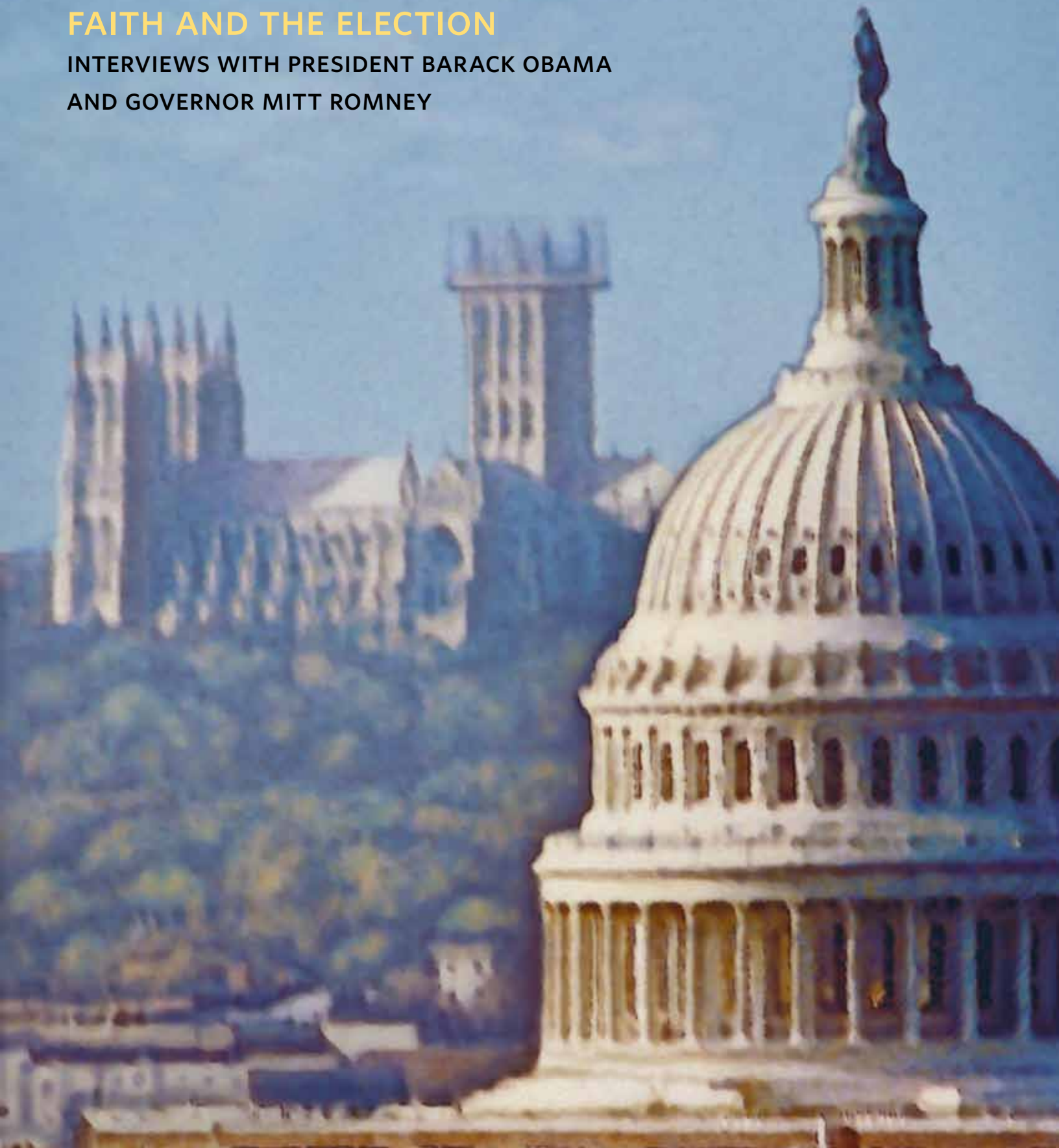


# CATHEDRAL AGE

WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL | MIDSUMMER 2012

## FAITH AND THE ELECTION

INTERVIEWS WITH PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA  
AND GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY



