

GOD'S POLITICS

Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).

Jim Wallis, an evangelical, editor of *Sojourners* magazine and the Convener of Call to Renewal, a national federation of churches and faith-based organizations working together to overcome poverty. Wallis has been an Institute of Politics Fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and taught on faith, politics, and society both there and at the Harvard Divinity School.

CHAPTER 1: TAKE BACK THE FAITH

Evil: According to Wallis, if evil in this world is deeply human and very real, and religious people believe it is, it just doesn't make spiritual sense to suggest that the evil all lies "out there" with our adversaries and enemies, and none of it is "in here" with us – embodied in our attitudes, behaviors, and policies (Wallis. 2005 P. 5).

Wallis claim that the loss of **religious prophetic vocation** is terribly dangerous for any society. He seriously asks "Who will uphold the dignity of economic and political outcasts?" "Who will question the recourse to violence and rush to wars"? "Who will not allow God's name to be used to simply justify ourselves, instead of calling us to accountability?" And "Who will love the people enough to challenge their worst habits, coarser entertainments, and self neglects?" Prophetic religion always press the question of the common good (Wallis. 2005 P. 6).

That **common good** should always be constructed from the deepest wells of our personal *and* social responsibility and the absolute insistence to never separate the two (Wallis. 2005 P. 6).

The Political Problem of Jesus (Wallis. 2005 P. 15).

Wallis also points out the fact that **many conservative evangelical leaders** conform to the political Right and its agenda that favors the wealthy over the poor and middle class. Jesus is not pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-American (Wallis. 2005 P. 15).

Luke 4:18-19: Jesus opened up his own ministry by proclaiming, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (which was a direct biblical reference to the Jubilee Year in the Hebrew Scriptures where, periodically, the debts of the poor ere cancelled, slaves were set free, and land was redistributed for the sake of equity) (Wallis. 2005 P. 17).

CHAPTER 2: LACK OF VISION

"Without vision, the people perish."

CHAPTER 3: IS THERE A POLITICS OF GOD?

God is Personal, but Never Private

Wallis feels that the [politics of God](#) calls all the rest of our politics into question. [The place to begin to understand the politics of God is with the prophets](#), the ancient moral articulators in the Scriptures who claimed to speak in “the name of the Lord.” [Their topics](#), as listed by Wallis, were quite secular; land, labor, capital, wages, debt, taxes, equity, fairness, courts, prisons, immigrants, other races and peoples, economic divisions, social justice, war, and peace – the stuff of politics (Wallis. 2005 P. 32).

[The prophets were usually speaking to](#) rulers, kings, judges, employers, landlords, owners of property and wealth, and even religious leaders. They spoke to “the nations,” and it was the powerful who were most often the prophet’s target audience; those in charge of things were the ones called to greatest accountability. [The prophets usually were speaking for](#), most often, the dispossessed, widows, orphans, the hungry, the homeless, the helpless, the least, last, and lost. [God wants the “common good”](#) (Wallis. 2005 P. 32).

Wallis asserts that [the politics of God is different](#) than ours –from the Republicans and the Democrats, the liberals and the conservatives, the Left and the Right. The Politics of God makes them all look pretty bad (Wallis. 2005 P. 32).

God is personal, but never private (Wallis. 2005 P. 34-35).

Most of the biblical prophets would offer a quite searing [indictment of contemporary American society](#). Specifically, that we have become a nation of endangered souls and that our society and politics are governed by values quite foreign to the heart of our religious traditions. Whether conservatives or liberal Christians, or members of other faith groups, or just spiritual seekers, we are all guilty of succumbing to a diminished religiosity that is characterized by privatized belief systems, devoid of the prophetic and social witness of Jesus and the prophets – ultimately, nothing more than “small-s” spirituality that is really only ad hoc wish fulfillment or a collection of little self-help techniques we use to take the edge off our materialistic rate-race lives (Wallis. 2005 P. 36).

