SPEAKER 1: So wonderful to see you here. And I'm so happy that we are in person for this somewhat delayed or lecture, but I'm really glad to be here and that you are all here too. This lecture was inaugurated in 1997 upon the retirement of Professor Daniel J. Meador, a longtime member of Virginia's law faculty.

Professor Meador was born in 1926 in Selma, Alabama. He graduated from the University of Alabama Law School in 1951. And after serving in the US Army during the Korean War in both the artillery and the Jag Corps, he studied at Harvard Law School, earning an LLM in 1954. He clerked for Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, also from Alabama, and practiced briefly in Alabama. And then he joined the Virginia Law faculty in 1957.

He stayed at Virginia through most of his long and distinguished career as a teacher and a scholar and a dean with a few breaks in service to serve as a Fulbright lecturer in England in 1965 to lead the University of Alabama Law School from 1966 to 1970. More on that in a second. And to work as an assistant attorney general at the Department of Justice from 1977 to 1979, organizing the new office for improvements in the administration of justice, which develops solutions for problems in state and federal courts.

I encountered him, not only as a former member of the faculty, and not only now as a fellow, dean but also as a historical actor in my book on vagrancy law. So I thought I would just tell you this little story. So in 1968, the fledgling ACLU chapter in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the only ACLU chapter in the state of Alabama at the time launched a challenge, a constitutional challenge to vagrancy laws by several students and several young faculty members at the University of Alabama.

They were the ones who had founded the ACLU chapter in Tuscaloosa. And they were hired by then Dean Meador from out of state as part of his strategic plans to raise the profile and intellectual currency of the law school there. And later, one of the plaintiffs recalled asking Dean Meador if he knew what he was doing back then.

And Dean Meador replied, yeah, I knew they were going to stir things up. That's why we have tenure. And this student said, but they didn't have tenure. And he said that didn't matter because folks thought they did. So I thought that was a terrific story. And I wrote it off in my book. And I was so pleased to see him in his decanal Alabama role.

So Professor Meador retired from law school in 1994. This lecture was endowed by alumni and friends to celebrate his many contributions to the life of the law school. And we are thrilled to honor Professor Meador today with this lecture and to have his son, Daniel J. Meador JR, class of 1992 and daughter-in-law Mary Lewis here tonight with us. So welcome to the two of you, and welcome to everyone.

The Meador Lecture is designed to promote the interdisciplinary study of law and religion. The lecture also seeks to explore the influence of religion on the development of law and the interplay of religion and law in the evolution of Western civilization. Our speaker this afternoon will certainly speak to those themes. She has spent her career exploring the intersection of gender, religion, and politics in recent American history.

I'm delighted to introduce our lecturer, Kristin Du Mez. I'll skip the Kobes. Kobes?

KRISTIN KOBES Kobes Du Mez.

DU MEZ:

SPEAKER 1: OK. Kristin Du Mez. And she is a *New York Times* best selling author and professor of history at Calvin University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Professor Du Mez received her BA in history and German at Dordt College, now Dordt University, in Sioux Center Iowa. She received her PhD in American history from Notre Dame with specialties in women's history and religious history. After graduate school, Professor Du Mez spent time at Williams College and at the Five College Women's Studies Research Center at Mount Holyoke before joining the faculty at Calvin University.

The author of two books and a slew of book chapters and scholarly articles, Professor Du Mez has also written for *The New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* and *The Atlantic, Religion News Services,* and *Christianity Today.* Professor Du Mez has also appeared on media outlets such as NPR, CBS News, NBC News, and the BBC. Her first book, *A New Gospel for Women-- Katharine Bushnell and the Challenge of Christian Feminism,* provides a vivid account of the life of Katharine Bushnell from the mid-19th to the mid-20th centuries, author of one of the most innovative and comprehensive feminist theologies ever written.

As one reviewer put it, by assessing Bushnell's achievements in context, Kobes Du Mez empowers readers to better understand their own challenges and opportunities as activists, scholars, and as those like Bushnell working to dismantle patriarchy as a biblical ideal. Professor Du Mez's most recent book, *Jesus and John Wayne-- How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation,* forms the basis of her talk this afternoon. She probes the intersection of religion and politics. And this book was called by one reviewer as, quote, "not only one of the most important books on religion and the 2016 elections, but one of the most important books on post 1945 American evangelicalism published in the past four decades."