# CATHEDRAL AGE

MIDSUMMER 2012



## Contents

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>2</b>    <b>Comment</b><br/>Seismic Shifts<br/><b>DAVID J. KAUTTER</b></p> <p><b>4</b>    <b>Stone by Stone</b><br/>A Year of Heavy Lifting<br/>Leads to Active Restoration<br/><b>DR. M. LEIGH HARRISON</b></p> <p><b>10</b>    <b>Breaking the Silence</b><br/>The Second<br/>Christian-Muslim Summit<br/><b>RICHARD M. WEINBERG</b></p> | <p><b>16</b>    <b>A Vote for Understanding</b><br/>The Power of Faith in the<br/>Coming Election<br/><b>THE REV. DR. FRANCIS H. WADE</b></p> <p><b>20</b>    <b>Faith in America</b><br/>Interviews with<br/>President Barack Obama and<br/>Governor Mitt Romney<br/><i>reflections on faith in America from different<br/>religious backgrounds or perspectives</i></p> | <p><b>26</b>    <b>Great Is Thy Faithfulness</b><br/>A Celebration of the Life<br/>of Charles Wendell Colson<br/><b>MARGARET SHANNON</b></p> <p><b>29</b>    <b>From Darkness to Light</b><br/>Cathedral Hosts AIDS<br/>Memorial Service<br/><b>RICHARD M. WEINBERG</b></p> <p><b>32</b>    <b>Passages</b><br/>An Address by President<br/>Calvin Coolidge (1928)<br/><i>a look at the history and wisdom<br/>in the Cathedral Age archives</i></p> |
|--|---|--|



**ON THE COVER** THIS UNIQUE ILLUSTRATION BASED ON A 1993 PHOTOGRAPH DEPICTS THE TWO ICONS OF THE WASHINGTON SKYLINE AS DESCRIBED BY FORMER CATHEDRAL DEAN FRANCIS B. SAYRE, JR., IN A 1964 INTERVIEW WITH HUGH DOWNS, HOST OF NBC'S TODAY SHOW. "THE CATHEDRAL SITS ON ONE HILL. ON THE OTHER IS THE CAPITOL OF OUR COUNTRY. ... ON ONE HILL, POLITICAL DECISIONS ARE BEING MADE. ON THE OTHER, THE WORD OF GOD IS BEING SPOKEN." **IMAGE** I. GODDARD, BASED ON PHOTO BY R. BURGESS

**ABOVE** THE GIRL SCOUT COUNCIL OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL CELEBRATES THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF GIRL SCOUTING IN AN INTERFAITH SERVICE AT THE CATHEDRAL ON APRIL 28, 2012. **PHOTO** D. MARKS

# Seismic Shifts

One year ago, when a magnitude 5.8 earthquake rocked the east coast of the United States, it did unprecedented damage to major landmarks and to our National Cathedral in particular. An even more significant event for Washington will occur this November 6, when the American people decide who will lead us as president for the next four years. In our own country, as across the globe, the fault lines of religion and culture remain far from quiet. With each of these major turning points covered in these pages, “seismic shifts” might well be the theme for this issue of *Cathedral Age*.

Major shifts lie ahead, but the outlook is far from bleak. For as serious as they are, the challenges that lie ahead are being faced with both agility and resolve. Following a 2010 gathering at the National Cathedral, a landmark second Christian-Muslim summit held in Beirut this summer resulted in a committed plan of action. After a year of detailed inspection, careful stabilization, and long-range planning, the Cathedral has entered a new phase of restoration—with exciting news of a major \$5 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. leading the way to restoring \$20 million of earthquake damage. Nationally important advocates for the cause of courage and understanding have been recently honored and uplifted at this spiritual home for the nation, from the humble ministry of Chuck Colson to the continuing role of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Last but not least, we are extremely honored that both candidates for the coming presidential election agreed to be interviewed for this issue’s “Faith in America” section.

Excerpts reprinted from Calvin Coolidge’s 1928 address at the Cathedral offer a potent reminder that, from the days of William McKinley onward, U.S. presidents have expressed active interest in faith and in the work of the National Cathedral. And as an essay by our Interim Dean Frank Wade points out, President Obama and Governor Romney are no different; their reflections here provide important

insight into a major factor that has shaped them and will continue to guide their future work. “The principles of faith lie behind the priorities we set and the manner in which we work to fulfill them,” Wade notes. “To pretend that the faith of our leaders is not a matter of interest to the electorate is an act of denial with substantial consequences.” As such, Wade asks us to acknowledge faith’s power openly—and also to reclaim it as a positive force, despite its often-divisive public role.

All of us who have read Frank Wade’s *Cathedral Age* essays or have heard him preach from the Cathedral’s historic Canterbury Pulpit can appreciate the eloquence, wisdom, and deeply faithful leadership that have distinguished his tenure as interim dean as well as his decades of service in ministry. Yet as Wade’s Cathedral term concludes, it is my great pleasure as newly elected chair of the Cathedral Chapter to welcome the Rev. Canon Gary R. Hall as tenth dean of Washington National Cathedral. Hall’s work begins October 1. For him, the Cathedral is “an architectural treasure and a living symbol of worship and ministry in the nation’s capital.” He has expressed his eagerness for working with the Cathedral community and friends nationwide in the search to “strengthen our historic ministries and imagine and enact new ones.” (To learn more about the new dean, visit [www.nationalcathedral.org](http://www.nationalcathedral.org).)

