

The original documents are located in Box 5, folder “1/28/75 - National Religious Broadcasters' 32nd Annual Congressional Breakfast” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *df.*

REMARKS BEFORE THE
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS' 32ND ANNUAL
CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28, 1975

Reply

I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR INVITATION TO THIS

CONGRESSIONAL BREAKFAST, WHICH I ATTENDED FAIRLY FAITHFULLY

WHEN I WAS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS, AND FROM WHICH I

DERIVED NOT ONLY A GOOD DEAL OF RELIGIOUS INSPIRATION BUT

ALSO THAT POWERFUL ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH IS DESCRIBED IN THE

FAMILIAR HYMN AS "THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS."

*Rev. Joshi
" Best man
Former colleague in Congress
Distinguished Member*

I MIGHT SAY, IN A SECULAR WAY, I AM ~~STILL~~ ^{strongly hope} HOPING

FOR SOME OF THAT SPIRIT WITH THE NEW CONGRESS.

LAST YEAR, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF BEING WITH YOU

AS VICE PRESIDENT - AND I GUESS THE FIRST THING I OUGHT TO

ASSURE YOU THIS MORNING IS THAT I AM NOT GOING TO DO ANY

MORE JOB-HOPPING.

AS PRESIDENT, I HAVE BEEN CAUTIONED TO BE VERY
CAREFUL WHAT I SAY ABOUT RELIGIOUS MATTERS. BUT THE
SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, ALTHOUGH A FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLE TO WHICH I FULLY SUBSCRIBE, WAS NEVER INTENDED
IN MY VIEW TO SEPARATE PUBLIC MORALITY FROM PUBLIC POLICY.

IT SAYS \ THAT THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT SHALL NOT BE USED TO
SUPPORT OR SUPPRESS ANY ONE FAITH, \ BUT IN THE SAME SENTENCE
PROTECTS THE PROFESSION AND PROPAGATION OF ALL FAITHS.

I TOOK A MINUTE TO RE-READ THE FIRST AMENDMENT
TO THE CONSTITUTION BEFORE COMING OVER HERE. THIS IS WHAT IT SAYS:

quote

"CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN
ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION, OR PROHIBITING THE FREE EXERCISE
THEREOF; OR ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS;
OR THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE PEACEABLY TO ASSEMBLE, AND TO
PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES."

unquote

NOW THAT SAYS AN AWFUL LOT IN ONE SENTENCE;

IT SUSTAINS SOME OF OUR MOST PRECIOUS RIGHTS; IT ALSO

UNDERScores HOW INTER-RELATED THEY ARE. FREEDOM TO

EXERCISE ONE'S RELIGION WOULD BE MEANINGLESS WITHOUT

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ASSEMBLY. WITHOUT FREEDOM

OF THE PRESS THERE COULD BE NEITHER RELIGIOUS BOOKS NOR

RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS.

AS WE PROUDLY ENTER A PERIOD OF CELEBRATING OUR
BICENTENNIAL OF INDEPENDENCE AS A NATION, WE MUST REMEMBER
THAT OUR GREAT TRADITIONS OF FREEDOM DID NOT SUDDENLY START
IN 1776. FOR MORE THAN TWO CENTURIES BEFORE THE LIBERTY BELL
RANG, THE PROCESSES OF CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE WERE WORKING
ON THIS CONTINENT, AND THE IMPASSIONED EXTREMES OF RELIGIOUS
AND POLITICAL RIVALRY WERE TESTED AND FOUND WANTING.

IN THE END, OUR FOUNDING FATHERS SOUGHT TO
ESTABLISH A NEW ORDER OF SOCIETY EMBODYING THE PRINCIPLES
OF TOLERANCE AND FREEDOM, \ OF UNITY IN DIVERSITY, \ OF
JUSTICE WITH CHARITY. SO THE FIRST AMENDMENT WAS
WRITTEN TO ENSURE THE PERPETUATION OF THE HARD-LEARNED
LESSONS FROM OUR COLONIAL HISTORY THAT RELIGIOUS BELIEFS
CAN NEITHER BE COERCED NOR SUPPRESSED BY GOVERNMENT;

THAT A FREE PEOPLE MUST RETAIN THE RIGHT TO HEAR, THE RIGHT

TO SPEAK, THE RIGHT TO PUBLISH AND TO READ, AND THE RIGHT

TO COME TOGETHER -- ALL OF WHICH HAD BEEN DENIED THE EARLY

AMERICAN SETTLERS AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

AS FOR THE OTHER FREEDOM -- THE RIGHT TO PETITION

THE GOVERNMENT FOR A REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES -- IT IS HARD

FOR ANY OF US WHO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE TO IMAGINE A TIME WHEN

THIS WAS NOT PERMITTED. ● BUT IT WAS DANGEROUS IN AMERICA

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO -- AND IT IS IN MANY PARTS OF THE

WORLD TODAY.

I AM TOLD THAT THE TOTAL LISTENING AUDIENCE OF THE
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS BROADCASTERS EXCEEDS FORTY MILLION PERSONS
AND THAT RELIGIOUS BROADCASTING IN THIS COUNTRY AND THROUGHOUT
THE WORLD IS GROWING AT THE RATE OF TWENTY TO THIRTY PERCENT
PER YEAR. THIS CAN BE A TREMENDOUS FORCE FOR GOOD,
FOR FREEDOM, AND FOR PEACE.