CHAPTER 4: PROTEST IS GOOD. ALTERNATIVES ARE BETTER

[Conservatives say](#) that cultural and moral issues of family breakdown, personal responsibility, sexual promiscuity, and substance abuse are prime reasons for entrenched domestic poverty. [The liberals point](#) to the critical need for adequate nutrition, health care, education, housing, and good-paying jobs as keys to overcoming endemic poverty.

Domestic poverty will not be overcome without investing both public and private resources in the lives of poor children and families *and* by strengthening the bonds of family and community. Poverty will only be significantly reduced by a combination of personal and social responsibility, and then only with a moral commitment that makes possible a new political will – transforming the fight against poverty into a bipartisan commitment and a nonpartisan cause (Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 48).

In the fight against poverty, clear and compelling **alternatives** are needed in every area; in education, health care, housing, and economic development and in personal, family, and community renewal. Gratefully, **those alternatives exist** (Wallis. 2005 P. 48). This needs to be included in model programs as alternatives existing in the U.S. and the other parts of the world.

Wallis asserts that the **spiritual component** in all this is absolutely crucial. An understanding of how **sacred the blessing of life** is must undergird all of our effort for justice and for peace. **Each of forgotten souls was made in the image of God** and carries that sacred value. To remember that is a religious duty, and to remember them is part of our obedience to God. In fact, the gospel reminds us that God is actually *particularly* present in those very victims when Jesus says, “As you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me” (Wallis. 2005 P. 49).

Scripture demand that we “choose life; so that you and your children may live” (Wallis. 2005 P. 49).

CHAPTER 6. PROPHETIC POLITICS

Wallis suggests there are 3 major political options and also suggests 4th option. **The first political option in America** today is **conservative** on everything – from cultural, moral and family concerns to economic, environmental, and foreign policy issues – coming from the political Right (Wallis. 2005 P. 74).

The second political option in contemporary America is **liberal** on every thing –both family/sexual/cultural questions and economic, environmental, and foreign policy matters. There are differences among the liberals but the intellectual and ideological roots come from the Left side of cultural and political spectrum (Wallis. 2005 P. 74).

The third option in American politics is **libertarian**, meaning **liberal on cultural/moral issues and conservative on fiscal/economic and foreign policy**. This “just leave me along and don’t spend my money option” is growing quickly in American life (Wallis. 2005 P. 74).

Wallis’ “**fourth option**” for American politics, which follows from the prophetic religious tradition. It is **traditional or conservative on issues of family values, sexual integrity and personal responsibility**, while being **very progressive, populist, or even radical on issues like poverty and racial justice**. It affirms good stewardship of the earth and its resources, supports gender equality, and is more internationally minded than nationalist – looking first to peacemaking and conflict resolution when it come to foreign policy questions.

The people it appeals to are very strong on issue like marriage, raising kids, and individual ethics, but without being right-wing, reactionary, or mean-spirited or scapegoating against any group of people, such as homosexuals. They can be pro-life, pro-family, and pro-feminist, all at the same time. They think issues of “moral character” are very important, both in a politician’s personal life and in his or her policy choices. Yet they are decidedly pro-poor, for racial reconciliation, critical of purely military solutions, and defenders of the environment. At the heart of the fourth option is the integral link between personal ethics and social justice (Wallis. 2005 P. 74).

Wallis asserts that what we need is nothing less than [prophetic politics](#). We must find new moral and political language that transcends old divisions and seeks the common good. Prophetic politics finds its center in fundamental moral issues like children, diversity, family, community, citizenship and ethics. Wallis seems to offer such option as political vision as an alternative that arises from prophetic texts; “Without a vision, the people perish” (Wallis. 2005 P. 75).

CHAPTER 12. MICAH VISION FOR NATIONAL and GLOBAL SECURITY

Wallis confess to discover from reading [federal budge resolution](#) that the cost of the war in Iraq will now be measured in the loss of health care, in our inability to provide education, and in the alarming percentage of people who will be hungry. The American occupation of Iraq now [costs about \\$1 billion per week](#). Yet American religious leaders cannot succeed in getting our government to approve \$5 billion for child care over five years. There is simply no space in the budget or in the national public discourse to talk about poor people (Wallis. 2005 P. 193).

