Turn the names to them. This is how they can start monitoring them. Israel's enemies are our enemies.

JOHN HAGEE: The head of the beast of radical Islam in the Middle East is Iran and its fanatical president Ahmadinejad. Ladies and gentlemen, we are reliving history. It is 1938 all over again. Iran is Germany. Ahmadinejad is Hitler. And Ahmadinejad, just like Hitler, is talking about killing the Jews.

BILL MOYERS: Ahmadinejad has said that Islam would soon reign supreme in a world without the United States and Zionism and that, quote, "Israel should be wiped off the map".

BILL MOYERS: As Iran has been actively enriching uranium, the world has been scrambling to determine how it will be used — as an energy supply or as a weapon to make good on Ahmadinejad's threats to Israel.

CUFI DELEGATE: Congressman, we love you. You're a fellow Georgian.

BILL MOYERS: At the capitol building, the CUFI delegation from Georgia urged representative Lynn Westmoreland to recognize the danger Iran poses.

CUFI DELEGATE: But the greatest threat that's facing us is Iran.

WESTMORELAND: That's right.

CUFI DELEGATE: And the nuclear capability that they are soon reaching. And hopefully we, as Americans, will not allow that to happen.

JOHN HAGEE: What we are trying to say to them is that a) we want you to continue your support for the State of Israel. Secondly, we want you to recognize that Iran is a clear and present danger to the United States of America and Israel. And we support Senator Joseph Lieberman, that it's time for our country to consider a military preemptive strike against Iran if they will not yield to diplomacy. And if they continue the pursuit of nuclear weapons we must not allow them to manipulate the economy of the world because they have a nuclear weapon.

JOHN HAGEE: As we speak Iran is building nuclear weapons...

BILL MOYERS: For John Hagee, what happens in Iran is not just a matter of politics — it's also a matter of theology. His study of biblical prophecy has led him to believe that Iran will figure prominently in the end times — the apocalypse and the return of Jesus.

JOHN HAGEE: Iran will use those weapons on Israel. Anyone who is smart enough to wave bye-bye knows that.

BILL MOYERS: In his book *Jerusalem Countdown*, he writes, "Iran with nuclear weapons will transform the Bush administration's roadmap for peace program into a racetrack to Armageddon." From his reading of the bible he lays out a scenario predicting that if Israel and America attack Iran, Russia and its allies — including Iran — will attack Israel, triggering Ezekiel's war. God will crush the invading forces as — quote — "He crushed pharaoh, Haman, and Hitler so that Israel and the world shall know that I am the lord". Says John Hagee, the battle of Armageddon will follow...

JOHN HAGEE: They intend to bring that bomb online and if they use it, you think gas is high now. Life as we know it is going to change instantly and forever and I'm telling you, you need to get your life ready to meet the son of God in all his glory. It's going to happen, it's going to happen, it's going to happen. [Applause]

JOHN HAGEE: There are going to be people in this tribulation period who do not take...

BILL MOYERS: There will be plenty of bloodshed...

JOHN HAGEE: They will have their heads cut off...

BILL MOYERS: But get ready — it's coming.

JOHN HAGEE: We are this close to the rapture of the church of Jesus Christ...

BILL MOYERS: For true believers like Hagee and his followers, it will be a day of deliverance. They will have been raptured — literally lifted into the air — to join the lord in the heavens. End times theology has blossomed from a cottage industry into a dynamic market for books, video games and movies.

BILL MOYERS: "The Left Behind" movie series is so popular it shows up in sermons around the country. John Hagee even had a cameo appearance in it. But because end times theology strikes a lot of people as threatening — especially as it relates to the fate of Jews — Hagee plays it down at political gatherings of CUFI.

REPORTER: I wanted to ask you, you've written a lot about bible prophecy and the relation, relationship to ...

BILL MOYERS: He brushed aside questions about it at this press conference in Washington...

PASTOR JOHN HAGEE: I can make it very clear for you. Our support of Israel has

absolutely nothing to do with End Times prophecy. It has absolutely nothing to do with eschatology. We support Israel because we feel Israel is in greater danger right now than in any time in statehood.

BILL MOYERS: So as the head of CUFI, with prominent politicians present — Hagee continues to insist that the peace and security of Israel is an end in itself but as a pre-eminent preacher of end times theology, he holds that the apocalypse is coming no matter what — events in the Middle East anticipate it — even require it.

