

¹Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush and Religious Liberty

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American presidents have played a major role in fostering religious liberty at home and abroad. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison strongly supported the separation of church and state and freedom of worship. Washington used his enormous prestige and influence as both commander-in-chief and president to promote freedom of worship and religious tolerance and to cultivate positive relations among America's various religious bodies. By his words and actions, he helped ensure that religious freedom and liberty of conscience prevailed in the United States. Jefferson and Madison led efforts to establish religious liberty in Virginia and frame the First Amendment. Madison's *Memorial and Remonstrance* expressed their shared conviction that the denial of equal exercise of religious freedom to all citizens offended God.¹ As president, both Jefferson and Madison worked to help religious liberty flourish in the new nation. Building on their foundation, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush all ardently advocated religious freedom. As they confronted the demise of communism and new terrorist threats and acts, they strove to increase opportunities for worship and religious expression in the U.S. and overseas.

Ronald Reagan

Reagan emphasized that America's earliest European settlers came to obtain religious freedom and "established a spiritual foundation" that has served Americans well ever since.²

Because many came to America to gain "a refuge where they could worship God unhindered,"

¹ On Madison's contribution to religious liberty, see Robert S. Alley, *James Madison on Religious Liberty* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1985) and Garrett Ward Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of James Madison* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

² Ronald Reagan, "Proclamation 4826—National Day of Prayer, 1981," March 19, 1981, online Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds., *The American Presidency Project*, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=61699>.

the nation's "dedication to individual freedom is wedded to religious freedom."³ The First Amendment, Reagan maintained, protected "religion and conscience from government interference." The fundamental guarantee that the government could neither forbid people from nor force them to worship was essential to the nation's flourishing. "Our leaders knew that faith blesses men and nations alike as it fosters morality and justice." The founders strove to "guard freedom of religion with eternal vigilance against tyranny and bigotry."⁴

Various court decisions, Reagan argued, had incorrectly interpreted the First Amendment as restricting, rather than protecting, "individual rights of conscience. What greater legacy could we leave our children than a new birth of religious freedom in this one nation under God?" Strikingly, as America returned to its spiritual roots, the courts lagged behind. Judges viewed the Constitutional "guarantee of religious liberty as if it meant freedom from religion, freedom from—actually a prohibition on—all values rooted in religion."⁵ Reagan was especially troubled by Supreme Court decisions that prohibited prayer and Bible reading in public schools. Prayer had been "practiced and revered" in schools since colonial times. For almost 200 years of the nation's history, he asserted, it had been considered "a natural expression of our religious freedom." In 1962, however, the Supreme Court declared school prayer illegal and "expelled God from America's classrooms."⁶ Reagan argued that children should have the same right to pray in school that Congress and the Supreme Court had to begin their sessions with prayer, the president had to pray in the Oval Office, and the armed forces had to employ chaplains.

Supporting a school prayer amendment, Reagan declared that some insist that "those in politics

³ Reagan, "Remarks Following a Meeting With Pope John Paul II in Vatican City," June 7, 1982, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42610>.

⁴ Reagan, "Proclamation 5866—Religious Freedom Week, 1988," September 27, 1988, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34902>.

⁵ Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters Association," February 1, 1988, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=34866>.

⁶ Reagan, "Remarks at a White House Briefing for the National Alliance of Senior Citizens," February 29, 1984, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=39577>.

should keep their hands off of the religious freedom of our people, and especially our children.”⁷

Some Jewish leaders and organizations complained that Reagan ignored the separation between church and state, and disliked his close relationship with conservative Christians.⁸

Administration officials countered that the president strongly endorsed “religious tolerance and forbearance,” but objected to recent court decisions that limited religious freedom.⁹

In 1988 Reagan refused to sign the Civil Rights Restoration Act because it “would diminish substantially the freedom and independence of religious institutions in our society.” The bill would significantly inhibit religious liberty through its “unprecedented and pervasive” regulation of churches and synagogues that received “even a small amount of Federal aid for just one activity”; its regulation “of entire religious elementary and secondary school systems” when only one of its schools received Federal aid; and “its failure to protect . . . the religious freedom of private schools that are closely identified with the religious tenets of, but not controlled by, a religious organization.”¹⁰

Reagan sought to provide greater spiritual opportunities for the residents of communist nations. He was convinced that many living behind the Iron Curtain had a deep desire to worship and grow spiritually; and that, despite communist antagonism, a religious revival was occurring there. While overthrowing this repressive system was his ultimate goal, Reagan also strove to further this revival by working to increase the freedom of citizens of communist countries to

⁷ Reagan, “Remarks at a Candle-Lighting Ceremony for Prayer in Schools,” September 25, 1982, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43055>.

⁸ E.g. “Reagan Fails to Allay Worry at Jewish Parley,” *New York Times*, September 7, 1984, A14.

⁹ Marshall Breger to Marshall Wolke, November 2, 1984. See also Wolke to RR, September 10, 1984; Adler to Breger, Oct. 17, 1984; Breger to Samuel Adler, November 5, 1984; and Norman Lent to RR, September 14, 1984, all in Religious Matters (hereinafter RM) 235001-250000, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library; and “Conservative Rabbis Urged to Mobilize against Moral Majority,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 28, 1982, RM032, Jewish, 000001-169999.