In awarding the book the 2021 George Orwell Award, the National Council of Teachers of English called it, quote, "a rich and fascinating account that, quote, 'helps' to illuminate the roots of current social and political divides in America." I am so pleased that Professor Du Mez is here with us today to share her perspective and no doubt stimulate rich discussion this afternoon and beyond. I'm delighted to turn the floor over to Professor Du Mez to deliver our 2022 Meador Lecture on law and religion entitled Jesus and John Wayne and the Evangelical Reckoning. Please join me in welcoming Professor Du Mez.

[APPLAUSE]

KRISTIN KOBES DU MEZ: Thank you so much for that generous introduction. Thank you to the UVA School of Law for this invitation and to the Meador family. I'm deeply appreciative. And it's so good to be here in person with you all today.

So I thought I would start with a bit of background here. *Jesus and John Wayne-- How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation,* where did this all start? You have, to go back a long time actually to my first year as a brand new professor at Calvin University. It was just Calvin College back then.

And I was teaching a course in recent America US history survey. And I wanted to introduce my students to the concept of gender, how gender worked in history because-- so Calvin University is a Christian university. I had gone to a conservative Christian college in my hometown, Northwest Iowa. And it wasn't until I got to graduate school that I was introduced to how gender worked in history.

I had only encountered gender in a very limited way. Essentially, can women serve as elders, deacons, and ordained ministers? That was it. And to answer that question, you go to the Bible. And when I got to graduate school, my very first semester there, I was introduced to gender history.

And what I discovered is that gender is so much more interesting, and it's so much more complicated. The ideas of masculinity and femininity change over time, that they're linked to underlying economic shifts to race, to class, to religion, yes, also, to foreign policy. And so I wanted to bring some of these lessons to my students.

I crafted a lecture on Teddy Roosevelt. It's a great way to demonstrate this because Roosevelt embodied a kind of shifting conception of American manhood, what it is to be a man, a more rugged conception, a militant, militaristic conception that is very much connected to whiteness and to American empire. So I put together this lecture. Right after the lecture, a couple of guys from the class came up to me and said, Professor Du Mez, there is a book that you have got to read. And they pointed me to John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart.*

Now I can tell that there's not a whole lot of evangelicals in this audience because I could always tell when I say that sentence who knows what I'm talking about. So how many of you are familiar with John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart?* OK, some of you. About half of you. More than I expected.

So this was back around 2005 or so when I taught this class. And Eldredge's book, *Wild at Heart-- Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul,* had published in 2001. I had heard all about it. It was a massive bestseller, sold more than four million copies. All of you authors out there just calculate the royalties for a moment, four million copies.

It was everywhere. My own local church was hosting men's group studies on *Wild at Heart.* All of the guys dorms were hosting book studies. The book was everywhere. I had successfully avoided it until that moment. Didn't seem like my kind of thing.

But I took their advice. And I drove down to a family Christian bookstore and bought myself a copy for $19.95. The price tag is still on it. And I opened up that book, and I immediately saw what they were talking about because Eldredge opens with a quote from Teddy Roosevelt. And he goes on to sketch a very militant, militaristic conception of Christian manhood.

God is a warrior God. And men are made in his image. Every man has a battle to fight and a beauty to rescue. And when I read Eldredge's book, I was startled by a couple of things. First, just how militant and militaristic this conception of Christian masculinity was, but also, how few scriptural references there were in this book on Christian manhood.

Instead Eldredge looked to mythical warriors and heroes to men like Teddy Roosevelt or General Patton or General MacArthur or random cowboys or US soldiers and especially to Mel Gibson's Williams Wallace from the movie *Braveheart.* Now I will say if I could have found a way to squeeze Jesus and Mel Gibson's Williams Wallace from the movie *Braveheart* into a title for this book, I probably would have gone with that. I tried. And that's where he was drawing. So these secular cultural ideals that Eldredge was then packaging and selling as Christian masculinity.

Now this, again, was back around 2005 or so when my attention was drawn to Eldredge. What else was going on then? This was the early years of the Iraq war. And all of the survey data was coming out demonstrating how white evangelicals were far and away more likely than any other demographic to support the Iraq war, to support preemptive war in general, to condone the use of torture, to embrace aggressive foreign policy.

