

**The original documents are located in Box 34, “6/15/76 - Remarks at the 1976 Southern Baptist Convention, Norfolk, Virginia” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . . \*

REMARKS AT SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

THANK YOU, DR. WEBBER.

CONGRESSMAN DOWNING

CONGRESSMAN WHITEHURST

CONGRESSMAN DANIEL

MAYOR HILL (Norfolk)

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

*Overflow Crowd*

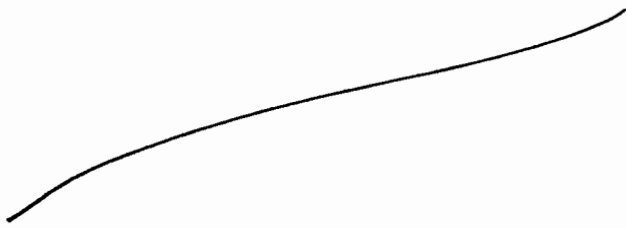
IT IS A GREAT HONOR FOR ME TO BE THE FIRST PRESIDENT  
OF THE UNITED STATES TO ADDRESS THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION.

I RECALL WITH SPECIAL INTEREST THE LAST TIME I WAS  
INTRODUCED AT AN EVENT SPONSORED BY THE SOUTHERN BAPTISTS.

IT WAS A BROTHERHOOD COMMISSION PRAYER BREAKFAST  
IN DALLAS ALMOST EXACTLY TWO YEARS AGO, WHEN I WAS  
VICE PRESIDENT.

THE MAN INTRODUCING ME WAS VERY CONSIDERATE,  
VERY GENEROUS IN HIS REMARKS, AND VERY FRIENDLY.

I WAS INTRODUCED AS A MAN WITH "AN OPEN MIND  
AND A COMPASSIONATE HEART," AND TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO RETURN  
THAT COMPLIMENT TO THE GENTLEMAN WHO INTRODUCED ME THEN --  
GOVERNOR JIMMY CARTER.

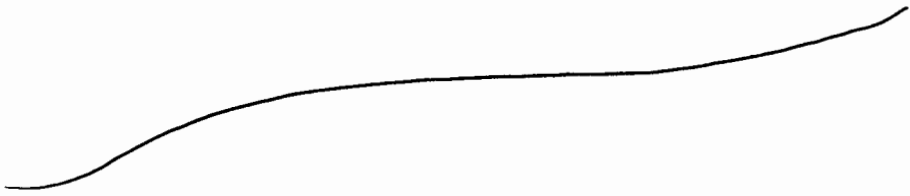


THE HONOR YOU HAVE PAID ME WITH THE INVITATION

TO SPEAK TO THIS CONVENTION IS SPECIAL TO ME IN A VERY

PERSONAL WAY.

ALTHOUGH OUR RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS ARE DIFFERENT,  
I HAVE LONG ADMIRED THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF BAPTISTS AND  
THE FACT THAT YOU STRIVE TO KEEP THE BIBLE AT THE CENTER OF YOUR  
LIVES. I ALSO RESPECT AND APPRECIATE YOUR COMMITMENT  
TO THE HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT OF YOUR  
FELLOW CITIZENS, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE MANY HOSPITALS,  
UNIVERSITIES AND SEMINARIES SUPPORTED BY BAPTIST CHURCHES.



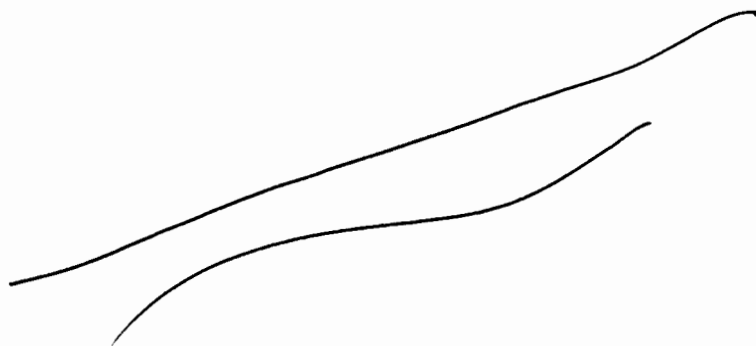
*select*  
MY SON MIKE, \ WHO IS NOW A DIVINITY STUDENT AT

GORDON CONWELL SEMINARY IN MASSACHUSETTS, \ WAS GRADUATED

FROM THE BAPTIST-AFFILIATED WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY

FOUR YEARS AGO, AND IT WAS MY PLEASURE TO BE THE SPEAKER

AT HIS GRADUATION CEREMONY.