A modern American prophet, like Micah, once said, “[A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is a nation approaching spiritual death.](#)” He was Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who made connection between war and poverty (Wallis. 2005 P. 194).

Biblical archeology discovered that when they dig down into the ruins of ancient Israel, they find periods of time when the houses were more or less the same size, and the artifacts show a relative equality between the people, with no great disparities. Ironically, during those periods, the prophets were silent. There was no Micah, Amos, Isaiah, or Jeremiah because there was nothing to say. But then they dig down into other periods, like the eighth century, and find remains of huge houses and small shacks, along with other evidence of great gaps between the rich and poor. And it was during those periods that the voice of the prophets rose up, to thunder the judgment and justice of God (Wallis. 2005 P. 199).

Wallis quoted speech of Bono, activist on Africa and HIV/AIDS. “[I think God is waiting for us to act. In fact, I think that God is on His knees to us, to the Church. God is on His knees to us, waiting for us to turn around this supertanker of indifference, our own indifference ..](#)” (Wallis. 2005 P. 199).

Bono said “the cost of five days of war in Iraq would have eliminated illiteracy worldwide. Which will finally make us more secure? (Wallis. 2005 P. 200).

Wallis reported on the “[Micah Network](#)” which is an organization of 250 agencies of 50 countries, evangelical poverty fighters from mostly Africa, Asia, and Latin America. They no longer willing to just “pull the bodies out of the river,” but were ready to upstream and find out what or who was throwing them in! These community development agencies had decided to now turn to advocacy as well – prophetic advocacy on behalf of the poor. They entered into a partnership with the World Evangelical Alliance (comprised of church associations in 120 countries). Their mission statement simply begins with “The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the Micah Network are creating a global evangelical campaign to [mobilize Christians against poverty](#)” (Wallis. 2005 P. 203-204).

CHAPTER 13. THE POOR YOU WILL ALWAYS HAVE WITH YOU

Mark 14:7: “The poor you will always have with you” is the most popular passage many Christians remember and it is mostly misinterpreted passage and see how Wallis interprets it.

Mark 14: 3 while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. 4 But some were there who said to one another in anger, why was the ointment wasted in this way? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor. And they scolded her. 6 But Jesus said, let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. 7 **For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me.** 8 She has done what she could; **she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial.** 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her (Mark 14:3-9).

Wallis point to the “**context**” of the text. Jesus was at Bethany “in the house of Simon the leper;” Jesus and his disciples are “at the table” with a leper – the worst outcast of his society. This was not a dinner with business executives from the chamber of commerce, nor a prayer breakfast with the president and members of Congress. Rather it was like having supper with somebody that everyone knows has AIDS (Wallis. 2005 P. 209).

When disciples complained when a woman broke alabaster jar, poured out oil on the head of Jesus that this oil could be sold and help the poor. Jesus’ response was to not bother her saying “**For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me.** 8 She has done what she could; **she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial**” (Wallis. 2005 P. 210).

In considering the context in which they were at the dinner table with a leper, and Jesus is making an assumption about his disciples’ continuing *proximity* 접근 to the poor. In Wallis’ interpretation, Jesus is saying, in effect, “Look, you will always have the poor with you because you are my disciples.

You know who we spend our time with, who we share meals with, who listens to our message, who we focus our attention on. You've been watching me, and you know what my priorities are. You know who comes first in the Kingdom of God. So, you will always be near the poor, you'll always be with them, and you will always have the opportunity to share with them (Wallis. 2005 P. 210).

Biblical scholars trace Jesus' teaching directly back to Hebrew Scriptures in Deuteronomy, chapter 15: 11: "Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth. I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'" Jesus is assuming the *social location* of his followers will always put them in close proximity to the poor and easily able to reach out to them (Wallis. 2005 P. 211).

Wallis suggest that Jesus is telling his disciples not so cheap when it come to worship and still be very generous toward the poor, who will always be at your side (Wallis. 2005 P. 211).