¹⁰ Reagan, “Message to the Senate Returning Without Approval the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 and Transmitting Alternative Legislation,” March 16, 1988, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35559>.

worship God, discussing religious themes in his speeches to them, and exhorting Americans to pray for them. In a 1983 address Reagan quoted English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge: “The most important happening in the world today is the resurgence of Christianity in the Soviet Union.” Reagan claimed that “the most awesome military machine in history” was “no match for that . . . single man, hero, strong yet tender, Prince of Peace. His name alone, Jesus, can lift our hearts, soothe our sorrows, heal our wounds, and drive away our fears.”¹¹

Reagan repeatedly denounced the lack of religious freedom in communist nations, met with several Soviet dissidents, and urged the Soviet Union to allow more Jews to emigrate.¹² Both Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, he avowed, recognized that religious belief would subvert communism.¹³ Reagan praised the witness of hunger strikers at the United States Embassy in Moscow in 1982 as “an inspiration to all who value religious freedom and individual human rights.”¹⁴ In 1983 he warned those who sought to “crush religious freedom,” jailed believers, closed churches, confiscated Bibles, and harassed priests and rabbis, would “never destroy the love of God and freedom that burns in their hearts.”¹⁵ Later that year he protested that people in many countries were not “even allowed to read the Bible. It is up to us to make sure that the

¹¹ Reagan, “Remarks . . . [to] the National Religious Broadcasters Association,” January 31, 1983, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Ronald Reagan, 1981-1989*, 8 vols. (Lanham, MD: Berman, 1995) (hereinafter *PP*), 3:154. See also Muggeridge to RR, March 1983: “I am sure that Solzhenitsyn is right, that now . . . there is a higher percentage of believing Christians in the USSR than in the UK or the USA” despite the concerted effort “to extirpate the Christian faith.” See also RR to Muggeridge, April 18, 1983, both in President’s Handwriting File, Presidential Records, Series II, Box 6, Folder 78.

¹² E.g. Reagan, “Address to the Nation about Christmas and the Situation in Poland,” *PP*, December 23, 1981, 1186-7; Reagan, “Statement in Signing Legislation Concerning Human Rights in the Soviet Union,” *PP*, March 22, 1982, 350; Reagan, “Remarks on Signing the International Human Rights Day Proclamation,” *PP*, December 10, 1984, 1882-3; Memorandum of Conversation, Reagan-Gorbachev Meetings in Geneva, November 1985, Third Private Meeting, OA 92137, Geneva Meetings, Memcons of Plenary Sessions and Tête-a-tête, November 19, 1985, Matlock, Jack, Box 6; and Ronald W. Reagan, *An American Life* (Norwalk, CT: Easton, 1960), 675, 698, 706. In meetings with Soviet leaders, Reagan also lobbied for ending religious repression (*An American Life*, 558).

¹³ Reagan, “Remarks at a Conference on Religious Liberty,” *PP*, April 16, 1985, 437-40.

¹⁴ Reagan, “Message to Lidiya and Augustina Vashchenko, Hunger Strikers in the United States Embassy in Moscow,” January 29, 1982, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42875>.

¹⁵ Reagan, “Religious Broadcasters,” 1983, 154.

message of hope and salvation gets through.”¹⁶ Reagan continually applauded and secretly supported the struggle of the Polish people to throw off the yoke of Soviet oppression.

“Nowhere in the world is there a more splendid affirmation of this connection between religious values and political freedom,” Reagan avowed, “than in the ideals, the faith, and heroism of the Polish people and the leaders of Solidarity.”¹⁷ In numerous addresses, Reagan expressed his hope that people behind the Iron Curtain would come to know “the liberating nature of faith in God.”¹⁸ In Romania communists were destroying Bibles, while in Bulgaria Muslims were being prevented from worshipping freely.¹⁹ Ironically, however, the effort of communists to crush religion was creating “the force, friction, and heat that allow deep belief to once again burst into flame” as new groups of believers kept springing up in communist countries and God was “honored once again.”²⁰ In 1987 Reagan maintained that Billy Graham’s recent crusades in the Soviet Union confirmed the “hunger for religion there.”²¹

Reagan frequently used his opportunities to speak to communist audiences to stress religious themes. “[T]he most fitting way to mark the millennium of Christianity in Kiev,” Reagan argued in 1988, would be to grant all Soviets the right to “worship their God, in their own way.”²² During his trip to Moscow in May of that year to meet with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Reagan told religious leaders that he hoped the Soviet Union would reopen

¹⁶ Reagan, “Remarks on Signing . . . Human Rights Day and Week Proclamation,” *PP*, December 9, 1983, 1675.

¹⁷ Reagan, “Remarks . . . [to] the Knights of Columbus in Hartford, CT,” *PP*, August 3, 1982, 1014. Among other actions, Reagan allowed Catholic Relief Services to buy unlimited amounts of surplus food at “concessionary prices” to distribute to the Polish people. See John Cardinal Krol to RR, August 4, 1981, President’s Handwriting File, Presidential Records, Folder 6.

¹⁸ Reagan, “Remarks at the . . . National Association of Evangelicals in Columbus, OH,” *PP*, March 6, 1984, 307.