Hall’s role will not be easy, as he comes to the Cathedral and to its national service at a time of many challenges—but this ordained minister for more than 35 years is strengthened by faith and by proven leadership as a former seminary dean and president. I know that I speak for all of the Cathedral community, along with the search committee and those who serve with me on the Cathedral Chapter, in looking forward to an outgoing and energetic ministry sure to kindle hearts and put wind in many sails.

DAVID J. KAUTTER  
CHAIR, CATHEDRAL CHAPTER





## CATHEDRAL AGE

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# A Vote for Understanding

## The Power of Faith in the Coming Election

by Francis H. Wade

There is a story told of a man who was finally rescued after many years on a desert island. He proudly showed the rescuers all that he had made for himself during his exile: the hut, the garden, a playing field, and two churches. When asked why he had built two houses of worship he explained that he regularly attended one and the other was the church he refused to go to under any circumstances. That negative and judgmental aspect of religion is not confined to small islands or bad jokes but is all too often the public face of religion. In this election year, that unfortunate impulse in the faithful has already begun to make its mark and undoubtedly will become a larger factor as November nears.

The results of the presidential election are expected to be close. And so far, our public discourse is relentlessly negative. The fear of what might happen if “the Other” were elected is generating far more energy than any hope associated with a particular candidate. Concerns about Mormonism or the preaching of Jeremiah Wright are being quietly fanned. Instincts that are drawn to homogeneity are allowed to rail against inclusivity. Islam receives little understanding from those of many theologies, and the frequent reports of its adherents blowing up themselves and others make insight even more elusive. Long-standing issues of contraception, abortion, sexuality, re-distribution of wealth,

stewardship of the environment, and healthcare, as well as public and private debt, combine to produce a nearly perfect storm of fear, judgment, and negativity. Like the man on the island, we are surrounded by churches, ideologies, and trends we do not want to consider under any circumstances. The result is that we who have been invited to serve at the banquet of God’s bounty are instead volunteering in droves to serve on the jury at Judgment Day.

### DEEPER AND BETTER IMPULSES

Yet that is an offer God consistently declines to accept. Teachings of the great religions condemn passing judgments on our neighbor. Those of us who are Christians would do well to remember that Jesus made it quite clear that we are simply not qualified to render the judgments we are so easily tempted to make. Those we regard as “ne’er do wells” will be in the Kingdom long before those we admire, he said. And he told a parable about our inability to separate good and evil—a job reserved for angels who are well above our station and grade. Our task is to be agents of the opposite of current political trends: openness, inclusion, truth, trust, forgiveness, understanding, generosity, and personal risk in the name of all of these things. The private hearts of people of faith know this even while our public faces are contorted by negativity.





The Rev. Dr. Francis H. Wade is interim dean of Washington National Cathedral

**ABOVE** A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATOR HOLDS A SIGN IN FRONT OF THE SITE OF A PROPOSED ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTER NEAR GROUND ZERO IN NEW YORK CITY IN AUGUST 2010. THE CENTER—PARK51—WOULD LATER OPEN TO THE PUBLIC FOR ITS FIRST EXHIBIT IN SEPTEMBER 2011. **PHOTO** AP PHOTO/S. WENIG

This does not mean there is a clear religious answer to the issues that perplex our nation. People of reason and faith do come to very different conclusions about the best course and the best candidate to lead us on that course. We are not called to common conclusions but to common paths, principles, and hopes. People of faith are bound to a given set of questions, even if the answers will vary. Faith's questions include exploring the potential for reconciliation of all people; impact on the environment as well as the economy; the  
interplay of freedom and

on the fruits of well grounded faith, fruits associated with the kind of questions already mentioned. In our discomfort we have come to the absurd oxymoronic notion that faith simply does not matter in public life. Our culture tends to treat it as an isolated personal choice having no more bearing on our community than the decision to collect stamps or ride a bicycle: one's right to do so is affirmed, but the practice of it is deemed to be without impact outside the circles of intimacy. Political rhetoric takes an equally limiting view. If all one knew about religion came from the political process it would appear to be on a par with the decision to wear  
purple or green; entirely personal  
and private with no  
bearing on one's