JOHN HAGEE: Listen to me. Just as I wrote in Jerusalem Countdown, Ahmadinejad will not respond to diplomacy. He has no intention of yielding to sanctions. He's stalling for time to make nuclear weapons to attack Israel and to attack the United States. He will do it. Iran is a clear and present danger to the survival of Israel. To the United States of America and the western world — western world. Therefore it is time for America to embrace the words of Senator Joseph Lieberman and consider a military preemptive strike against Iran to prevent a nuclear holocaust in Israel and a nuclear attack in America.

BILL MOYERS: That was last summer. Now John McCain is John Hagee's man:

JOHN MCCAIN: I'm very honored by Pastor John Hagee's endorsement today. He has been the staunchest leader of our Christian evangelical movement in many areas, but especially, most especially, his close ties and advocacy for the freedom and independence of the state of Israel.

BILL MOYERS: But it's not Hagee's support of Israel that is beyond the mainstream — it's his bigotry towards different faiths. Here's what he thinks of Catholics:

PASTOR JOHN HAGEE: This is the anti-christ system; this is the apostate church this false cult system that was born in the Genesis ten that progressed through Israel and became veil worship God says the day is going to come when I'm going to cause this beast to devour this apostate system.

BILL MOYERS: That's why many Catholics were outraged last week when McCain welcomed Hagee's endorsement:

BILL DONOHUE, PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC LEAGUE: This thing is out of bounds. And this is why McCain has to look at this. It's the totality of what the man stands for. He's been bashing Catholicism for decades and making a mountain of money over it.

BILL MOYERS: And here's what John Hagee told NPR about Hurricane Katrina:

JOHN HAGEE: I believe that New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God, that there was to be a homosexual parade on the Monday that the Katrina came, and the promise of that parade was that it was going to reach a level of sexuality never demonstrated before in any of the other Gay Pride parades. So I believe that the judgment of God is a very real thing, and I believe that the Hurricane Katrina was, in fact, the judgment of God against the city of New Orleans.

BILL MOYERS: Despite Hagee's fantastical theology, McCain would not reject his blessing, although he did manage to qualify it:

SEN. JOHN MCCAIN: It's pretty obvious that you get a lot of endorsements in a political campaign. That does not mean I embrace the views of the people who have endorsed me; that means they embrace my views. So I'm sure I may disagree with some things that Pastor Hagee has said in the past but that does not mean that I endorse him.

BILL MOYERS: But exactly which of Hagee's views does McCain agree with and which does he reject? And will the press and secular conservatives insist that he explain why he has now embraced what he once abhorred as the "outer fringes" of Politics? We'll hear some discussion of these questions in our next segment. But first, remember that this is the time we need you to be the public in public broadcasting and that your station needs your support.

[NOTE: NOT ALL STATIONS WILL BROADCAST THIS CONTENT]

BILL MOYERS:

It's time once again to take a look at some of the comments you've been sending to us at the journal. You've been writing and we've been reading.

First, our conversation with MSNBC's Keith Olbermann had many of you talking about his strong ideas on politics, the media, and the future of our country.

KEITH OLBERMANN (ON COUNTDOWN): "I accuse you, Mr. Bush, of lying this country into war. I accuse you of fabricating in the minds of your own people..)

KEITH OLBERMANN: When I get angry on the air, it's because I'm angry about that particular subject and because of the revision of this country that has been done under our noses for the last seven years against the will of the people...

I applaud Keith Olbermann for many excellent commentaries. I think it's important to understand that censorship can occur in many ways. Censorship can occur not only in terms of the falsehoods on the right but in the limitations and the subtle innuendoes in the left-liberal press.

Nathaniel Heidenheimer

Sometimes Olbermann tends to be a bit over-zealous when criticizing all things Bush or Fox and O'Reilly, and this is where he gets himself in "journalistic" trouble, providing lots of material for the right to use against him. I do like his show, but don't like when he falls into the same bombastic nonsense as the loud mouths on the right.