According to Wallis, modern Americans simply use this text as an excuse. "The poor you will always have with you" gets translated into "There is nothing we can do about poverty, and the poor will always be there, so why bother?" But that's not what the text is saying at all. The critical difference between Jesus' disciples and a middle-class church is precisely this: our lack of proximity to the poor. The continuing relationship to the poor that Jesus assumes will be natural for his disciples is unnatural to an affluent church. The "Social location" of the affluent Christians has changed; we are no longer "with the poor, and they are no longer with us. The middle-class church doesn't know the poor and they don't know us. Wealthy Christians talk *about* the poor but have no friends who are poor. So they merely speculate on the reasons for their conditions, often placing the blame on the poor themselves (Wallis. 2005 P. 211).

Wallis suggests that because of our isolation from the poor, American Christians *get the text wrong!* We misuse it to justify ourselves and don't realize how this story offers a deep biblical challenge to how we live. Social location often determines biblical interpretation, and that truth goes a long way toward understanding why Christians from the United States and many other wealthy countries simply miss some of the most central themes of the Scripture (Wallis. 2005 P. 211).

Wallis and his friends (all first year seminary students) did a thorough study to find every verse in the Bible that dealt with the poor. They scoured the Old and New Testaments for every single reference to poor people, to wealth and poverty, to injustice and oppression, and to what the response to all those subjects was to be for the people of God (Wallis. 2005 P. 212).

They found *several thousand* verses in the Bible on the poor and God's response to injustice. They found it to be the second most prominent theme in the Hebrew Scriptures Old Testament – the first was idolatry, and the two often were related.

One every sixteen verses in the New Testament is about the poor or the subject of money (Mammon, as the gospels call it). In the first three (Synoptic) gospels it is one out of ten verses, and in the book of Luke, it is one in seven! (Wallis. 2005 P. 212).

Wallis again talks about Matt. 25:31-46. He wrote what was most striking to him was that the people gathered in front of the throne of Christ in the story all really believed they are among his followers. And they must be completely stunned to learn that they will be separated and judged by how they have treated the poor – the poor! This judgment is not about right doctrine or good theology, not about personal piety or sexual ethics, not about church leadership or about success in ministry. It's about how we treated the most vulnerable people in our society, whom Jesus calls "the least of these." Jesus is, in fact, saying, I'll know how much you love me by how you treat them. Whatever you do for them, it's like you've done it for me. And, conversely, ignoring them is like ignoring me. Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 218.

CHAPTER 14: PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED IN THE DEBATE ABOUT POVERTY

War and the Poor (Wallis P. 222)

Statistics of poor children (Wallis P. 223)

Root Cause of Poverty – Blame each other (P. 225) - read

Wallis says "we not only pull people out of the river, but go upstream to find out what or who is pushing them in

Racial Issue (Wallis P. 229)

There is growing agreement across the political spectrum that racism is still very real and that we won't succeed in overcoming poverty without dismantling the structures of racial prejudice that still work to maintain economic injustice. The justice Department and the FBI have released devastating studies demonstrating the stark differences in arrest, conviction, and sentencing between white offenders and black and Hispanic offenders –for the same crimes and even in the same cities and neighborhoods. In the criminal justice system, as in many other social system in America, race still makes a real difference in how people are treated. And this is now, in the new millennium, not just twenty, fifty or one hundred years ago. It is crucial that both conservatives and liberals work to overcome the continuing impact of race as a cause of poverty. Jim Wallis, *God's Politics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 229.

Marriage (Wallis P. 230, 235, 253, 257,

Myth: If you marry and stay in it, you won't become homeless

Facts:

Self-sufficiency of the poor (Wallis P. 231) - read

While giving people fish to survive today we must teach them how to do fishing.