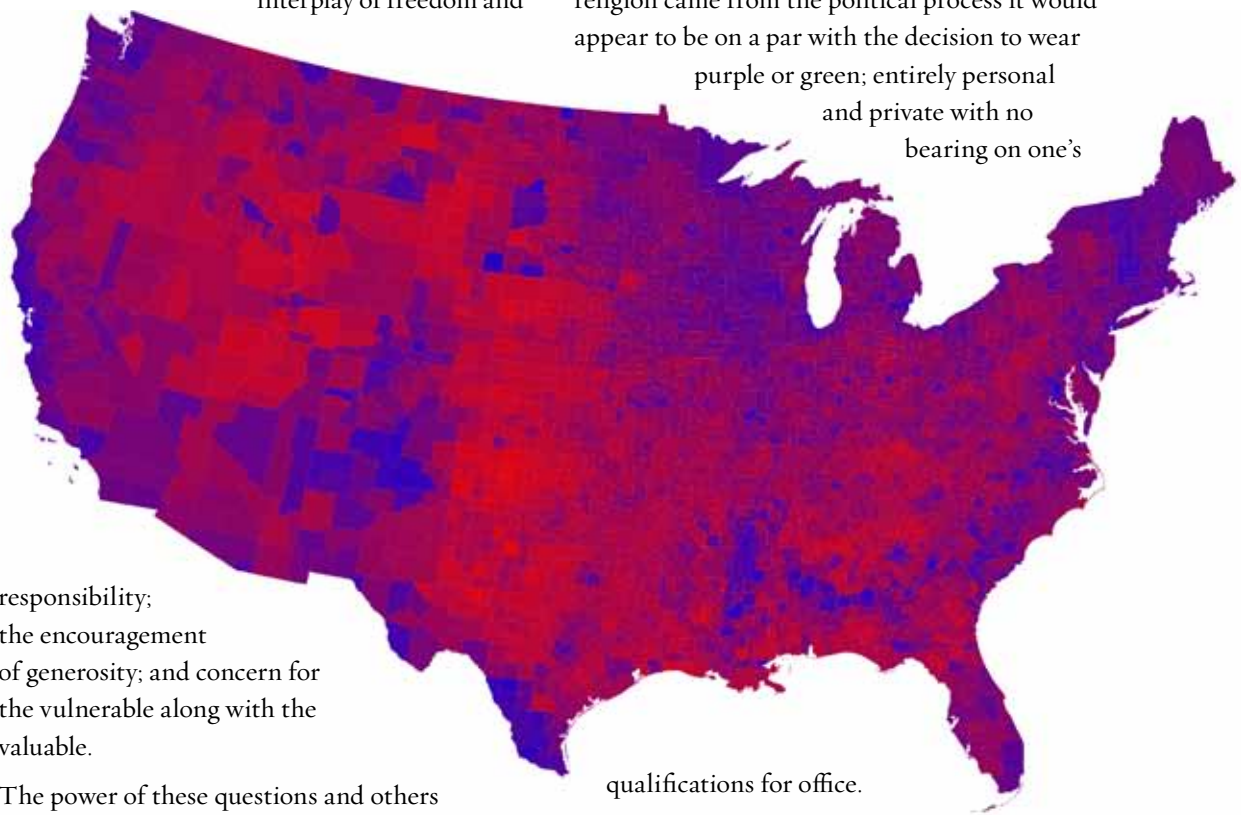
responsibility;  
the encouragement  
of generosity; and concern for  
the vulnerable along with the  
valuable.

The power of these questions and others like them is not absent from the hearts of the faithful even if they are of little interest to adrenaline-addicted news cycles. The deeper and better impulses of religion remain overshadowed by the reality of shallow and unmoored behavior carried out under its banner. This distortion results in a national discomfort with the fact of faith. We forget our Founders' understanding that while church and state must be separate, democracy depends

qualifications for office.

#### THE DANGERS OF DENIAL

Faith is actually the means by which one understands life and the world in which we live. Is life good? If so, how is its value expressed? What are the purposes of life, and how does one contribute to and serve them? The great narratives of faith address those questions in mythic form, and the answers one derives from them have much to do with how one might lead a nation. The principles of faith lie behind the priorities



we set and the manner in which we work to fulfill them. To pretend that the faith of our leaders is not a matter of interest to the electorate is an act of denial with substantial consequences far beyond the scope of dealing with the intolerant excesses of some religious practitioners.

And there is no real reason for it. The traditions that formed President Obama and Governor Romney's faiths have several points that should be of interest to voters. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a long and commendable emphasis on the importance of family life. It is a point well worth acknowledging and worthy of commendation by anyone concerned with the fabric of our nation. The DNA of African-American faith communities includes a lively concern for justice that can always benefit our common experiences. And both traditions believe that God's purposes are worked out in the flow of history—the very flow the president of the United States significantly influences. Our candidates have been molded by their faith communities as they have been shaped by educational institutions, families, and work experiences. The sources of their convictions and assumptions are proper inquiries in an election year. Our national respect for individual choice in religion makes the processes of faith communities off-limits, but the resulting values are as important to elections as they are to governance.

#### LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

Just as positive values emerge from the traditions of Messrs. Obama and Romney,

**“We are not called to common conclusions but to common paths, principles, and hopes. People of faith are bound to a given set of questions, even if the answers will vary.”**

questions can also be raised about them.

Thinking of Mormonism and the African-American tradition in the broadest possible categories, both have the experience of being marginalized in ways not known in mainline or national faith communities. That experience tends to produce strong internal loyalties and strengths but can develop wary if not hostile relationships with the wider community that have no place in national governance. I am not suggesting that either candidate has that limiting view: I am suggesting that a lively conversation about the importance of faith

should not keep us from hearing how the candidates have honored the obvious assets of their religious background and how they have dealt with some of its possible liabilities.

Religion is a powerful force in life. That point is obvious to believers and unbelievers alike. Much of history's goodness as well as its terror spring from some form of religious conviction.

In spite of our checkered behavior, faith retains an interest in questions that are vital to the common good.

For our nation to pretend that the beliefs of our president are a matter of indifference is an absurdity that ill serves us. Putting one's light under a

bushel is a common failing. Trying to convince the world that there was no light in the first place is a folly with peculiar power during an election. *CA*

## Join the Conversation

How does faith contribute to leadership? What is the continuing importance of faith in American life?



Tweet your thoughts about this article to us: @WNCathedral.

**OPPOSITE** 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS BY COUNTY, WITH SHADES OF RED, BLUE, AND PURPLE USED TO INDICATE PERCENTAGES OF REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC VOTES. © 2008 M. E. J. NEWMAN, USED WITH PERMISSION.



Interviews  
with President  
Barack Obama  
and Governor  
Mitt Romney

# FAITH in AMERICA

This series features reflections on faith in America—from prominent thought leaders and individuals of different religious backgrounds or perspectives.

For this issue, President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney were asked an identical set of questions and given the opportunity to respond freely. Their answers appear in *Cathedral Age* as they were given in full.



## *CA* HOW DOES FAITH PLAY A ROLE IN YOUR LIFE?

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** First and foremost, my Christian faith gives me a perspective and security that I don't think I would have otherwise: That I am loved. That, at the end of the day, God is in control—and my main responsibility is to love God with all of my heart, soul, and mind, and to love my neighbor as myself. Now, I don't always live up to that standard, but it is a standard I am always pursuing.

My faith is also a great source of comfort to me. I've said before that my faith has grown as president. This office tends to make a person pray more; and as President Lincoln once said, "I have been driven to my knees many times by the overwhelming conviction that I had no place else to go."

Finally, I try to make sure that my faith informs how I live my life. As a husband, as a father, and as president, my faith helps me to keep my eyes on the prize and focus on what is good and truly important.

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** Faith is integral to my life. I have served as a lay pastor in my church. I faithfully follow its precepts. I was taught in my home to honor God and love my neighbor. My father was committed to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s cause of equality, and I saw my parents provide compassionate care to others, in personal ways to people nearby and in leading national volunteer movements. My faith is grounded in the conviction that a consequence of our common humanity is our responsibility to one another—to our fellow Americans foremost, but also to every child of God.

## *CA* DO YOU HAVE FAVORITE SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES, PRAYERS, OR OTHER WORDS OF WISDOM TO WHICH YOU OFTEN TURN?

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** I am always moved by the Lord's words in Matthew: "For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me." (MATTHEW 25:35-36, KJV).

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** I do have a few favorites. Isaiah 40:31 has been a great source of encouragement in my life, and I quote from it often. Psalm 46 is also important to me; I chose to read it on the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Niebuhr's serenity prayer is a good one as well.

I've also been blessed to receive a daily devotional from my faith advisor, Joshua DuBois, who will send me Scripture or thoughts from people such as C.S. Lewis or Howard Thurman every morning.

## *CA* HOW DO YOU VIEW THE ROLE OF FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE?

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** There are many ways to approach this question, but two clear aspects of the role of faith in public life come to mind immediately. First, faith has always provided a moral framework and vocabulary for this country to come to terms with its most pressing challenges. One of the great things about this nation is that it is a place where people from all walks of life can advocate on behalf of their faith and beliefs and be open about what drives and motivates them.