Kat

You presented Olbermann's "side" as if there are two sides to truth. You presented him as just being on one side...liberals. That's shallow for a journalist. It wasn't about liberal versus conservative as you suggest, but truth versus lies from this administration. Olbermann is not presenting a liberal view, he is responding to the lies these conservatives are spouting on all the other media shows. Not picking sides Bill...speaking truth. Why don't you know that?

Joseph Bacon

And as election season heats up and campaign ads fill the airwaves, here are some of your comments about the money that the media giants are making off our democratic process.

BROOKS JACKSON: I think in too many cases broadcasters and cable outlets are making huge amounts of money from running these political ads. Which in many cases are false and misleading.

I would like to suggest that the awarding of broadcast licenses have a provision of free time for political debates to secure a license. The American people have been ill served by our government in allowing our airwaves to be monopolized by just a few corporate behemoths. Nothing will change until we force the issue by focusing on the matter at every opportunity.

Saul P. Heller

I believe you missed the most obscene point: for months now the same media has been dictating to the American public that the winner is the candidate with the most dollars to spend.

Nancy Hansen

Is it fair to suggest that big media loves elections like contractors love wars? Your piece today certainly allows one to think along those lines. Luca Menato

Finally, professor ron walters' interview sparked a debate about race and the presidency.

BILL MOYERS: Can Obama win?

RONALD WALTERS: Mathematically and analytically there's the chance, yes, that he could win. When you look at the history of this country and the history of racism and race in particular there is a huge, huge doubt that he will eventually become president of the United States.

Dr. Ronald Walters is very bright and articulate but seems overly pessimistic and cynical. Such a depth of knowledge of black history seems to prevent Dr. Walters from believing that a black man will ever be elected president. It is sad to think that after four decades, some are so suspect of true positive change that they cannot and will not believe that such change is possible.

Susan Garvan

I think this program misses the point about who could or should be elected president. The question should not be about someone's race or sex, but who they are as a person, and what they believe. I must say, from what I see, Clinton and Obama are more of the same, politics as usual. Just because they aren't white men doesn't mean their priorities are going to be any different.

Paul Andersen

Keep telling us what you think of the broadcast - by [mail](#), [e-mail](#), or on the [blog at pbs.org](#).

BILL MOYERS: Welcome back, and thanks for your support of this station. Joining me now to talk about what John McCain's nomination means for conservatism and thing country are Matt Welch and Mickey Edwards, whose books you ought to read as this fascinating campaign unfolds.

It's often been said that when Mickey Edwards speaks conservatives listen. And that's why they're digging into his new book, published this week, with the title RECLAIMING CONSERVATISM: HOW A GREAT AMERICAN POLITICAL MOVEMENT GOT LOST, AND HOW IT CAN FIND IT'S WAY BACK. In it, he argues that by building an imperial presidency, so-called conservatives have gutted the system of checks and balances, abandoned due process, and trampled upon our civil liberties, strong views from a lifelong conservative. Mickey Edwards served in Congress for 16 years, was national chairman of the American Conservative Union, and a founding trustee of the Heritage Foundation. He's now a vice president of the Aspen Institute.

Matt Welch lit up the blogs with his book, MCCAIN: THE MYTH OF A MAVERICK, and the long article he wrote for the libertarian Magazine REASON, where he is editor in chief. Look at this headline over his article. "Be afraid of President McCain, the frightening mind of an authoritarian maverick. Welcome to both of you.

MATT WELCH: Thank you very much for having me.

BILL MOYERS: Have you endorsed a candidate yet?

MATT WELCH: No, we haven't. The Reason magazine actually doesn't get into the business of endorsing candidates. We just write about them and instill a certain institutional fear about what might come.

BILL MOYERS: Well, what's the answer to the Bill Moyers you ask in the magazine? What's the fear from President McCain?

MATT WELCH: John McCain has an ideology that's little appreciated and little understood by the press. He receives more adoring press probably than any Republican that I can think of in my lifetime, or certainly the last 20 years. And by the time you're done reciting all of the marvelous things in his biography and talk about how much fun it was on the Straight Talk Express, there's not a whole lot of time to talk about where he came up with his ideas about what the government should or should not do.