¹⁹ Reagan, “Remarks on Signing the Bill of Rights Day and the Human Rights Day and Week Proclamation,” December 10, 1985, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38143>.

²⁰ Reagan, “Remarks at a Conference on Religious Liberty,” April 16, 1985, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38486>.

²¹ Ronald Reagan, “Remarks . . . with Area High School Seniors in Jacksonville, FL,” *PP*, December 1, 1987, 1405. On Reagan’s fascination with religious revival in the USSR; see also Edmund Morris, *Dutch: A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999), 519.

²² Reagan, “Remarks . . . on Religious Freedom in the Soviet Union,” *PP*, May 3, 1988, 550.

churches. He argued that faith was as elemental to the nation as its dark and fertile soil and hoped that *perestroika* would “be accompanied by a deeper restructuring, a deeper conversion” and that *Glasnost* would “let loose a new chorus of belief, singing praises to the God who gave us life.”²³ Reagan rejoiced in 1988 that the prediction when all “the grandmothers died, nobody would remember that there had been a church in Russia” was wrong. Instead, the churches in Russia were still full of grandmothers, but many members of the younger generation, longing to satisfy the hunger that “no manmade institution in any society can ever fulfill,” had joined them. About 90 million residents of the Soviet Union, or almost a third of the population, testified to their belief in God. When people were persecuted for their faith, religion often grew in both numbers of adherents and intensity of conviction. Reagan pointed to the examples of author Alexander Solzhenitsyn and psychiatrist Anatoliy Koryagin, two dissidents whose faith became stronger while in Soviet prisons.²⁴

Speaking at a monastery in the Soviet Union in May 1988, Reagan declared that Americans hated to see religious freedom “denied to anyone anywhere” and hoped that soon all the many Soviet religious communities which were presently prevented from registering, or were banned, including the Ukrainian Catholic and Orthodox Churches, “would soon be able to practice their religion freely and openly and instruct their children in and outside the home in the fundamentals of their faith.” Americans hoped that *perestroika* would “be accompanied by a deeper restructuring, a deeper conversion. . . a change in heart, and that *Glasnost*, which means giving voice, will also let loose a new chorus of belief, singing praise to the God that gave us

²³ Reagan, “Remarks to Religious Leaders at the Danilov Monastery in Moscow,” *PP*, May 30, 1988, 675. See also Reagan, “Remarks to Soviet Dissidents at Spaso House in Moscow,” *PP*, May 30, 1988, 676-7. Cf. “New Year’s Messages of President Reagan and Soviet Secretary Gorbachev,” *PP*, January 1, 1986, 1, and Reagan, “Remarks at Fudan University in Shanghai, China,” *PP*, April 30, 1984, 606.

²⁴ Reagan, “Remarks at a White House Briefing on Religious Freedom in the Soviet Union,” May 3, 1988, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=35782>.

life.²⁵ “One of the truest measures of *Glasnost*,” Reagan added, “will be the degree of religious freedom” Soviet leaders would give to Protestants, Jews, Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims.²⁶

Reagan also denounced the restriction of religious freedom in other parts of the world. He asserted in 1983 that the communist-inspired revolution in Central America was “no match for the much greater force of faith that runs so deep” among its people, as demonstrated by Pope John Paul II’s recent visit to the region.²⁷ “Throughout the world,” he protested in 1985, “the machinery of the state” was being employed “as never before” to limit religious freedom. In Nicaragua the Sandinistas were persecuting both Catholics and Protestants who opposed their regime; Iran’s leaders had “virtually declared war on the Bahais”; and in Afghanistan the Soviet military had “resorted to increasingly cruel measures” against Muslims.²⁸

George Herbert Walker Bush

Like Reagan and many other chief executives, George H. W. Bush argued that the founders’ religious convictions helped shape the government they crafted. The American republic “was built on their faith in Almighty God” and “spiritual principles.”²⁹ Convinced that all people “are equal in the sight of their Creator,” the founders devised a system of government that protected “the God-given rights of every individual.”³⁰ Like them, Bush believed “in

²⁵ Reagan, “Danilov Monastery,” 675.

²⁶ Reagan, “Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by the Heritage Foundation,” November 30, 1987, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33744>.

²⁷ Reagan, “Radio Address . . . on the Observance of Easter and Passover,” *PP*, April 2, 1983, 488.

²⁸ Reagan, “Bill of Rights Day.”

²⁹ George Herbert Walker Bush [GHWB] to the convocation of the Churches of God in Christ, International, September 29, 1992, White House Office of Records Management (hereinafter WHORM), 002-01, 337594 (first quotation) (cf. GHW Bush to Jeannie Gonzalez, September 11, 1992, WHORM, RM 351464; GHWB to Congressman Ron Machtley, August 15, 1990, WHORM 241435); Bush, “Remarks at the Catholic University of America Anniversary Dinner,” December 12, 1989, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17940> (second quotation).