From slavery to the suffrage movement to civil rights, faith—and the moral obligations that derive from our faith—have always helped us to navigate some of our greatest moral challenges with a recognition that there’s something bigger than ourselves: we have obligations that extend beyond our own self-interest. We face big challenges in this country, and we’re coming to the point where we will decide if we’re truly in this together or if each individual ought just to fight for what serves them best. For me, and I think for many other Americans, faith tells us that there is something about this world that ties our interest to the welfare of a child who can’t get the health care they need, or a parent who can’t find work after the plant shut down, or a family going hungry.

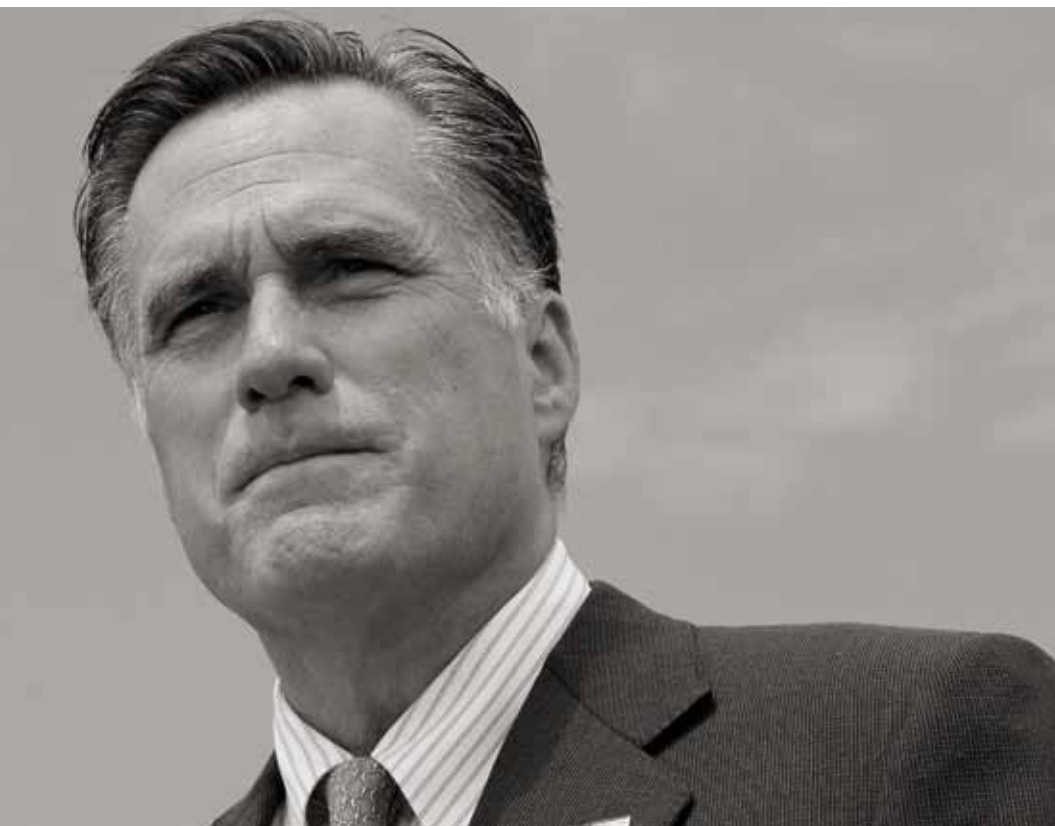
Second, faith motivates people to do incredibly compassionate and good work

that helps our nation thrive. Now, I’ve been familiar with this for a long time. One of my first jobs was as a community organizer where I was funded by a Catholic Church grant to help families on the South Side of Chicago who were struggling after the local steel plant closed. But I must say this has become even more real to me during my time as president. Through the letters I’ve read from individuals whose faith led them to serve in Joplin or Colorado Springs in the aftermath of a natural disaster, and the work of my faith-based office (which has done incredible work to strengthen partnerships between the federal government and faith-based non-profits to serve those in need), it is more apparent to me now than ever how integral faith is as a motivating factor for so much of what keeps our country moving forward.

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** We should acknowledge the Creator, as did the Founders—in ceremony and word. He should remain on our currency, in our pledge, in the teaching of our history, and during the holiday season, nativity scenes and menorahs should be welcome in our public places. Our greatness would not long endure without judges who respect the foundation of faith upon which our Constitution rests.

**CA AS A COUNTRY OF GREAT RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND DIVISIVENESS, HOW CAN FAITH PLAY A ROLE IN UNIFYING AMERICA?**

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** I believe that while we are a country with so many differences in creed and theology, we can all meet in service, in shared moral convictions about our nation stemming from a common worldview.