His ideas about what the government should do are basically, he wants to restore your faith

and my faith and Mickey's faith in the idea of America being a shining city on the hill. He wants to restore our faith in governing institutions, in the federal government, in other words, and use the federal government as a sort of blunt instrument to go after anything that makes us cynical about those institutions and the greatness of America. It's a sort of national greatness conservatism which has a kind of militaristic component, let's say, in which we are all supposed to sort of sacrifice ourselves to the greater cause, the higher power of American nationalism.

BILL MOYERS: You say he's the most pro-war candidate in the last decade.

MATT WELCH: People forget this, but in 1999 and 2000, when he was running against George Bush, he was the neoconservative candidate. You know, four years before the doctrine of preemptive war ever even occurred to Bush, McCain was running on a campaign of rogue state rollback, is what he called it, in which America was supposed to go anywhere there was an authoritarian dictatorship. We were supposed to help the insurgents materially, covertly, however. And if those insurgents got cracked down upon about the government, then we support them militarily. It is a much more radical and interventionist approach than George Bush ever had, certainly at the beginning of his presidency.

BILL MOYERS: So you ask in your book, it's time that we look for the real McCain. Well, Mickey Edwards knows the real McCain.

MICKEY EDWARDS: I do.

BILL MOYERS: And they've been friends for a long time. And you're supporting him, right?

MICKEY EDWARDS: No. No, I'm not. I actually have not taken any position in the campaign.

BILL MOYERS: You haven't?

MICKEY EDWARDS: No. I think there are things about John that are quite good. You know, I think John believes in most conservative principles about limited government, and so forth. But he does have one tendency that does bother me. That is, I think he has a little bit of the same Bush attitude, that when I am put in charge, it is my job, you know, to make things work, to protect the country, whatever. Without the constraints that the constitution puts on the presidency. And I was very heartened when Charlie Savage of THE BOSTON GLOBE asked the various presidential candidates, will you follow President Bush's habit of issuing signing statements saying, I as president, don't have to follow the law — McCain said he would not do that. But that I do think it is part of John's personality to just take charge. And you know, the constitution doesn't you know, some presidents think they're the head of government, right. They're not the head of state, but they're not head of government. And I think—

BILL MOYERS: Wait a minute. What do you mean?

MICKEY EDWARDS: We have a tripartite system. I hate to tell you this, but the executive branch — head of the executive branch is not the head of government. It's one of three equal branches. And George Bush forgot that. And I'm not totally sure that John McCain would remember it.

BILL MOYERS: Did you watch the endorsement of McCain by George Bush earlier this week?

PRESIDENT BUSH: In 2000 I said, vote for me, I'm an agent of change. In 2004, I said, I'm not interested in change — I want to continue as President. Every candidate has got to say "change." That's what the American people expect. And the good news about our candidate is, there will be a new President, a man of character and courage — but he's not going to change when it comes to taking on the enemy. And there's still an enemy that lurks, an enemy that wants to strike us. And this country better have somebody in that

Oval Office who understands the stakes, and John McCain understands those stakes.
SENATOR MCCAIN: Thank you, sir. I don't have anything to add.

BILL MOYERS: Combine that with what you said and what write, and it seems to me that Bush is echoing — it seems to me that McCain is echoing Bush and Cheney when it comes to the imperial presidency, the power of the presidency, to the foreign expeditions, to a strong — to, you know, doubling the budget. Am I wrong on that?

MICKY EDWARDS: No. I think he's making a mistake in showing up at the White House, standing beside George Bush. You know, the thing that gave him all of the credibility that he had was that he was perceived as a maverick. He was perceived as somebody who is not in George Bush's pocket. You know, now, he undercuts that. First of all, he's already won the nomination, right. So why does he need to play to that very small base of Bush supporters?

BILL MOYERS: Why?

MICKY EDWARDS: You know, I think — well, you know, it was — I think it was a mistake. Because if I were him, I would say, "The Bush presidency is ending. I'm something different." Not "I'm a continuation." The country does not want a continuation of George W. Bush.

MATT WELCH: A very interesting artifact of this primary season that if you look in the early elections — before Super Tuesday, McCain never won even a plurality among voters who self-identify this Republican when asked.

MATT WELCH: Even in close primaries. He was tied at best, with anybody. He won because he won two to one on the vote that was anti-war, that was angry at Bush, and who described themselves as independents. And independents in this country, even more than regular citizens, are completely against the war. People— he won the Republican nomination because of the anti-war vote.