³⁰ GHW Bush to W. Stan Tyson, February 8, 1989, WHORM 005160, ME002-01.

separation of church and state, but not in the separation” of “moral values and state.”³¹ The First Amendment, he argued, protected “people against religious intrusions by the state,” not “the state from [people’s] voluntary religious activities.”³² Bush censured the “aggressive campaign” some waged “against religious belief itself.” Children should have the right to pray voluntarily at school, and parents should have the right to choose which school, including religiously-based ones, their children attend.³³ Americans’ “faith in God—unencumbered by legal restrictions” and “government interference—” he averred, had been crucial to “maintaining high standards of morality and justice in society.”³⁴

Freedom of worship, Bush contended, had enabled religion to play an essential role in American society.³⁵ The liberty Americans enjoyed, he proclaimed, “is clearly rooted in our Nation’s Judeo-Christian moral heritage and in the timeless values that have united Americans of all religions,” especially “love of God and family, personal responsibility and virtue, respect for the law, and concern for others.”³⁶

Bush promoted religious liberty at home and abroad. He told B’nai B’rith in 1989 that “we must condemn all attacks on the Jewish religion, the Jewish heritage—clearly, unequivocally, and without exception. This Nation must stand for tolerance, for pluralism, and a

³¹ GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Annual National Prayer Breakfast,” May 4, 1989, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16997>.

³² GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Southern Baptist Convention,” June 6, 1991, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19664>.

³³ GHW Bush, “Remarks to the National Association of Evangelicals in Chicago,” March 3, 1992, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20677>.

³⁴ GHW Bush, “Proclamation 6029—Religious Freedom Week, 1989,” September 27, 1989, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1748>.

³⁵ GHW Bush, “Remarks to Members of the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith,” March 14, 1989, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16784>.

³⁶ GHW Bush, “Proclamation 6508—Thanksgiving Day, 1992,” November 20, 1992, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=72486>.

healthy respect for the rights of all minorities.” He deeply cherished the principle of religious freedom and promised “to uphold this principle as the very cornerstone of our freedom.”³⁷

Bush rejoiced that religious liberty was increasing around the world. Despite persecuting believers, destroying churches, and razing cemeteries, he observed, neither China nor the USSR had been able to stamp out religious faith or worship.³⁸ Attending Leonid Brezhnev’s funeral in Moscow in 1982, Bush was amazed when his widow made the sign of the cross after taking her last look at her deceased husband. He thought: “All the barbed wire and indoctrination classes in the world can’t keep Him [God] out.” Prayer and worship services, Bush insisted, had helped topple communism in the Soviet Union.³⁹ The president was pleased that Soviet officials allowed a Christmas sermon of Robert Schuller, pastor of the famed Crystal Cathedral in California, to air on primetime television in December 1989, and that Gorbachev met with a group of North American evangelicals to discuss the role of religion and democracy in his nation in November 1991.⁴⁰ Gorbachev’s acknowledgement that religious practice and values could help revitalize his country was a major breakthrough.⁴¹ The victory of freedom, Bush insisted, was evident in Russia, where once oppressed citizens crowded into reopened churches and synagogues, and in Eastern Europe, where millions sang Christmas carols.⁴² He rejoiced in 1992 that “the gigantic picture of Lenin” in Red Square had been replaced by “a massive icon of the Risen Lord, a

³⁷ GHW Bush, “B’nai B’rith.”

³⁸ George Bush, “Remarks at the University of South Carolina Commencement,” May 12, 1990, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=18477>; Bush, “Remarks at a Meeting With Amish and Mennonite Leaders in Lancaster, Pennsylvania,” March 22, 1989, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16824>.

³⁹ Doug Wead, “George Bush: Where Does He Stand?” *Christian Herald*, June 1986, 17. See also GHW Bush, *All the Best: George Bush: My Life in Letters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 324.

⁴⁰ GHW Bush to Schuller, January 4, 1990, WHORM 108188, RM035; GB to E. Brandt Gustavson, December 9, 1991 and Gustavson to GHW Bush, November 7, 1991, both WHORM 288864, RM035.

⁴¹ GHW Bush, “Catholic University.”

⁴² GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters,” January 27, 1992, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20540>.

powerful symbol of the new birth of freedom for believers all around the world.”⁴³ Religious, political, and economic freedom in Eastern Europe, the Texan proclaimed, had come by “the hand of God.”⁴⁴ Bush argued that religious liberty was an integral part of the “new world order” he sought to create as communism was abandoned in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.⁴⁵ The United States was committed to promoting a new political structure based on “the rule of law and the guarantee of real economic,” political, and religious freedom.⁴⁶

William Jefferson Clinton

Like his two Republican predecessors, Bill Clinton strongly advocated religious freedom domestically and internationally, most notably through the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments of 1994; his guidelines for Religious Expression in Public Schools issued in 1995; his Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace, distributed in 1997; and his visit to China in June 1998. Clinton called religious liberty the first and “most precious of all American liberties,” which undergirded other American freedoms. The First Amendment created “twin pillars of religious liberty”—it ensured that individuals could freely practice their religion and banned the federal government from establishing a religion.⁴⁷

⁴³ GHW Bush, “Remarks to Religious and Ethnic Groups in Garfield, New Jersey,” July 21, 1992, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=21244>.

⁴⁴ GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters,” January 29, 1990; <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=18087>.

⁴⁵ GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters,” January 28 1991, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19250>.

⁴⁶ GHW Bush, “Remarks at the Arrival Ceremony in Kiev, Soviet Union,” August 1, 1991, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19862>.