**“My faith is grounded in the conviction that a consequence of our common humanity is our responsibility to one another—to our fellow Americans foremost, but also to every child of God.”**



“... faith  
motivates people  
to do incredibly  
compassionate  
and good work  
that helps our  
nation thrive.”



**PRESIDENT OBAMA** Faith lets us know that there's something bigger than ourselves, and that requires a certain basic commitment to one another. This country has a rich tradition of seeking to create an environment where people of different beliefs can live together and share common goals. As Americans, I think we understand that—in protecting our ability to advocate for our own positions—we must protect the ability of those who come from different backgrounds and beliefs to do so as well. Faith demands that we see the image of God in one another and respect it.

**CA SOME PEOPLE HAVE QUESTIONED THE SINCERITY OF YOUR FAITH AND YOUR CHRISTIANITY. HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO THOSE QUESTIONS?**

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** I spoke about this a bit at the National Prayer Breakfast last year. You know, there's not much

I can do about it. I have a job to do as president, and that does not involve convincing folks that my faith in Jesus is legitimate and real. I do my best to live out my faith, and to stay in the Word, and to make my life look more like His. I'm not perfect. What I can do is just keep on following Him, and serve others—trying to make folks' lives a little better using this humbling position that I hold.

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** I am often asked about my faith and my beliefs about Jesus Christ. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. Every religion has its own unique doctrines and history. These should not be bases for criticism but rather a test of our tolerance. Religious tolerance would be a shallow principle indeed if it were reserved only for faiths with which we agree.

**CA WHAT DOES A POLITICAL LEADER'S FAITH TELL YOU ABOUT HIM/HER AS A PERSON?**

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** A political leader's faith can tell us a great deal or nothing. So much depends on what lies behind that faith. And so much depends on deeds, not words. Perhaps the most important question to ask a person of faith who seeks a political office is whether he or she shares these American values: the equality of humankind, the obligation to serve one another, and a steadfast commitment to liberty. They are not unique to any one denomination. They belong to the great moral inheritance we hold in common. They are the firm ground on which Americans of different faiths meet and stand as a nation, united.

“From slavery to the suffrage movement to civil rights, faith—and the moral obligations that derive from our faith—have always helped us to navigate some of our greatest moral challenges with a recognition that there’s something bigger than ourselves: we have obligations that extend beyond our own self-interest.”



**PRESIDENT OBAMA** Faith can express itself in people in many ways, and I think it is important that we not make faith alone a barometer of a person’s worth, value, or character. I will say that oftentimes faith can serve as an impetus, or even a reason in itself, to view issues outside of just the perspective of our own personal advancement. There is a sort of selflessness that often derives from faith that I think is a powerful force for good.

I didn’t agree with former President Bush on many issues, but I did respect him as a good husband, a loving father, and as a man of faith. I don’t know how he would have approached the issue of immigration reform or AIDS in Africa if he were not a man of faith. If he’d been someone solely concerned with hard politics—or what people would say about him—I’m not sure he would have had the gall to step out on those issues. But he did, and I think it’s clear that his faith was a major part of that.

#### *CA* HOW CAN OUR GOVERNMENT AND FAITH COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER AS A POSITIVE FORCE FOR THE NATION WHILE ALSO RESPECTING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE TWO?

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** I think we’ve made some important progress on this issue during my time as president through our work with my Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The constitutional principle of a separation between church and state has served our nation well since our founding—embraced by people of faith and those of no faith at all throughout our history—and it has been paramount in our work. That is why I signed an executive order that implemented recommendations from my Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships that included some of our nation’s top church/state experts. We’ve also expanded how the government views partnerships with faith-based and non-profit organizations from solely a financial focus to include non-financial partnerships.

I have also had the approach that partnerships are a two-way street. Faith communities often know their cities better than most anyone else. They also have an institutional memory and history of service that we have and can continue to learn from. On the other hand, the federal government has tools and resources that faith communities often do not have. We’ve been intentional about connecting non-profits in the same field with one another to share best practices, or to form private sector partnerships. In a field like mentoring, we’ve brought corporations to the table to facilitate private funding for non-profits doing this work. On an issue like human trafficking, we’ve worked with faith communities not only to care for trafficking survivors through financial partnerships but also to inform their congregations about how to identify possible trafficking victims through non-financial partnerships. We can always do better, and we’re getting better every day, but one of the greatest sources of optimism for

me over these last four years has been to see so many heroic and humble Americans serving others out of the kindness of their hearts, and the moral imperative of their most core beliefs.