많은교인들이 외국선교여행다녀와서 은혜를 많이 받았다고하고 우리들이 얼마나 풍부하고 행복하게사는지를 여실히 느꼈다는것은 사실입니다. 그러나 막대한 돈을 드러가지않아도 여러분들이 사는 도시에도 그런사람들이 얼마던지 있습니다. 그 여행비용으로 지역선교를 하고 외국선교지에 줄것은 그대로 주는 방법도 있습니다. 제가 외국선교를 반대하는것이 아닙니다. 우리들이 외국선교의 산물인데 왜 반대하겠습니까? 지역선교와 balance 를 이루자는 말씀을 드리는것입니다. 외국선교에 100 불을 보냈으면 지역선교에도 100 불을 보내자는 말입니다. 외국선교지를 답사했으면 지역선교지도 답사하자는 말입니다.

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Amos was a humble shepherd who became one of the strongest voices for God's judgment against poverty and injustice (Wallis P. 233).

Amos Award: The first Amos Award of Calls for Renewal was given to Rev. Darren Ferguson. He was a former inmate of Sing Sing Prison. Wallis recall hearing one of the inmates when he was there to preach: "We are all from only about five neighborhoods in New York City. It's like a train that begins in my neighborhood. You get on the train when you're nine or ten years old, and the train ends up here at Sing Sing." Then he said, "When I get out, I want to go back and stop that train." Darren Ferguson is now the youth minister at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, NY, where the former Sing Sing inmate does amazing work with urban young people and ex-offenders who are usually forgotten and invisible to officials in Washington (Wallis P. 233).

Wallis too claim that the result of the coming of the Spirit in Jerusalem two thousand years ago, was an economic sharing so transformational that "there was not a needy person among them" (Wallis P. 234).

For those who care about poverty in America, the coming years are a critical time, a turning point similar to the New Deal of the 1930s Read more (Wallis P. 234)

We must have a clear moral message (Wallis P. 234).

Add this part to fed budget in chapter I.

Advocacy (Wallis P. 236)

Moral Question: Wallis emphasizes that what's happening in the streets of America is connected to what's happening in the hearts of Americans. The greatest moral question in American politics today is "what is our prosperity for" Will it serve as an excuse to forget those left behind? Or will it include those who have fallen through the cracks in our society, including almost thirteen million children? The biblical prophets say that a society's integrity is judged, not by its wealth and power, but by how it treats its most vulnerable members (Wallis P. 236).

Economy and consumerism (Wallis P. 236-237)

Impact values on children – children's shooting – (Wallis P. 237)

Wallis claims that poverty is becoming the definite moral issue for many in the faith community, including evangelicals and Pentecostals, Catholics and mainline Protestants, and of course, the black churches. While divided on other issues, church leaders are declaring a determined "unity" to make poverty a *religious issue* (Wallis P. 238).

CHAPTER 15: ISAIAH'S PLATFORM (P. 241)

Isaiah offered us God's vision of a good society. Isaiah's platform links religious values with economic justice, moral behavior with political commitment.

According to Wallis, budgets are moral documents. They clearly reveal the priorities of a family, a church, an organization, a city, or a nation. A budget shows what we most care about and how that compares to other things we care about. So when politicians present their budget, they are really presenting their priorities.

Federal government's budget and deficit (Wallis P. 242).

Faith-based Initiative (Wallis P. 243).

Add this section to Faith –Based Initiatives: Wallis witness what went on in the meeting at the White House of a wide cross-section of church and faith-based leaders ... (Wallis P. 251, 252,).

Statistics P. 243 bottom

Tax is moral issue: Faith and Tax (Wallis P. 243)

Susan Pace Hamill, a University of Alabama tax law professor, wrote her thesis on "An Argument for Tax Reform Based on Judeo-Christian Ethics." In it she applied "the moral principles of Judeo-Christian ethics" to Alabama's tax system, seeing reform as "a critically important step toward ensuring that Alabama's children, especially children

from low-income families” (Wallis P. 243). Alabama has long had one of the most regressive tax system in the country. A family of four earning \$4,600 a year has to pay income taxes. Property taxes are the lowest in the nation, which primarily benefits the timber industry in a state where 71 percent of the land is timber. The state sales tax is 4 percent, but local governments are free to add to it. Many do; in some counties it’s as high as 11 percent, even on groceries. People with income below \$13,000 pay 10.9 percent of their income in taxes, while those who make more than \$229,000 pay only 4 percent (Wallis P. 244).