And so I asked what historians of gender have been trained to ask, what might one of these things have to do with the other? So I decided to research it. I spent a year and a half researching, not just Eldredge's book but the vast amount of essentially copy cat books that had been published since 2001. If you have a successful book like that, it's going to produce copy cat books. And there were so many, dozens in fact, many bordering on plagiarism.

Same cast of characters, Teddy Roosevelt, Williams Wallace, soldiers, cowboys. And I noticed John Wayne kept popping up in a lot of these too. And this was also-- if you know anything about the history of American evangelicalism or recently, this was the heyday of Mark Driscoll. And Mark Driscoll's Mars Hill Church out in Seattle has gotten a lot of attention recently with a *Christianity Today* podcast on Driscoll's very militant, militaristic, misogynistic, crass preaching style.

And in the mid 2000s, he was all the rage. He was held up as this kind of young pioneer leader. And so many evangelical pastors were modeling their ministries after his. And so many young evangelical men were drawn to his preaching.

So I was working on this project for about a year and a half, and then I set it aside for a couple of different reasons. First of all, I found it incredibly distressing, what I was uncovering, revolting honestly, again, deeply misogynistic, crass, militaristic. And I wasn't sure I wanted to spend the years of my life I thought it would require immersed in that kind of toxic subculture. But also I'm a Christian myself. I teach at Calvin University.

And I was troubled. I thought, is this a responsible thing for me to do as a professing Christian, to draw attention to this really toxic religious subculture? Is it right for me to be shining a bright light on what might be the darkest underbelly of American Christianity? And then also, I had another book to finish, and I had a couple of kids, and then another kid. And so life got in the way. I set it aside.

I will say at the time, that question is this the right thing to do, felt like a noble question. And I've since come to question that. So fast forward then to 2016. Now I should say that in the ensuing decade, I didn't stop paying attention entirely. I still kept track of a lot of the guys who had been writing these books, who have been preaching these sermons.

And I watched as one after another of these guys became implicated in scandal, abuse of power, or sexual abuse, either directly as perpetrators or often indirectly supporting their friends who are perpetrators. So I just kept taking notes. And then it was October of 2016. You probably remember that.

Precisely the release of the Access Hollywood tape, where we had then candidate Trump on video bragging about assaulting women. And at that point-- this was just weeks before the election. And it was already clear that white evangelicals were going to be absolutely critical to any chance of Trump's victory. And then this hit.

And I remember it vividly because I had the next morning my first live national television interview. And it was not supposed to be on that. It was supposed to be on Trump's linguistic style contrasted to Clinton's linguistic style. And all of a sudden, we had the grab them by the pussy video. And that was the most nervous I've ever been for an interview.

And strangely, they did not go in that direction. Instead, they asked me about the software that I'd use to analyze speeches, which was totally not what I was expecting, but it worked, pulled it off. Anyway, I digress. But you'll remember that moment because the country stopped. And so the world kind of stopped to see what was going to happen next.

Surely, this is a step too far for family values evangelicals. The moral majority surely cannot support a man like Donald Trump now, right? A couple of evangelical leaders wavered ever so briefly. Wayne Grudem was one of them, and then he prayed about it. And a few days later, he was back supporting Trump within the week. And weeks later, we saw the infamous 81% of white evangelical voters who supported Trump handing him the election.

But it was in those days after the Access Hollywood video released that something clicked for me, because the words that I heard evangelical leaders use to describe their continued support-- to defend their continued support for Donald Trump were exactly what I had read all of those years before. We need a strong leader. We need a rugged man, a man who's filled with testosterone so that he has the aggression necessary to protect faith, family, and nation.

And Trump himself had promised to protect Christianity, to protect conservative white evangelicals and the values they held dear. And he was going to do that in a way that was unconventional, that was absolutely not politically correct, right? He was going to channel that aggression. And he was in fact the perfect man for the job precisely because he was not constrained by traditional Christian virtues, right? He was ruthless enough to do what needed to be done.

So I dusted off that old research, pulled out those files. And I wrote a piece I just called it-- I think it was just evangelical masculinity and militarism. And I published it timed to his inauguration in an online journal religion and politics. And that went viral.