BILL MOYERS: Fascinating.

MATT WELCH: It's fascinating.

BILL MOYERS: How do you explain it?

MATT WELCH: I think it's partially because he's a charismatic, likeable fellow. People have a fond memory of the 2000 campaign, when he was being very mavericky, and he was calling, you know, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson agents of intolerance, and these kind of things. And he seemed to speak his mind in a way that was unusual for a politician. And he's just sort of a charismatic personality.

But it's also because I believe that he's both overexposed and under-examined. People don't really look at his foreign policy, his experience, his family tradition. His father and grandfather were both four star admirals in the U.S. Navy. And not just that. They were both really strong advocates for a sort of 19th century British model of imperialism, for lack of a better word. Of using the huge navy to guarantee the world, make the world safe for democracy. This is the tradition that John McCain has marinated in his whole life. And it was only Vietnam that sort of knocked him off his game. It reduced his faith in the sort of — the right of America's might. He regained that faith right about the time that he started running for president for the first time. And since then, he's right on message. And that message is more interventionist, it's more explicitly militaristic than George Bush.

MICKY EDWARDS: Now, you know, I think there's another factor. And that is that Hillary and Obama are two evenly matched political heavyweights. There are some other heavyweights who maybe didn't do as well, like Joe Biden, in that race. John McCain — you know, Fred Thompson was almost a joke in his candidacy. Rudy Giuliani decided not to even campaign until Florida. You know, so McCain really did not have much of a challenge for the nomination. And I think you had some person of a higher quality, or a more forceful campaign style, been able to take him on. I'm not sure he would have won.

MATT WELCH: It's an interesting thing, that he was doing so badly in the summer, that no one attacked him. You know, every one of the debates, would say, John McCain is an American hero, he's a great friend. And they would attack Mitt Romney, or they would attack Giuliani. He actually didn't get challenged too much in the primary until the last six weeks, maybe.

BILL MOYERS: But what we see happening now is that the people who may not have supported him in the campaign are now lining up behind him. You have the neocon warriors who believe the Republicans are the party of war. And you have the Christian right, who believes that the Republicans are the party of God. You've got these two extremes, one for war, one for God. When you wed that militant state with a fanatical religion, you're getting something that conservatives don't like, right?

MICKEY EDWARDS: Well, you know, first of all, neither the neocons nor the Christian right were part of American conservatism. You know, they may fit in European conservatism, where Winston Churchill said conservatism is not reverence for the king and the church. But that's not what American conservatism was about. We were about the constitution. We were about the fact that, you know, our document, our founding document — we made a major fundamental change in governance. And that was, we were not going to be a government and its subjects. We were going to be citizens and their government. You know, and that's a basic change.

BILL MOYERS: Limited government, strong personal liberty. The idea —

MICKEY EDWARDS: A very strong commitment to personal liberty, including, you know — sometimes people forget this — There are ten provisions, ten amendments in the Bill of Rights. But the document says we're going to divide power, we're going to constrain power. Powers that had always belonged to the head of government in Europe — you know, to make war, to set spending priorities, to set tax levels — were deliberately withheld from the American president. And the whole idea was to keep power in check. We are a religious people. Americans are a religious people. But we're a secular nation. There's a big difference.

BILL MOYERS: There is a big difference.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Yeah.

BILL MOYERS: But John Hagee won't agree with you.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Yeah.

BILL MOYERS: Hagee and those folks say this is a Christian nation, founded as a Christian nation.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Right.

BILL MOYERS: Which would be news to the founders.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Which would be news to the founders.

BILL MOYERS: That they are one of the dominant constituencies in the Bush administration which has given its mantel now to John McCain.

MATT WELCH: But John McCain is also someone who has famously said, especially in the 2000 campaign, that, "you know the old joke about the Christian right? They're neither." He called Falwell and Robertson agents of intolerance. He has always had an arms length distance from the Christian right. He is not one of them, even though he himself goes to an evangelical church. His faith is part of his life. But as he's put it himself on the campaign trail — and people haven't written about this too much — he doesn't really care about social conservative issues. What's interesting to him are questions all revolving around national greatness. This year, it's about the war, mostly. In 2000, it was re — the

campaign finance reform. His record, you know, he's a very strong anti-abortion record, if you just judge by his votes. But if you judge by what actually animates him, social conservatism isn't really part of it. And the religious right, to this day feels like he, feels like they lost in this primary election.