⁴⁷ Bill Clinton [WJC], “Remarks on Signing the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993,” November 16, 1993, *Public Papers of the Presidents: William J. Clinton* (Lanham, MD: Bernan, 2006), 1993, vol. 2, 2000; Clinton, “Proclamation 6862—Religious Freedom Day, 1996,” January 12, 1996, Clinton Web site, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1996/01/1996-01-12-proclamation-of-religious-freedom-day.html>; quotations in that order.

Clinton considered the passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 to be one of his major achievements. Sponsored by 60 Senators and 170 Congressmen, strongly supported by numerous religious groups, and decisively passed by both Houses (97-3 in the Senate), the Act permitted the federal government to restrict people's religious freedom only if it had a compelling interest for doing so and only by employing the "least restrictive means" of furthering its interests. This Act reversed the Supreme Court's decision in *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990) and reestablished a standard, Clinton claimed, that better protected "Americans of all faiths in the exercise of their religion" and was "far more consistent" with the founders' intention than the Court's ruling. This Act, Clinton maintained, honored "the principle that our laws and institutions should not impede or hinder but rather should protect and preserve fundamental religious liberties."⁴⁸ Clinton rejoiced that Jewish, Catholic, Protestant evangelical, and Muslim leaders, who rarely worked together, had stood "arm in arm" to support this act.⁴⁹

Speaking to Native Americans who visited the White House in 1994, Clinton declared that "traditional religions and ceremonies are the essence of your culture and your very existence." "No agenda for religious freedom," therefore, would be "complete until traditional Native American religious practices" received the protection they deserved. He promised them that the federal government would respect their religions, values, identity, and sovereignty.⁵⁰ Soon thereafter Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act Amendments to ensure that the management of federal lands did not inhibit traditional Native American religions and to permit the use of peyote in their religious ceremonies.

⁴⁸ White House Press Release, Speechwriter, Edmonds, Terry, Religious Freedom Restoration Act [RFRA], Box 46, file 11, 16990, William J. Clinton Presidential Library (first quotation); Clinton, "Remarks to the World Jewish Congress," February 9, 1994, *PP*, 1994, 218 (remainder of quotations). In a 6-3 decision the Supreme Court struck down the RFRA in June 1997 as unconstitutional.

⁴⁹ Clinton, "Remarks to the World Jewish Congress," February 9, 1994, *PP*, 1994, vol. 1, 217-18.

⁵⁰ Clinton, "Remarks to Native American and Native Alaskan Tribal Leaders," April 29, 1994, *PP*, 1994, vol. 1, 800-01.

Clinton also strove to increase the role of religion in public schools. Religion, he insisted, was too important to American history and heritage and to promoting traditional values to be kept out of American schools. Teachers should discuss the teachings of various religions and their contributions to history, values, music, and art throughout the world.⁵¹ Schools, Clinton argued, help nurture children's "souls by reinforcing the values they learn at home and in their communities." Schools could not advocate specific religious beliefs, but "they should teach mainstream values and virtues," some of which were distinctively religious. Schools should devise and teach a widely endorsed "set of civic values" that include good citizenship, respect, honesty, and the avoidance of violence.⁵²

Clinton protested that many public school students had been prohibited from reading the Bible silently in study hall and saying grace before eating their lunch, and numerous student religious groups had been forbidden to publicize their meetings.⁵³ Some public school officials, teachers, and parents had incorrectly "assumed that religious expression of any type is either inappropriate, or forbidden altogether." The First Amendment, however, he asserted, did "not require students to leave their religion at the schoolhouse door." Students could advertise their religious meetings, use school facilities for them, and pray out loud together at their meetings. Students could also distribute religious flyers and pamphlets and wear t-shirts that promoted religion. Students could express their religious beliefs in homework, art work, and class presentations as long as they were relevant to the assignment. "If certain subjects or activities are objectionable to their students or their parents because of their religious beliefs," he argued, "then schools may, and sometimes must, excuse the students from those activities." Finally, he

⁵¹ Clinton, "Remarks at James Madison High School in Vienna, Virginia," July 12, 1995, *PP*, 1995, vol. 2, 1081.

⁵² Clinton, "The President's Radio Address," *PP*, 1998, vol. 1, 854; Clinton, "James Madison High," 1081; Clinton, "Remarks in a Town Meeting in Charlotte," April 5, 1994, *PP*, 1994, vol. 1:1586 ; quotations in that order.

⁵³ Clinton, "James Madison High," 1080.

argued, people should “be able to freely pray and to acknowledge God” at school sports events and graduation exercises.⁵⁴

These convictions led Clinton to issue comprehensive guidelines for religious expression in public schools in July 1995. Its signers included individuals who held very different ideological positions: Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter; William Bennett, Reagan’s Secretary of Education; Lane Kirkland, the president of the AFL-CIO; Norman Lear, Phyllis Schlafly, Coretta Scott King, and James Dobson. The directive, Clinton noted, also borrowed heavily from a document titled “Religion in Public Schools: A Joint Statement of Current Law,” issued in April 1995 by “a broad coalition of religious and legal groups.” The guidelines asserted that students had the right to pray privately at school, say grace at lunchtime, hold religious meetings on school property, and “use school facilities, just like any other club.” Students had the right to read “any religious text during study hall or free class time” and to participate in religious activities in school. The guidelines also stated that schools may actively teach “civic values and virtue.”⁵⁵

During his second term, Clinton took additional steps to expand religious liberty. The most significant were the guidelines his administration issued in 1997 to strengthen the right of religious expression in the federal workplace. They mandated that federal employees could participate “in personal religious expression” to “the greatest extent possible, consistent with workplace efficiency and the requirements of law.” They prohibited federal employers from

⁵⁴ Clinton, “Memorandum on Religious Expression in Public Schools,” July 12, 1995, *PP*, 1995, vol. 2, 1083 (first quotation); Clinton, “James Madison High,” 1081 (second and third quotations); Clinton, “Town Meeting in Charlotte,” 586 (fourth quotation).