And I know you're not supposed to read the comments, but I did. And what I saw was really interesting. So many men came there to the comment section to say this is true. I've been in these spaces. This is true. I've read these books. And that actually-- it was those comments that convinced me that I needed to turn this into a book.

So I decided to write a book. And the first thing as a historian that one needs to do is figure out where to start, right? And it's not all that easy. As a historian, where does this story really start? I knew in some ways, it really picked up in the '60s and '70s with the rise of the Christian right, but I knew I had to go back at least the '40s with the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals.

But really, you need to get the 1920s in there because you need the fundamentalist modernist controversy. But I actually look all the way back to the 19th century ever so briefly. And I was kind of testing my editor's patience, I think, doing this. But I needed to set up one very important point, that things have not always been as they are now. And that's important for historical research generally, but I think particularly important for evangelicals, who tend to have a very static conception of history and interpret their values as timeless and God ordained.

And so I needed to go back to the 19th century for a couple of reasons, just to point out that in the 19th century, evangelical ideals of masculinity looked quite different. In many cases, they celebrated a gentlemanly self-restraint. That was what it was to be a Christian man.

Now if you look in the American South and in evangelicalism in the American South, there, you'll find a different kind of trope of Christian manhood, one that is in some ways more similar to the one that we see today, more of an honor-based one where in patriarchal authority where the patriarch is tasked with protecting and disciplining and keeping in order one's dependence, meaning women, children and enslaved people. But by the early 20th century, North and South and these variations kind of come together in the Roosevelt kind of muscular Christianity rugged masculinity era. And so I needed to set that up.

But even then, in the early 20th century, things still don't look as they do today. And particularly around the question of Christian nationalism and how Christian nationalism is linked to these ideals of rugged militant masculinity. And so in the early 20th century, first, when it comes to Protestantism, you have liberal Protestants and conservative Protestants who are equally as likely to embrace this rugged militant masculinity.

And when we get to the First World War where we finally have a kind of battle ground for this militant masculinity upon which it can be enacted, there too, you have liberal Protestants as likely as conservative Protestants to embrace war and militarism. Sure, you've got your Billy Sundays, kind of conservative Protestant pastors, who embrace militant masculinity and Christian nationalism. He actually jumped on top of his pulpit waving an American flag, pro-war.

So you've got the Billy Sunday type, but you had a lot of conservative Protestants who actually were pacifists and who rejected Christian nationalism because to be a Christian, was to have your soul saved. A nation doesn't have a soul. So it really doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Besides, look around you. Does this look like a Christian nation, right? So again, things were different than they are now.

Where we see these new alignments really start to come into place is in the 1940s. And this is where I'm going to jump to the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. At this point, a lot of conservative Protestants came together and said they are feeling marginalized after the-- feeling displaced, unable to maintain control of Protestant denominations in the wake of the fundamentalist modernist controversies, the Scopes trial.

Despite what a lot of coastal elites thought, they didn't just disappear. They actually founded Bible colleges, churches across the country, but they were scattered. And so in 1942, they said, let's come together. We're doing great work, but imagine what we could do if we banded together.

And so when you read some of those founding documents from the National Association of Evangelicals, it's really fascinating because they had a plan. And their plan was to unite together, strength in numbers, and that they were going to-- they had a lot of Bible colleges across the country, but now they needed to network. They needed organizations of Bible colleges.

And they needed to come together and take to the airwaves. Radio, very important at that time to reach into all the corners of the country. They wanted to have Christian publishing really take hold and Christian bookstores across the country so that they could reach into the smallest towns and the biggest cities. And they wanted magazines. And they imagine magazines, Christian magazines with subscribers in the tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands.

What is amazing is that within 15 years, they accomplished all of that, beyond their wildest dreams. And the man at the center of all of this was Billy Graham, the kind of new face of evangelicalism. And he got his start as an evangelist, youth for Christ evangelist, during World War II, a time that it made perfect sense to combine evangelism with Christian nationalism. He was pro-war, pro Christianity.

And within just a few years, with the end of World War II, we're in the midst of the early Cold War. And there in particular, it was a powerful combination because communism was seen as such a threat, a real threat. And it was a threat to the country because communists were anti-American, but they were also anti-God and anti-family. According to evangelicals, all the things that they held most dear.