MATT WELCH: I just spoke at the CPAC Conference, which is largely young religious conservatives--

BILL MOYERS: The annual gathering, right?

MATT WELCH: Yes. And I actually gave a talk about McCain's role with faith. And by far, he was the — I mean, people were hissing at the sound of his name. He is not their candidate.

MICKEY EDWARDS: I think you can put too much emphasis on the power of the Hagees. Every exit poll that was taken during the primaries showed that those people who called themselves strongly conservative — which usually, now, these days, you know, means something like the religious conservatives, or whatever — was always less than a third of the electorate. You know, they're —

MATT WELCH: In the Republican Primary.

MICKEY EDWARDS: In a Republican primary. They're not as powerful as they think they are.

BILL MOYERS: But a consistent third. A consistent third.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Oh, yeah. About 30 percent. 28, 29, 30 percent. Oh, they're — they're a bloc, you know. But they are not nearly the majority of Republican voters.

BILL MOYERS: Let's take a look at John Hagee's—

MICKEY EDWARDS: Yes.

BILL MOYERS: —endorsement of McCain.

HAGEE: In the matter of immigration John McCain has pledged to secure the borders of the United States first. No immigration policy will work until our borders are secure. John McCain's position on the war and Iraq was right from day one. He supported our troops by encouraging them to stay the course. John McCain has stated he will appoint conservative judges who will follow the constitution of the United States. Not rewrite the law from the bench. John McCain has pledged to veto any bill that has a pork barrel clip on attached. He will support the Bush tax cuts.

BILL MOYERS: Now, Mickey, take what John Hagee said — take him as serious man — take John McCain standing there, welcoming his endorsement, take what you said about conservatives owing their inspiration to the constitution with a limited government and personal liberties—

MICKEY EDWARDS: Right.

BILL MOYERS: Where that, listening to that, does John McCain's stand in the evolution or in the reclaiming of conservatism, which is your mission in life?

MICKEY EDWARDS: You know, the back in the days when Goldwater and Reagan was coming in as a Goldwater supporter. You know, when and I was there. And we were putting this modern conservative movement together. Nobody would have thought to ask any John Hagee what he thought about any of it. You know, it would simply not have been something we would have done. And for McCain, it's just like his meeting with Bush. For McCain, to allow himself now to be wrapped in the embrace of people like that, you know, I

think is going to seriously damage him in the fall. Because he is undercutting the very image that he so carefully cultivated, you know, in the — I'm not sure which is real — because I'm not sure that his maverick image or his independent straight talk image was always completely accurate. And I attacked it from time to time.

But I think that he's making a serious mistake in terms of how he frames his persona for the general election. I don't think this country is ready for a continuation of Bush. And I don't think it's ready for a Hagee approved, Hagee-endorsed presidency. And why he's doing that, I don't know.

BILL MOYERS: At what stage do you think conservatives became Republicans first and conservatives second?

MATT WELCH: I think it was in the Richard Nixon presidency. Up until that moment, conservatives had been the biggest critics of the imperial presidency. They were the biggest critics of the way executive power was abused by John F. Kennedy, by Lyndon Johnson, by FDR before them. They saw executive power as this as aggrandizement of power in the federal government that was used against individuals. But when Richard Nixon was abusing that power and he was attacked by the press, who conservatives have always hated, and Democrats, who the conservatives have always hated, they rallied around him. And there was a flipping that happened then.

Even since then — and Dick Cheney was a big part of it and Donald Rumsfeld, because they were there — in the Ford Administration, when the reformist Democratic Congress started passing these limits on executive power. Ever since then, restoring the power of the executive has been a fundamental part of modern Republicanism, which went totally against their traditions. And as part of that, John McCain actually one of the only philosophies that he elucidates in his book, his five books that he's written, is to restore executive power at the expense of Congress, especially when it comes to foreign policy and the making of war. It is basically the only interest that he shows in political philosophy in his books.