⁵⁵ Clinton, “James Madison High,” 1081 (first quotation); Clinton, “Radio Address,” 1854 (second and third quotations); Clinton, “Memorandum on Religious Expression,” July 12, 1995, *PP*, vol. 2, 1085 (fourth quotation).

discriminating on the basis of religion in hiring and mandated that agencies “reasonably accommodate employees’ religious practices.”⁵⁶

Defending his actions, Clinton contended that religious liberty was deeply rooted in American history. The Puritans wanted “to express their faith freely without persecution.” By making “their settlements havens for freedom of conscience,” William Penn, Roger Williams, and numerous others had laid “the foundation for the great tradition of religious liberty” expressed in the First Amendment. The founders cared deeply about religion, Clinton maintained, because they thought it promoted the character and conduct necessary for their republic to succeed. The framers of the Constitution, he argued, “recognized the awesome power of religious liberty” to unite citizens in furthering the common good. For more than two centuries, he contended, America’s religious institutions and practices had promoted faith, morality, discipline, character, community, and responsibility.⁵⁷

Clinton, like many other presidents, argued that religious freedom was crucial to the success and future of America. For more than 200 years, he asserted, the First Amendment had enabled “many faiths to flourish” in homes, workplaces, and schools. If every American child attended a religious institution weekly, he insisted, their character would improve greatly and drug usage, crime, and violence would decline dramatically. Clinton observed that the nation’s religious freedom had permitted Americans to live together in unprecedented peace and to create “the world’s strongest democracy and its most truly multi-ethnic society.” This “precious

⁵⁶ Clinton, “Remarks Announcing Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace,” August 14, 1997, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54535>.

⁵⁷ Clinton, “James Madison High,” 1076 (first quotation); Clinton, “Proclamation 7063—Religious Freedom Day, 1998,” January 16, 1998, Clinton Web site, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1998/01/1998-01-16-proclamation-on-religious-freedom-day.html> (second and third quotations); Clinton, “Proclamation 6646—Religious Freedom Day, 1994,” January 14, 1994, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=49910> (fourth quotation).

liberty” enabled people who held various beliefs to “respect and celebrate” their “differences while uniting around the ideals” that bound them together and strengthened the nation.⁵⁸

Religious liberty, he contended, had produced other positive results. “Because we are free to worship or not, according to our own conscience,” he declared, “Americans worship deeply and in very great numbers.” “In this highly secular age,” the United States was “clearly the most conventionally religious country” in the post-industrial world. It had higher weekly levels of attendance at churches, synagogues, and mosques than in any other highly developed country. In addition, more Americans than citizens of any other post-industrial country believed that religion was “directly important to their lives.” Our various places of worship, Clinton asserted, “bring us together, support our families, nourish our hearts and minds, and sustain our deepest values.” These houses of worship also serve as centers of community service and civic life and stimulate Americans “to build a civil society based on mutual respect, compassion, and generosity.”⁵⁹

Clinton repeatedly defended the right of every American to practice his or her convictions. He urged citizens to “respect one another’s faiths.” The United States could meet its economic and social challenges only if its citizens “honestly and openly” debated their differences and reached common ground. Respecting religious diversity, he maintained, promoted community and harmony. Religious hatred and discrimination, by contrast, fueled violence. “The freedom to follow one’s personal beliefs, to worship as one chooses,” Clinton

⁵⁸ Clinton, “Radio Address,” 854; Clinton, “Religious Freedom Day, 1994”; Clinton, “Federal Workplace,” 1103; quotations in that order.

⁵⁹ Clinton, “Federal Workplace,” 1102 (first quotation); Clinton, “James Madison High,” 1076 (second and third quotations); Clinton, “Proclamation 7267—Religious Freedom Day, 2000,” January 14, 2000, Clinton Web site, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/2000/01/2000-01-14-proclamation-on-religious-freedom-day.html> (fourth quotation); Clinton, “Proclamation 7162—Religious Freedom Day, 1999,” January 14, 1999, Clinton Web site, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1999/01/1999-01-14-proclamation-on-religious-freedom-day.html> (fifth quotation).

stressed, was a core American principle. Every year people who espoused “every conceivable faith” still come from every place in the world to attain this freedom.⁶⁰