And so they really hold on to these core values. And they do it at a time when they're hardly the only ones who are anti-communist, right? And so what we see happening is just as evangelicals are trying to assert their place, reassert their place in American culture and society, it is this Cold War context that places them much closer to the cultural mainstream than they had been just a few years earlier.

So that by the early '50s, we see these very recently marginalized evangelicals in and out of the White House, right? Billy Graham in and out of the Eisenhower White House. Again, this was the post-World War II era. This was a leave it to Beaver era, right? Family values, traditional values, all the rage, and a time when we have a Cold War consensus, right? And so the values that they held dear were very close to the center of American culture at the time.

So things were going great. Again, beyond their wildest dreams until the '60s. '60s, in the 1960s, what we see happening is this kind of fracturing. We can look at the civil rights movement and the challenge to the racial status quo particularly in the American South. And many Southerners were white evangelicals. We also have the rise of the feminist movement challenging these traditional family values. And you have the Vietnam War and the anti-war movement.

I was struck in my research just how central a role Vietnam played, not just in that moment, but ever since. All the books that I was reading on Christian masculinity published in the 1990s, almost all of them, all the big hitters start with a vignette in Vietnam, right? And so Vietnam, in particular, led many Americans to question American goodness and American greatness.

And that's when conservative evangelicals double down. Pro-war, pro-military, again, Billy Graham leading the way. And that's when they feel that they have this special role to play, that they are a faithful remnant, right? Because they're seeing that, after this brief moment of consensus where they are finding themselves near the center of American power, a lot of Americans are turning away.

And this is that kind of critical moment. This is also when we see evangelicals mobilize as a partisan political movement. Now they had been active in politics in different ways in different times earlier, prohibition, anti-new deal, and so forth. But in the 1960s, this is when we see the partisan realignment, and we see evangelicals helping to facilitate that southern strategy.

Billy Graham was giving politicians advice on how to appeal to Southern Democrats. And we have data that southern Baptist pastors moved ahead of their congregations from the Democratic Party into the Republican Party in this part of this party realignment. So they were there right at the grassroots.

One of the things that I do in my book is push back against the narrative that somehow religion has been hijacked by politics. That's not really what we're seeing here. We see religious actors really at the ground level building a political movement.

So since the 1960s-- this is where John Wayne comes in, by the way. I did not set out to write a book about John Wayne at all. But this is where we see John Wayne in the '60s and '70s coming to stand as an icon of conservative masculinity. He was pro-war. He was in person and on screen. He was anti-hippie. He was explicitly racist.

All of the movies that he starred in his greatest hits, he was the white hero who would bring order through violence, usually by subduing non-white populations if you think about it, right? The hero, the Wild West against the Native American, *Sands of Iwo Jima* against the Japanese, the Green Berets against the Vietnamese, the Alamo against the Mexicans, right? He kind of stood for this rugged, iconic American manhood, this kind of throwback to the Roosevelt era but bringing order through violence, righteous violence.

And that's when we see that John Wayne came to stand as a symbol for secular conservatives. But these very values were also being embraced particularly the assertion of white patriarchal authority being embraced by conservative evangelicals. Because if you go back and think about all those disruptions, the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the anti-war movement, what was the solution to all of those? The assertion of white patriarchal authority to restore order.

So this moves to the center of conservative evangelical cultural identity and political identity. And this brings them into alliance across religious difference with secular conservatives and increasingly with conservative Catholics and conservative Mormons as well. And you can see some of these new alliances taking shape. All of this is kind of crystallized in the 1980 election where Ronald Reagan defeats Jimmy Carter. And most evangelicals, white evangelicals vote not for the Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher, Jimmy Carter, but for Ronald Reagan, who embodies this rugged masculinity domestically and also on the global stage. And then we're very much kind of living in that era today in terms of party realignments.

OK, so in the book then, I kind of trace this up to the present. The 1990s are really interesting moment from my perspective because the Cold War has come to an end. And up until then, so much of evangelicals political values and cultural identity had been forged in that Cold War context. So what happens when the Cold War suddenly comes to an end? When I went back to the documents, the readings from the 1990s, one word pops up over and over and over again. And it is confusion.

What does it even mean to be a Christian man? What does it mean to be a man? Or what should our politics be? What should our foreign policy be? It is a time of confusion. And this is when you have the Promise Keepers movement. You may have heard of this before. The evangelical men's movement that suddenly caught national attention.