BILL MOYERS: What's your answer to your own question about what's— at what point—

MICKEY EDWARDS: Well, you know, I agree with Matt, that that was a part of it. It certainly had an effect. But more than that, while I was in the House, Newt Gingrich sort of rose in power. And Newt decided that the purpose of the Republican in Congress was not to carry out the fundamental principles that they had originally believed in, but to defeat Democrats. That was all that mattered. And it became how do— it's always war Democrats versus Republicans, all the time. And when you look at it from that mindset, you have a Republican president — you know, he is not any more the head of a different branch of government. He's your team captain. He's your quarterback.

And so, Gingrich really created a system of nonstop warfare that went well beyond, you know, what the situation was with Nixon. And institutionalized it to an extent that today, when the Congress properly issues — tries to vote a contempt citation against two people on the White House staff, Harriet Myers and Josh Bolton, you know, who defy a Congressional subpoena, and Republicans in Congress walk out in protest, rather than engage in defending the branch of government that they're a part of. So, I put a lot of the blame right on Newt Gingrich. I think he led to a lot of this.

BILL MOYERS: But what about the emergence of the religious right? Each of us seem to be saying that the religious zeal of fanatical believers, allied to an aggressive, military state, has been a recipe for disaster. But that's what you're getting with the Bush-Cheney policy and the third term of the Bush-Cheney policy incarnated in John McCain.

MATT WELCH: But I would amend to that that I think that that power curve is on its wane. First, for the fact that McCain really isn't one of them, and hasn't been. Even though he has been very much sucking up to them since around 2004 and 2005, as an attempt to win the presidency. So he's making peace with Jerry Falwell and other people like that. But if you look at basically since Terry Schiavo, a lot of people tried to figure out when did the Republicans really lose their groove. Because the whole concept of limited government they threw out the window to do whatever it took to win elections. Mickey's completely

right about that.

But part of it is the country woke up and saw — you know, Congress passing a special session to intervene in the life of one person. And at some point, it comes, what are you even talking about? And I think since then, there is not an appetite for such an aggressive, specifically sort of Christian conservative policy-making from the federal government. There's been a recoiling for that. And Republicans, their share is just increased — decreasing by the minute. And part of that is a revulsion against overstretch, I think, from the religious right. And I — you know, I respect the participation politics. We — thankfully, we have a really pluralistic tradition in this country. And, you know, religious blocs played key roles in the civil rights movement, in the abolition of slavery, in a lot of different areas, that have been beneficial to the country. Other areas that I would disagree with more, that are more associated with the Moral Majority. But I don't wake in fear of theocracy.

MICKEY EDWARDS: Yeah. And I wanted to say— you know, I address this in the book. And I talk about the time, you know, it began with an attempt by conservatives to reach out to a public that was largely conservative in its traditional views. And said, well, how do you do this. And the answer came, well, you try to— they go to church. Let's try to reach them through the church. And you started with a multi-denominational organization, the Moral Majority.

You know, there were Jews and Christians, and you know, all kinds of — you know, involved in this. But it got supplanted by the overtly Christian Coalition, you know. And the Moral Majority was gone, and a much more aggressively narrow-- sectarian kind of a group arose. And got increasingly more powerful because— not by numbers. It's not numbers. It's that in Republican primaries, the most committed, the most zealous, show up to vote. And they are the ones who show up to vote. And that's how they began to have-- the neocons never had that kind of power at the grassroots. Theirs was at the top.

BILL MOYERS: With the elites?

MICKEY EDWARDS: Right. You know, but the—

BILL MOYERS: The elites, the media.

MICKEY EDWARDS: But the Christian Coalition, the religious right, got its strength by getting people who, in low turnout primaries, would go vote, and they would do the work in the campaign. And so, they began to have influence far beyond their numbers.

BILL MOYERS: My viewers are quite loyal to my guests. And they're going to be busy this weekend, not watching television, but reading MCCAIN: THE MYTH OF A MAVERICK, by Matt Welch, and RECLAIMING CONSERVATION: HOW A GREAT AMERICAN POLITICAL MOVEMENT GOT LOST, AND HOW IT CAN FIND ITS WAY BACK, by Mickey Edwards. Mickey and Matt, thank you both for being on THE JOURNAL

MICKEY EDWARDS: Thank you, Bill.

MATT WELCH: Thanks for having me.

BILL MOYERS: And that's it for this week. I'll see you this time next week. I'm Bill Moyers.

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