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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
NATIONAL RELIGIOUS
BROADCASTERS CONVENTION

THE SHOREHAM HOTEL

8:32 P.M. EST

Dr. Zimmerman, Dr. VanDerPuy, Dr. Toms, members and guests of the National Religious Broadcasters and the National Association of the Evangelicals:

It is a very special honor for me to address for the third time in as many years this great Convention of National Religious Broadcasters. I welcome, of course, the participation of the National Association of Evangelicals, and I salute both of you for your outstanding organizations as you follow the great commissions of Jesus, to go into the world and to preach the gospel.

My good friend, Billy Zeoli, makes the point that we may know the number of churches, radio and television stations involved in religious broadcasting and mission work. Only God, however, can count the number of lives that have been changed by the gospel you preach throughout the world.

I like the theme you selected for your Bicentennial, "Let Freedom Ring." Nowhere on earth has freedom rung so loud and so long as in the United States of America. Americans have heard it ring for 200 years, and I hope and pray it will ring forever in this great land of ours.

The Commandments and the laws of God were of very special importance to our Founding Fathers and to the Nation they created. 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 greatest Nation in the history of the world.

We are taught in the Psalms that blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord. I believe that very, very deeply, and I know you believe it, too.

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Looking back over 200 years, we can see that America has always been a uniquely blessed nation, that we have had a very special role to play in the affairs of mankind. In our Nation's youth we become living proof of the fact that men could govern themselves successfully, that the divine right of kings was a false doctrine for Americans and that in truth all men are created equal in the sight of their creator.

We proved that hard work and self-sacrifice and a freely extended helping hand could build a Nation and a people to greatness in the space of just a few generations, a timetable unheard of before the American experience began.

We have demonstrated time and time again that the cause of freedom in the world has no better friend, no stronger ally than the United States of America. We have demonstrated that we are among the most compassionate, most generous people on earth. We have demonstrated that the world famous American ingenuity is still very much at work, still able to keep us on the frontiers of progress in every field.

Our leadership in all of these endeavors has enriched mankind everywhere. While seeking out the path of peace with other nations, we have declared our enemies to be disease, ignorance and poverty and injustice and war itself.

I remember President Eisenhower observing that America is not good because it is great, America is great because it is good.

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. We read of George Washington on his knees in prayers at Valley Forge, seeking divine guidance for himself, his men and his fledgling Nation in the terrible winter of 1777.

We read of Benjamin Franklin calling the Second Continental Congress to prayer when that body of strong willed independent men was in disarray and in discord.

We read of John Adams, proclaiming of love of God and his creation, stating that the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount were the sum of his religion and praying that heaven would bestow the best blessings on the White House and all of its future inhabitants.

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This faith of our fathers sustained the young America when it was weak and very poor. That same faith can sustain us today in the added responsibilities of the world's most prosperous and powerful nations.

When I became President, this country was faced with some of its most pressing and serious problems in its history. Underlying these problems was a crisis of confidence in our Government, a crisis of spirit among our own people. American had been buffeted about for more than a decade with shocks to its system that would have crippled a lesser country.-- political assassination, a long and frustrating war, riots in our streets and on our campuses, economic distress, scandals at the highest levels.

In the few hours before this responsibility was suddenly thrust upon me, I was asked by one of my aides what verse I wanted the Bible open to when I took the oath of office. I turned to the Bible which had been given me when I became Vice President and my oldest son, Mike, was a divinity student in Massachusetts -- and I understand Dr. Ockenga is speaking tomorrow night to you.

Ever since I was a little boy, I have used a very special verse in the Bible as a kind of prayer. I am sure you are all familiar with it. It comes from the Book of Proverbs, and it says, "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 was the verse that I placed my hand upon when I took the oath of office administered to every President since George Washington. These words have meant much, very much, to me as I have dealt with the problems of this Nation and the world.

We hear so much about the corruption of Government and business and labor. We sense so much distrust in our basic institutions of society. Too many people are complaining we don't know who or what we can believe.

My answer is we can believe in God. We can believe in the faith of our fathers. We are the heirs of our fathers' faith, and it can be a source of strength and comfort and understanding for us, as it was for them.

It remains our duty to remember our religious heritage, to teach it to our children and to order our own lives with courage, with justice and kindness and in the love of God.

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Each generation has its difficulties and its challenges to meet. Surely we have no less need of an abiding faith than did the Pilgrims, who established a new life in the American wilderness.

We have no less need of faith than the American colonists when they flung their challenge of independence in the face of the world's most powerful empire. We have no less need of faith than the pioneers, who conquered a vast and dangerous continent.

The faith of our fathers is living still in America today. It will live as long as freedom rings in this sweet land of liberty.

Tonight, let us say in the stirring words of "America," "Long may our land be bright, with freedoms holy light, protect us by thy might, great God our King."

Thank you very much.

END (AT 8:47 P.M. EST)