Clinton was committed to promoting religious liberty abroad as well as at home. In 1996 he proclaimed that America must be “an international advocate” “for the basic rights that sustain human dignity and personal freedom.” The United States, he added, must assist “all who struggle against religious oppression.” In 1997 Clinton called “our commitment to religious liberty” “a key part of America’s human rights policy.” The U.S. had pressed “for religious freedom at the United Nations” and in its “relations with other countries across the globe.” People had “the fundamental right,” Clinton stated in January 1998, “to believe and worship according to their own conscience, to affirm their beliefs openly and freely, and to practice their faith without fear or intimidation.” Clinton claimed that he had extensively discussed religious freedom with Russian President Boris Yeltsin and other world leaders. State Department officials were giving more attention to religious persecution than ever before. Clinton established a high-level advisory committee on religious liberty in 1996, and in June 1998, Clinton named Robert Seiple, the former President of World Vision, as Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, to ensure that religious liberty received “close attention in our foreign policy.”⁶¹

That same month Clinton praised China for releasing from prison two influential religious leaders, Gao Feng and Bishop Zeng Jingmu, and for announcing that it would sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guaranteed freedom of thought and religion. He noted, however, numerous Chinese Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists remained

⁶⁰ Clinton, “Religious Freedom Restoration Act,” 2001 (first quotation); Clinton, “James Madison High,” 1076 (second quotation); Clinton, “Remarks Following Discussions With Religious Leaders,” June 18, 1998, *PP*, 1998, vol. 1, 985 (third and fourth quotations).

⁶¹ Clinton, “Proclamation 6862—Religious Freedom Day, 1996,” January 12, 1996, Clinton Web site, <http://clinton6.nara.gov/1996/01/1996-01-12-proclamation-of-religious-freedom-day.html>; (first and second quotations); Clinton, “Federal Workplace,” 1102 (third and fourth quotations); Clinton, “Religious Freedom Day, 1998” (fifth quotation); Clinton, “Religious Leaders,” 985 (sixth quotation).

imprisoned for their religious activities, and other believers faced government harassment. Clinton promised, therefore, that when he visited China later in the month, he would emphasize human rights and religious freedom and urge China to release all prisoners of conscience. Clinton had previously told President Jiang Zemin both privately and publicly that China would become more stable, stronger, and more influential “in direct proportion to the extent” to which it permitted “liberties of all kinds and especially religious liberty.”⁶² Before Clinton left for China, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews presented him with an *Appeal for Religious Liberty in China* signed by hundreds of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist leaders and urged him to make religious freedom a primary topic of discussion with Chinese officials.⁶³

As he had promised, during his visit to China in late June and early July 1998, Clinton raised the issue of religious liberty. At a news conference with Jiang, he declared that Americans firmly believed “that individual rights, including the freedom of speech, association, and religion, are very important.” He applauded “China’s decision to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the recent release of several prominent political dissidents, the hospitality China graciously accorded to American religious leaders, and the resumption of a human rights dialog between China and the United States.” On the other hand, Clinton criticized China’s use of force to stop protests at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and “the tragic loss of life” that occurred there. Nations which restricted people’s freedom, he warned, would pay a great price in a world where economic growth depended on ideas, information exchange, and debate.

⁶² Clinton, “Religious Leaders,” 984.

⁶³ Yechiel Eckstein, et al. to WJC, June 15, 1998, National Security Council, Blinken, Anthony, Religious Freedom Event, June 18, 1998, 3380, Box 36.

Jiang countered that China's constitution protected freedom of religious belief. Clinton also protested privately that 2,000 dissidents were reportedly still imprisoned in China.⁶⁴

Speaking at Beijing University, Clinton argued that “the darkest moments” in American history included denying freedom to people either because of their race, religion, or espousal of disfavored views. By contrast, America’s “best moments” had been when it “protected the freedom of people who held unpopular opinions.” Certain rights, he proclaimed were universal, “now enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights: the right to be treated with dignity,” to express one’s opinions, to select one’s leaders, “to associate freely with others, and to worship or not, freely, however one chooses.” Clinton rejoiced that during his visit he had witnessed many manifestations of freedom, including a village choosing its own leaders. The president had seen cell phones, video players, and fax machines bring “ideas, information, and images from all over the world.” He had “heard people speak their minds” and had “joined people in prayer” in his own freely chosen faith. “The freest possible flow of information, ideas, and opinions and a greater respect for divergent political and religious convictions,” Clinton insisted, would make China stronger and more stable.⁶⁵ Surprisingly, despite worshipping at Chongwenmen Church in Beijing with 2,000 people, he did not directly denounce China’s policies that restricted the activities of churches and limited its citizens’ ability to worship as they pleased.⁶⁶ Chinese Christians had hoped that Clinton’s visit to their country would increase

⁶⁴ “The President’s News Conference with President Jiang Zemin of China in Beijing,” June 27, 1998, *PP*, 1998, vol. 1, 1072.

⁶⁵ Clinton, “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Students at Beijing University,” June 29, 1998, *PP*, 1998, vol. 1, 1085.

⁶⁶ June Shih’s June 18 draft for Clinton’s remarks at Chongwenmen Church stated that everyone deserved “the freedom to pursue their beliefs without apprehension or fear” (Eckstein, et al., NSC, Blinken, Anthony, China Trip, Church Remarks, Box 36, June 28, 1998). Clinton instead simply declared, “We rejoice to hear Reverend Siu cite the numbers of churches and other places of worship where people are practicing their faith today.” “Remarks at Chongwenmen Church in Beijing,” June 28, 1998, *PP*, vol. 1, 1079-80.

religious freedom and help the gospel advance, but the state-controlled media paid little attention to his trip.