WE MEET TODAY IN A YEAR OF HISTORIC IMPORTANCE  
AND NATIONAL CELEBRATION, THE BICENTENNIAL YEAR OF  
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE•

EVEN AS YOUR DENOMINATION HAS GROWN FROM FEWER  
THAN 500 PEOPLE IN AMERICA AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 18th  
CENTURY TO ALMOST 13 MILLION TODAY, BAPTISTS HAVE PLAYED  
A FUNDAMENTAL PART IN THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF AMERICA•

AN EARLY CHAMPION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM }- WHICH

THE GREAT BAPTIST MINISTER GEORGE TRUETT ONCE CALLED "THE

SUPREME CONTRIBUTION OF THE NEW WORLD TO THE OLD" --

5 | WAS ROGER WILLIAMS, / FOUNDER OF PROVIDENCE, / FORERUNNER

| OF JEFFERSON / AND GIANT AMONG BAPTISTS•

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEMOCRACY ITSELF WAS ROOTED DEEPLY  
IN BAPTIST CHURCH LIFE LONG BEFORE THERE WAS A UNITED STATES  
OF AMERICA.

THOMAS JEFFERSON SO ADMIRERD THE BAPTIST FORM OF  
CHURCH GOVERNMENT THAT HE CALLED IT "THE PUREST DEMOCRACY  
IN THE WORLD."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S MOTHER, A DEVOUT BAPTIST,

WAS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND ENDURING INFLUENCE

IN THE MEMORABLE LIFE OF HER SON, IMPLANTING IN HIM A DEEP

FAITH IN GOD AND ALWAYS ENCOURAGING HIM TO "BE SOMEBODY."

HISTORY GIVES US MANY MORE EXAMPLES OF PROFOUND

BAPTIST INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN LIFE, A TRADITION STILL BEING

ENRICHED TODAY.

BILLY GRAHAM CAME FROM YOUR RANKS TO BECOME

ONE OF TODAY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL CHRISTIAN EVANGELISTS AND

ONE OF THE MOST ADMIRED MEN OF OUR TIMES.●

BROOKS HAYS + TWICE THE PRESIDENT OF THIS  
CONVENTION, / A FORMER COLLEAGUE OF MINE IN THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES / AND A VERY DEAR FRIEND + HAS STOOD  
THROUGHOUT HIS DISTINGUISHED CAREER AS A MAN OF COURAGE AND  
CONVICTION, / A MAN OF TOWERING MORAL STRENGTH, / A MAN WHO  
SETS A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR ALL OF US IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE LIFE.

THESE RICH CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY,

DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES, SOCIAL EQUALITY, EVANGELISTIC FERVOR

AND MORAL STRENGTH HAVE RESERVED FOR YOUR PEOPLE AN HONORED

PLACE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.

YOU HAVE ALWAYS JEALOUSLY GUARDED THE SEPARATION

OF CHURCH AND STATE, BUT YOU HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT

PRIVATE MORALITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE CAN - AND MUST -

GO HAND IN HAND.

THE ESSENTIAL TASK OF LEADERSHIP IN OUR MODERN AGE,

AS IN AGES PAST, IS TO INSPIRE, TO TEACH, TO ACT WITH COURAGE

TO LIVE WITH HONOR, TO SHOW THE WAY.



THE MINISTER IN THE PULPIT, THE TEACHER IN THE  
CLASSROOM, THE FOREMAN ON THE DOCK, THE EXECUTIVE IN THE  
BOARDROOM, THE COMMANDERS OF ARMIES AND NAVIES, THE  
PARENTS OF CHILDREN -- ALL SHARE THE BURDEN AND THE  
SATISFACTION OF LEADERSHIP FULLY AS MUCH AS THOSE WHO SERVE  
IN GOVERNMENT.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF US ALL, IF WE ARE TO LEAD

SUCCESSFULLY, IS A STRONG MORAL FOUNDATION. WE CANNOT

STAND VERY LONG ON THE SHIFTING SANDS OF "SITUATION ETHICS."

HISTORY PROVES THAT POWER AND PRESTIGE ARE SLIPPERY PEAKS

FROM WHICH THE MIGHTY HAVE OFTEN FALLEN INTO DISGRACE.

JESUS SAID, "WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED, IF HE SHALL

GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"

WE STAND IN DANGER TODAY OF LOSING THE SOUL OF  
AMERICA TO THE SEDUCTIONS OF MATERIAL GAIN AND MORAL APATHY,  
TO A NEW CODE OF CONDUCT WHICH REVILES THE BASIC TRUTHS AND  
MOCKS THE BASIC BELIEFS ON WHICH THIS NATION AND MUCH OF  
RELIGION WERE FOUNDED•

FORGIVING HEARTS AND TOLERANT ATTITUDES ARE AMONG

THE GREATEST LESSONS OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING, BUT AT SOME POINT

WE MUST TAKE A STAND AND SAY 'THIS IS RIGHT; THIS IS WRONG

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.'

IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, WE CELEBRATE OUR

INDEPENDENCE FROM A FOREIGN POWER, BUT WE REAFFIRM OUR

DEPENDENCE UPON A HIGHER POWER.

WE RECOGNIZE, JUST AS GEORGE WASHINGTON DID  
IN HIS FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, THAT NO NATION ON EARTH  
CAN OWE MORE TO PROVIDENCE THAN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

OUR GREATNESS IS BECAUSE OF OUR GOODNESS.