And it was interesting to see how it was interpreted because feminists looked at it, and it looked like a throwback. This is the religious right in disguise. And there was a lot of truth to that. But from the certain perspectives, it could also be a more progressive movement, depending on where you're coming from certainly as a conservative evangelical.

And in that movement, you have a lot of contradictions. You had some egalitarians saying that men and women should be equal. You had those supporting patriarchy and traditional culture was Christianity. So what you see emerging in that moment is this kind of sense of tension.

And so there are books on tender warriors. You need warriors, yes, but we need tenderness. You'll see a talk of soft patriarchy. We still need the patriarchs, but just be a little kinder, gentler about that. This is one servant leadership becomes a very celebrated notion. And some emphasize the servant, but most are emphasizing the leader. This is the 1990s.

But really when I went back to the 1990s and the sources, I had this feeling that things could really go either way. In fact, it felt like we were turning a corner, and things were going to take a more progressive kind of global direction. And then the pendulum starts to swing. You see this kind of reassertion of culture wars language sometime in the mid-1990s.

Well, Ralph Reed had said we have to move away from this militaristic language. Let's use sports metaphors instead. And you see that movement, and then the pendulum starts to swing back again. And people are saying we're getting too soft. You don't want tenderness in the trenches.

And so books start to be written. And so by 2001, there are three books that appear. One John Eldredge's *Wild at Heart,* two, James Dobson's *Bringing Up Boys.* Testosterone is the key to boyhood. And Doug Wilson's *Future Men,* which promotes a theology of fist fighting. All of these books were on the shelves of Christian bookstores when terrorists struck the United States on September 11, 2001.

Every man needs a battle to fight. It's no longer metaphorical, right? They have their battle. And is in the months after September 11, 2001 and in the years following that, you just see an explosion of this literature, sermons, popular books on how to be a Christian man. And it is incredibly militaristic, this warrior masculinity. And it is explicitly linked to September 11, to the threat of radical Islam, and to UN military power.

And this is where we get to, I think, one of the strangest chapters or easily the strangest chapter in *Jesus and John Wayne* by my read at least, and not talking holy balls. But the chapter on the fake ex-Muslim terrorists. This was the thing. Still is the thing actually in the years after September 11, that these men who claimed to have been jihadists and radical Muslims came to the United States in order to commit acts of terror against Americans and particularly American Christians and especially American evangelicals, who are the most faithful Christians.

But then they underwent conversion experiences, became evangelicals themselves, and then they took to the speaking circuit to tell evangelicals about the dangers of radical Islam. One of these guys came to Calvin, my university. Unfortunately, I did attend, but my colleague Doug Howard did. And my colleague happens to be an expert on the Ottoman Empire and knows a thing or two about Islam. And within minutes, he figured out that this guy didn't what he was talking about.

And so he actually contacted Focus on the Family who was sponsoring this ex-Muslim terrorists because these ex-Muslim terrorists, they were everywhere. And they were sponsored by Focus on the Family, by CBN, and they had this backing. And so my colleague Doug gives them a call, president at Focus on the family, only to find out that they knew he was a fraud and continued to support his ministry.

This was when something else clicked for me. Because when you go to 2016, and you listen to the analysis around how do we explain the White evangelical vote, how do we explain this political radicalism, either from pundits or from evangelical leaders themselves, particularly the Never-Trump evangelicals, the language often focused on fear. Evangelicals are so afraid, right? What choice did they have?

But evangelicals are always afraid if you have the historical perspective. But what they're afraid of changes. So afraid of communism, understandable perhaps, afraid of secular humanism, afraid of feminism, afraid of radical Islam, afraid of declines in religious liberty, afraid of demographic changes and of white Christian America. You see how this goes.

And what I realized in trying to make sense of this phenomenon of these ex-Muslim terrorists was that in many cases, we needed to flip the script. What comes first, militancy or fear? Is militancy a response to fear, or does militancy come first and require the stoking of fear?

That's what we were seeing in the case of these ex-Muslim terrorists. They were made up. They completely invented their stories. Total frauds. And yet, they continued to get the backing. And I realize that that's what we were seeing in the case of Jerry Falwell Sr's Thomas Road Baptist Church. He would generate the sense of threat so that he could demand loyalty and sacrifice of his followers.