WHILE THE FOUNDING FATHERS NEVER DREAMED OF
RADIO OR TELEVISION, THE PERSONAL FREEDOMS THEY PROTECTED
MAKE YOUR WORK POSSIBLE. THE ELECTRONIC ERA OF
COMMUNICATIONS WHICH IS ONLY BEGINNING, AS THE AGE OF
BOOKS WAS ONLY BEGINNING WHEN GUTENBERG PRINTED HIS BIBLE,
HOLDS UNLIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE WHO TODAY TELL AND
RE-TELL THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S LOVE FOR MAN.

AS PRESIDENT, I AM NO LESS CONCERNED THAN

GEORGE WASHINGTON WAS WHEN HE OBSERVED IN HIS FAREWELL

ADDRESS TO HIS COUNTRYMEN:

quote

"OF ALL THE DISPOSITIONS AND HABITS WHICH LEAD

TO POLITICAL PROSPERITY, RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE

INDISPENSIBLE SUPPORTS . . . THE MERE POLITICIAN, EQUALLY

WITH THE PIOUS MAN, OUGHT TO RESPECT AND TO CHERISH THEM . . .

REASON AND EXPERIENCE BOTH FORBID US TO EXPECT THAT NATIONAL

MORALITY CAN PREVAIL IN EXCLUSION OF RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE."

unquote

YOU WILL NOTE THAT THE FIRST AMENDMENT IS STATED
ENTIRELY IN THE NEGATIVE; IT FORBIDS CONGRESS -- BECAUSE
ITS AUTHORS WERE MUCH MORE FEARFUL OF THE TYRANNY OF
PARLIAMENT THAN OF THE KING -- TO MAKE ANY LAWS IN CERTAIN
AREAS OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM.

BUT PRESIDENT WASHINGTON URGED ALL "MERE" POLITICIANS
TO RESPECT AND CHERISH THE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION AND MORALITY. ●
AND IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE IN THE CONGRESS OVER THE YEARS
THAT MOST OF US "MERE POLITICIANS" REALLY DO.

IN MY FIRST SPEECH AS PRESIDENT TO MY FORMER
COLLEAGUES IN THE CONGRESS, I HAD DEDICATED GROUPS SUCH
AS THIS ONE IN MIND WHEN I SAID:

quote

"ON THE HIGHER PLANE OF PUBLIC MORALITY, THERE
IS NO NEED FOR ME TO PREACH . . . WE HAVE THOUSANDS
OF FAR BETTER PREACHERS AND MILLIONS OF SACRED SCRIPTURES
TO GUIDE US ON THE PATH OF PERSONAL RIGHT-LIVING AND
EXEMPLARY OFFICIAL CONDUCT.

"IF WE CAN MAKE EFFECTIVE AND EARLIER USE OF THE MORAL AND
ETHICAL WISDOM OF THE CENTURIES IN TODAY'S COMPLEX SOCIETY,
WE WILL PREVENT MORE CRIME AND MORE CORRUPTION THAN ALL
THE POLICEMEN AND PROSECUTORS OF THE GOVERNMENT CAN EVER
DETER. IF I MIGHT SAY SO, THIS IS A JOB THAT MUST
BEGIN AT HOME -- NOT IN WASHINGTON."

end quote

THROUGH YOUR BROADCASTS, YOU REACH INTO THE
HOMES OF AMERICA, AND BRING TO YOUNG AND OLD THE AGELESS
AXIOMS OF DIVINE TRUTH. ALL OF US NEED THE SURE GUIDANCE
OF GOD IN WHATEVER WE DO. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY
FAITHS AND DENOMINATIONS REPRESENTED AT THIS MEETING,
A COMMON GOAL BRINGS US HERE: \ RECOGNITION OF THE NEED TO
KEEP STRONG THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL TIES THAT BIND US TOGETHER
AS A NATION.

I WILL NOT JOIN THE SKEPTICS WHO SAY AMERICANS HAVE LOST

FAITH, HOPE OR LOVE. BUT I KNOW THAT EACH NEW GENERATION

MUST REDISCOVER THESE REDEEMING QUALITIES AND TRANSLATE THEM

INTO ITS OWN WAY OF LIVING, OR LIFESTYLE AS THEY NOW SAY.

YOU ARE HELPING IN THIS RENEWAL AND NURTURE OF OUR DEEP

RELIGIOUS ROOTS.

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I LEARNED A COUPLE OF VERSES
FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, THIRD CHAPTER, WHICH HAVE STUCK
WITH ME ALL MY LIFE. WHEN I TOOK THE OATH OF OFFICE AS
PRESIDENT, THE BIBLE WAS OPEN TO THIS PASSAGE:

TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL THINE HEART; AND LEAN
NOT UNTO THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING. IN ALL THY WAYS
ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE SHALL DIRECT THY PATHS.

THAT IS WHAT I HAVE TRIED TO DO, AND WILL TRY TO DO,
AS YOUR PRESIDENT. I THINK IT DOES NO VIOLENCE TO THE
SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE TO COMMEND THESE WORDS TO
MY COUNTRYMEN. IF IT DOES, I AM IN GOOD COMPANY,
STARTING WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON.

.....
END OF TEXT