Professor Hamill’s thesis was published in the *Alabama Law Review* and came to the attention of the new governor, Bob Riley, a conservative Republican and former member of Congress. Alabama, like most of the fifty states, faced a severe budget crisis with a deficit of \$700 million. Yet it is obligated by its constitution to have a balanced budget. So on May 19, 2003, Governor Riley addressed a special session of the state legislature. “We cannot balance our budget with cuts alone,” Riley said, “not unless we are willing to lay off thousands of teachers and cancel all extra-curricular activities, open prison doors, and put convicted felons back on the streets, and force thousands of seniors out of nursing homes and take away their prescription drugs.” The governor then went on to propose a tax-reform package that included higher property taxes, higher income taxes on the wealthy, and no income taxes on the poorest people. The plan raised the threshold to pay income tax for families of four to \$17,000 –paying for it in part by raising corporate taxes on the timber industry (Wallis P. 244). The plan was approved by the state legislature and then went to a statewide public referendum, where it went down to defeat –due in large part to a huge advertising campaign by the state’s wealthy business and special interests. But Alabama’s churches – including the Methodists, Presbyterians, Southern Baptists, Episcopalians, and Catholics, along with Jewish leaders- supported the changes (Wallis 244).

Wallis witnesses that though the tax-reform plan ultimately failed, it was one of the most important political stories in many years and that Bob Riley is deeply Christian and realized that his faith had something to say about the budget and tax situation. Wallis asserts further that “according to our Christian ethic, we’re supposed to love God, love each other, and help take care of our poor,” he was quoted by CBS News. Wallis suggests this is a step in the right direction” (Wallis P. 244).

Exclusion of low income working families from the child tax credit: Child tax credit (P. 245).

Disparity in income (Wallis P. 246 bottom and 247).

The decisions to drop child tax credit for America’s poorest families and children in favor of further tax cuts for the rich is morally offensive. It is blatant disregard for the poor and an outrageous bias toward the rich. In religious terms, the exclusion of any benefits for poor children in a new tax bill should have been names as a political sin. And those politicians who utter the words of religion and faith, yet who supported this exclusion of the poor, deserve to be called hypocrites (Wallis P. 248).

First casualty of war – P. 249

I would say from my experience of speaking tour for 7 years (1998-22004), visiting several hundred mission programs in 31 states that the United States is being lifted up and held by the service of so many caring people. Wallis adds that “We saw amazing ministries without which, I believe, the nation would fall apart in about 48 hours (Wallis P. 257).

Wallis too witness by saying that “all along the way (travel), there was a talk of *movement* in the air. It’s time to shift our thinking ‘from ministry to movement.’” Poverty is a religious issue. The cry of the poor rings from cover to cover in the Bible; God hears the cry of the poor –do we?

CHAPTER 16: AMOS AND ENRON

Report Enron’s case in Chapter I from Wallis P. 259-260

Add Reagn to the history of U.S. poverty in American economy (Wallis P. 262-263-265).

Quote article written by Bill Gats, Sr. (Wallis P. 268) add it to tax system in Ch. I.

CHAPTER 19: TRUTH TELLING ABOUT RACE –America’s Original Sin

Quote most of the articles in chapter I – racism

Wallis affirms that racism is a theological offense, a spiritual test, and not merely a political and economic issue. It was, after all, a primary theme of Paul’s missionary journeys, the reconciling of two peoples – Gentiles and Jews –in the body of Christ. He proclaims in 2 Corinthians 5:18 that “God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, .. has given us the ministry of reconciliation.” As America moves into a decidedly multicultural future, Paul’s command and example become increasingly relevant and challenging (Wallis P. 319).

CHAPTER 20: THE TIES THAT BOND –Family and Community Values

See if there is something I can quote for the myth : stay in marriage and you won’t become homeless.

CHAPTER 21