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** As governor of Massachusetts, I worked hard to promote faith-based social-service organizations, and I appointed my wife, Ann, to lead my efforts. Clearly the boundaries between church and state must be respected, but there is a large space in which faith-based organizations can do good for the community in which they serve. In recent years, the notion of the separation of church and state has been taken by some well beyond its original meaning. They seek to remove from the public domain any acknowledgment of God. Religion is seen as merely a private affair with no place in public life. The Founders proscribed the establishment of a state

religion, but they did not countenance the elimination of religion from the public square. We are a nation "Under God," and in God, we do indeed trust.

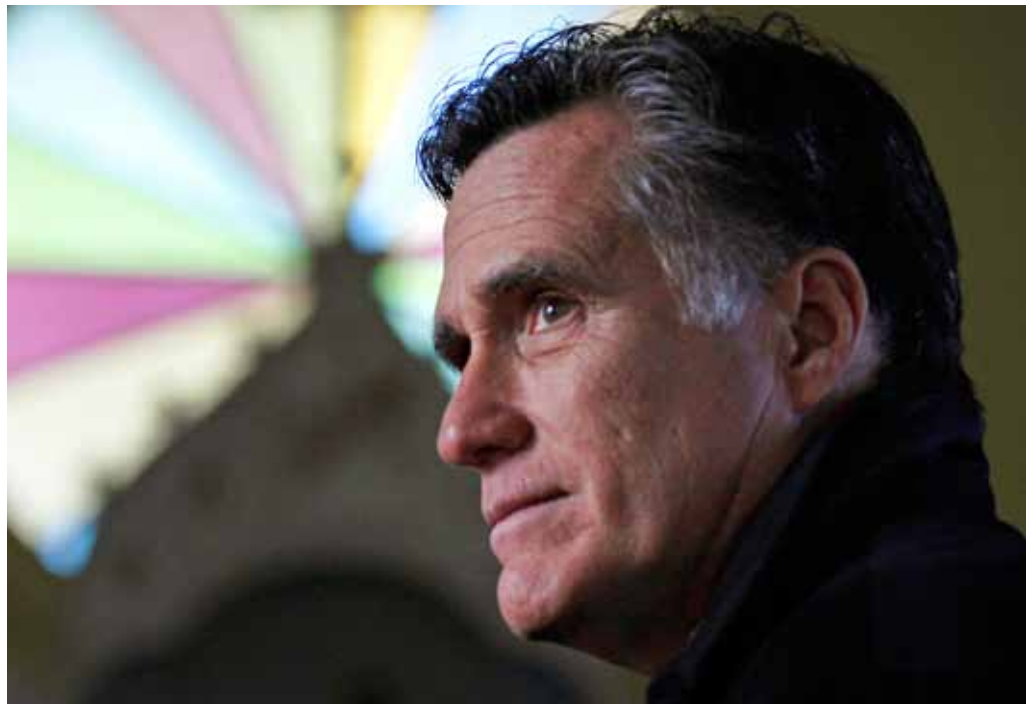
**CA WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL IS CALLED TO BE THE SPIRITUAL HOME FOR THE NATION. FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, HOW CAN THE CATHEDRAL LIVE OUT THAT MISSION?**

**GOVERNOR ROMNEY** From the beginning this nation trusted in God, not man. Religious liberty is the first freedom in our Bill of Rights. And whether the cause is justice for the persecuted, compassion for the needy and the sick, or mercy for the child waiting to be born, there is no greater force for good in the nation than Christian conscience in action. The mission of the National Cathedral, as I conceive of it, is to preserve, protect, and advance that tradition as a national house of prayer.

**PRESIDENT OBAMA** I believe that clarity about most anything in life is the result of seeking answers, not settling for what we know already. The National Cathedral has a proud history of hosting conversations about questions and debates of great importance and of allowing different perspectives as part of that conversation.

I think the Cathedral has found that our faith and overall decision-making is strengthened by being exposed to other ideas and testing them. This is how the Cathedral can continue to serve its mission, and how America can continue to live up to its highest ideals as well: by carving out space for important conversations and ideas, and intentionally including those of different viewpoints in those discussions.

**"Every religion has its own unique doctrines and history. These should not be bases for criticism but rather a test of our tolerance. Religious tolerance would be a shallow principle indeed if it were reserved only for faiths with which we agree."**



**OPPOSITE** PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AT THE INAUGURAL PRAYER SERVICE AT WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL, JANUARY 2009 **PHOTO** D. MARKS

**ABOVE** FORMER MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY PAUSES DURING A VISIT TO ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH WHILE CAMPAIGNING IN A BERLIN, N.H., NEIGHBORHOOD IN DECEMBER 2011. **PHOTO** AP PHOTO/C. KRUPA