This is exactly what we were seeing in Mark Driscoll's Mars Hill Church. He would be flanked with bodyguards when he preached, again, to generate the sense of imminent threat, and then use militaristic language. Because when you are at war, you can demand-- you must demand absolute loyalty from your followers. Absolute sacrifice, financial, time, and he did.

When I realized that the fears among evangelicals were real, but those fears were also manufactured by leaders in order to consolidate their own power in many cases. And that was an important piece of this larger story when that clicked into place. Fast forward now to 2016 and, in fact, to our present moment, because I think we are still very much in this moment today.

And I'll reflect-- I ended up publishing what I ended up calling *Jesus and John* Wayne in the summer of 2020. And as I pulled the book together, I came up with a few kind of lessons and takeaways. And that's what I will wrap up with before turning things over to some questions.

But one of the key observations, I think, or key interventions that *Jesus and John Wayne* makes is around the definition of evangelicalism. Initially, I had intended to do what pretty much every other scholar of evangelicalism does in terms of defining evangelicalism. And that is to drop a definition drawn from David Bebbington into my introduction.

This is known as the Bebbington quadrilateral among history nerds. And David Bebbington, a historian of British evangelicalism who years ago, decades ago came up with this 4-point of definition of evangelicalism, hence the Bebbington quadrilateral. So evangelicals, you have to think about biblicism, the authority of the scriptures, crucicentrism, the centrality of the cross of Christ, conversionism, this born-again experience, and then activism, so acting out of these faith commitments.

I fully intended to just drop that in the intro, and then go on and write the book I was going to write. But at a certain point, I realize this doesn't really describe what I'm looking at. I don't I think that theological doctrines are really at the center of this movement that I'm trying to describe. And that becomes very clear particularly if you look at the question of race, because the majority of Black Protestants in this country could check all of those boxes.

But the vast majority of Black Protestants do not identify as evangelical, because it is very clear to them that there is a whole lot more to being an evangelical than these doctrinal commitments. And in fact, there's often less as well. We have surveys that show that majority-- or the alarming numbers, if you're an evangelical leader at least, the alarming numbers of evangelicals are theologically illiterate, and in fact, hold ideas that count as heresy, which leads me as a historian, as a cultural historian to ask, well, then should we be defining the movement according to theology or according to something else?

And I ended up not defining but describing evangelicalism as a series of networks and alliances. And that's what I try to map out in this book, how that works through publishers, through denominations like the SBC, through organizations and conferences, groups like The Gospel Coalition, and try to map out how all of these things are connected and look at relations of power among them. And essentially, I look at evangelicalism as a consumer culture.

So rather than defining real evangelicals versus fake evangelicals according to how often you attend church or whether you go to Sunday school or not, I look at how immerse a person is in this evangelical subculture. And there are a lot of Americans who are all in, only listen to Christian radio. I grew up only listening to Christian music. I thought the top 40 was sinful. I grew up in a town that only had one bookstore. It was a Christian bookstore. And so all of my graduation gifts all the birthday gifts came from that store.

There are other people who just kind of dabble. Might listen to Christian music here or there, not be all in. This is a really powerful consumer culture that if you grew up in this, if you have been immersed in this, you know exactly what I'm talking about. I'm seeing lots of nods around here. If you did not, you may well be completely oblivious that this even exists.

So when I was writing this book, I published with a secular publisher. My editor, not at all from this world. And he was questioning some of my publication numbers on sales numbers on some of these Christian books like millions of copies that-- OK, Kristin, I have to tell you how this works. Publishers are always inflating their numbers. Where did you find this?

I said, I don't know, it was in*The New York Times.* And he said, oh, OK, then. It's legit, right? But this was completely-- these books are not making *The New York Times* bestseller list because that's a curated list. And they know their readers don't actually want to read this stuff.

So I was also struck by the emphasis on authority. When I went back to writings on how to raise kids, how to be a Christian man, how to be a Christian woman in the 1970s, just how central authority was and social hierarchies. And I had grown up in an aspect of this culture, kind of on the edges. And I was shocked honestly to reread some of these materials from a historian's perspective.