SHOULD WE CEASE TO BE GOOD, WE WOULD SOON CEASE TO BE GREAT.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS HAVE A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY

TO SET A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS TO FOLLOW -- \ IN BOTH

THEIR PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CONDUCT•

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY OUR YOUNG PEOPLE  
CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO TAKE PRIDE + OR EVEN TO PARTICIPATE +  
IN A SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT THAT IS DEFILED AND DISHONORED --  
WHETHER IN THE WHITE HOUSE OR IN THE HALLS OF CONGRESS•

JESUS SAID, "UNTO WHOMSOEVER MUCH IS GIVEN,  
OF HIM / SHALL MUCH BE REQUIRED."

PERSONAL INTEGRITY IS NOT TOO MUCH TO ASK OF  
PUBLIC SERVANTS. ~~IN FACT~~, WE SHOULD ACCEPT NOTHING LESS.



THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE SEEN TOO MUCH ABUSE

OF THE MORAL IMPERATIVES OF HONESTY AND DECENCY ON WHICH

RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT AND CIVILIZED SOCIETY MUST REST.

TO REMEDY THESE ABUSES, WE MUST LOOK NOT ONLY  
TO THE GOVERNMENT BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TO THE BIBLE,  
THE CHURCH, THE HUMAN HEART.

WE MUST LOOK TO THE FAMILY FOR "INSTRUCTION IN  
RIGHTEOUSNESS" AND FOR THE STABILIZING INFLUENCE SO  
IMPORTANT IN A COMPLEX, CONFUSING AND EVER-CHANGING WORLD.

WE MUST LOOK TO THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS•

THE LAWS OF GOD WERE OF VERY SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

TO OUR FOUNDING FATHERS AND TO THE NATION THEY CREATED•

THE EARLY HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY WAS WRITTEN

BY MEN WHO VALUED THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND WHO HAD IN

COMMON A DEEP FAITH IN GOD•

I BELIEVE IT IS NO ACCIDENT OF HISTORY, NO

COINCIDENCE THAT THIS NATION WHICH DECLARED ITS DEPENDENCE ON

GOD / EVEN WHILE DECLARING ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM FOREIGN

DOMINATION / HAS BECOME THE MOST RICHLY BLESSED NATION IN THE

HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

FOR IT IS AS TRUE TODAY AS IT WAS IN OLD TESTAMENT

TIMES THAT "BLESSED IS THE NATION WHOSE GOD IS THE LORD."

I BELIEVE THAT VERY DEEPLY•

IN MY OWN LIFE, AND THROUGHOUT MY CAREER IN  
PUBLIC SERVICE, I HAVE FOUND IN THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE A  
STEADY COMPASS AND A SOURCE OF GREAT STRENGTH AND PEACE•

AS EACH OF MY PREDECESSORS IN THE PRESIDENCY HAS  
DONE, I ASKED FOR GOD'S GUIDANCE AS I UNDERTOOK THE DUTIES  
OF THIS OFFICE•

I HAVE ASKED FOR THAT GUIDANCE MANY TIMES SINCE.

JUST AS ROGER WILLIAMS AND HIS FOLLOWERS FOUND

REFUGE IN PROVIDENCE, MORE AND MORE AMERICANS TODAY ARE

TURNING FOR REFUGE TO THE SAFE HARBOR OF RELIGIOUS FAITH --

A FACT BORNE OUT BY YOUR OWN RAPIDLY INCREASING MEMBERSHIP

ROLLS.

THIS REKINDLING OF RELIGIOUS CONVICTION, THIS NEW  
APPRECIATION FOR BIBLICAL TEACHING WE SEE IN AMERICA TODAY  
IS AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT AS WE MOVE INTO OUR THIRD  
CENTURY AS A NATION.

IT MEANS THAT WE WILL RESOLVE TO MAKE OUR SOCIETY  
NOT ONLY PROSPEROUS BUT NOBLE, / NOT ONLY PROGRESSIVE BUT  
CONSTRUCTIVE.

WE MAY COME TO KNOW PEACE, NOT AS THE MERE  
ABSENCE OF WAR, BUT AS A CLIMATE IN WHICH UNDERSTANDING CAN  
GROW AND HUMAN DIGNITY FLOURISH•

WHILE WE ARE FAR FROM ATTAINING HEAVEN ON EARTH,  
WE CAN MAKE THIS EARTH A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE• THAT MUST  
BE OUR CONSTANT GOAL, WHETHER WE LABOR IN GOVERNMENT OR IN  
THE KINGDOM OF GOD•



THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION HAS SOUGHT THROUGH

MUCH OF ITS HISTORY TO OVERCOME THE ENEMIES OF THIS WORLD

IGNORANCE, DISEASE, POVERTY, TYRANNY, INJUSTICE, GREED

AND WAR ITSELF - EVEN WHILE SETTING YOUR SIGHTS ON THE

GATES OF HEAVEN.

AS AMERICA ENTERS ITS THIRD CENTURY, STILL BATTLING  
THESE ENEMIES, STILL REACHING FOR LIFE ON A HIGHER PLANE, WE  
COULD ASK NO BETTER INSPIRATION THAN THESE WORDS OF A  
FAVORITE PASSAGE OF MINE FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS:

"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."

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

END OF TEXT