And I honestly didn't quite what to do with it because what I was reading seemed awfully anti-democratic to me and definitely bordering on authoritarian. And that's something we could perhaps come back to. Another question that I pull throughout the book is one that initially troubled me. And that's the question of, am I looking at a mainstream movement here or am I looking at the fringe? And back all those years ago when I thought, should I be drawing attention to this?

If it's just the extremist fringe, that's just going to make Christianity look really bad. Maybe I shouldn't be doing this. So you can see if you read the book, over and over again, I'm asking this question. So I'll introduce you to Bill Gothard. Absolutely fringe extremist, but still influenced millions of people and taught a very rigid conception of female submission, patriarchal authority, social hierarchy, theocracy essentially.

And then hold him up next to James Dobson, who irrefutably mainstream is teaching strikingly similar softer versions of the same. And that's something that I pull throughout this book. And I also look at figures like Doug Wilson, the theology of fist fighting guy who's also blatantly racist and see how-- yes, fringe. He'd be offended if anybody would consider him mainstream, but how he was platformed by organizations like Christianity Today, how respectable pastors smoothed the way for figures such as Wilson.

Finally, I decided as I researched this book, I saw the damage that silence had done across generations. I saw how much within evangelicalism, there was a culture of deference that was actively cultivated, that you are to put the best face forward, that you are not to shine a light on the darker sides of your movement, that that's going to hurt the witness of the church. I recognized what I had done. So at certain point in writing this book, I decided I'm out. I am not going to participate in that culture of deference. And that explains some of the chapter titles and the subtitle and the book itself in many ways.

So in some ways, it was actually quite a surprise when the book published in the summer of 2020. I hadn't really given a whole lot of thought to what the reception would be, particularly among evangelicals. I pretty much thought a lot of them probably wouldn't like it. An early review described the book as urgent and sharp elbowed. And I think that gets it right.

So I was surprised that just a couple of days after the book released-- it had a really nice launch on *Morning Edition.* So it got a lot of attention right away. Within two or three days, I started getting letters in my inbox from readers. And people think that I get a whole lot of hate mail. I actually don't. I get to this day several letters of gratitude every day from evangelical readers who say this is the story of my life, and thank you for helping me to see.

And so I get asked a lot, Kristin , where's the hope here? I will confess I did not have a lot of hope when I wrote this book at all. In fact, so much so that when we're almost ready to go into production, my editor wrote me and said, Kristin, this is a really depressing book. I said, yeah, I know.

And he's, no, no, like, this is a problem. You can't do this to your readers. It's like, OK, let me see what I can do. So I took an afternoon and looked over the manuscript. And then I wrote him back, and I said, I'm sorry I've got nothing. This is where I'm at. And he said, OK, I respect that.

And then the next day, he wrote again. And he said, Kristin, just give us anything. So I reworked the very end of the book, and I gave him that last sentence, what was once done might also be undone. And honestly, when I sent that off to him, I felt foolish, sheepish. It just felt like so not enough.

But there's truth to that because, again, among evangelicals, there's a sense of controlling their own history, defining their own terms, and considering their values timeless, eternal, and God ordained. And if you can show things weren't always as they are now and this is how they came to be, that frees people up to ask, is this how they ought to be? And if not, maybe we can take a few steps back.

So in some ways, I have more hope now than I did when I finished the book, but it is a very tempered hope. I'm a historian, and it's hard to be hopeful. Because while I see a lot of individual change, and I get letters testifying to that change every single day, I see almost no institutional change. As individuals in evangelical organizations speak out and try to change the course, they end up getting picked off. And so the organizations, institutions remain as reactionary or even more reactionary because those voices have been removed.

And finally, I will say that in terms of a way forward, I think we're in some ways a conundrum. And I think this gets back to the question of what is mainstream and what is fringe. And I think that has to be the question we're asking of evangelicalism today, of I think our political parties as well. What is mainstream, and what is fringe?

And for all of the voices within evangelicalism that are speaking out against this drift towards authoritarianism, the excesses of Christian nationalism, there's very little introspection among these very leaders in terms of how they themselves have been complicit in bringing us to where we are now. And so this is a moment that calls both for radical truth, for introspection, but also for finding a way to reach that kind of middle ground, the moderate who is being pulled in two directions right now. And so that is where I will leave things. And I am happy to open up to

[APPLAUSE]