In November 1998 Clinton issued a “Statement on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.” It declared: “We pray for those who suffer for their beliefs—a suffering forewarned by Scripture.” But God promised, “I will give you . . . wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to deny or resist (Luke 21:12).” In observing this occasion the next year, he argued that every government must guarantee the “fundamental human right” of religious freedom. The United States must aid millions around the world who were “harassed, imprisoned, tortured, and executed simply for seeking to live by their own beliefs.” In 1998 the United States passed the International Religious Freedom Act, which directed the president “to take diplomatic and other appropriate action with respect to any country that engages in or tolerates violations of religious freedom.” The Act prompted the State Department to publish an annual report, beginning in 1999, on the status of religious freedom worldwide that identified “the most severe international violators.”⁶⁷

George Walker Bush

Religious liberty was also very important to George W. Bush. “Religious freedom,” he declared, “is a cornerstone of our Republic, a core principle of our Constitution, and a fundamental human right.”⁶⁸ When the founders framed the Bill of Rights, the “first liberty they enshrined was the freedom of religion.” They recognized that people’s “most basic freedom . . .

⁶⁷ Clinton, “Statement on the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church,” November 14, 1998, *PP*, 1998, vol. 2, 2035 (first quotation); Clinton, “Message on the Observance of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church,” November 10, 1999, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=56926> (second quotation); Clinton, “Religious Freedom Day, 1999” (third and fourth quotations); Clinton, “Statement on Signing the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998,” October 27, 1998, *PP*, 1998, vol. 2, 1884 (fifth and sixth quotations).

⁶⁸ George W. Bush [G. W. Bush], “Proclamation 7517—Religious Freedom Day, 2002,” January 15, 2002, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=61814>.

is the right to worship” God as they see fit.⁶⁹ The right to freely espouse and practice religious beliefs, Bush averred, is one of Americans’ most fundamental freedoms.⁷⁰ “Freedom of worship is central to the American character” and holds American society together by enabling people of different faiths to practice their “beliefs without fear” and live together in peace, tolerance, and humility.⁷¹ Religious liberty, he insisted, empowered people to be instruments of God’s love.⁷² In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attack, Bush praised citizens for exemplifying “the American tradition of tolerance and religious liberty,” which had long “welcomed and protected generations of immigrants from every faith and background.”⁷³

Bush promised his national security strategy would include “special efforts to promote freedom of religion and conscience and defend it from encroachment by repressive regimes.”⁷⁴ As noted, the International Religious Freedom Act required the United States to monitor the status of religious liberty worldwide. It mandated producing an annual report on “the state of religious freedom in every nation to help identify the most egregious offenders” and to adopt sanctions against these regimes. As a result, Bush claimed, the Act placed religious liberty “at the center of U.S. foreign policy.”⁷⁵ Religious freedom, he argued, provided a foundation for “fundamental human and civil rights.” By promoting religious freedom, the United States helped spread democracy and peace around the world. Religious freedom enabled people to practice

⁶⁹ G. W. Bush, “Remarks on the 10th Anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act,” July 14, 2008, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=77682>.

⁷⁰ G. W. Bush, “Remarks to the American Jewish Committee,” May 3, 2001, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=45581>.

⁷¹ G. W. Bush, “Remarks at the Iftaar Dinner,” October 4, 2007, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=75878>; Bush, “Proclamation 8215--Religious Freedom Day, 2008,” January 14, 2008, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=76273>; quotations in that order.

⁷² G. W. Bush, “Remarks at an Independence Day Celebration in Philadelphia, PA,” July 4, 2001, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=73536>.

⁷³ G. W. Bush, “The President’s Radio Address,” November 24, 2001, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24991>.

⁷⁴ “U.S. National Security Strategy: Champion Aspirations for Human Dignity,” <http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ei/wh/15422.htm>.

⁷⁵ G. W. Bush, “Remarks on the 10th Anniversary of the International Religious Freedom Act,” July 14, 2008, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=77682>.

their own faith and required them “to respect the faith of others.”⁷⁶ “Freedom is a gift from the Almighty, written in the heart and soul of every man, woman, and child,” he avowed, so “we must continue to promote the importance of religious freedom at home and abroad.”⁷⁷ Bush repeatedly exhorted Americans to celebrate their “legacy of religious liberty, foster a culture of tolerance and peace,” and work “to ensure that every person on Earth can enjoy these basic human rights.”⁷⁸

In 2001 Bush insisted that several countries in north Africa and the Middle East displayed “considerable and improving respect for religious liberty,” most notably Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and Bahrain. The “disrespect for freedom of worship” in other nations, however, “is seriously disturbing. Iraq murders dissident religious figures. Iran systematically maltreats Jews, Christians, and adherents of the Baha’i faith. The Burmese junta tortures” Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians. Cuba harassed many priests and ministers. The Taliban’s “disdain for fundamental human freedoms” in Afghanistan horrified the world. The newly independent republics of central Asia restricted “religious expression and missionary work.” “The intensifying attacks on religious freedom in China” were especially troubling. The Chinese government displayed “an unreasonable and unworthy suspicion of freedom of conscience.” Religious leaders and worshippers were imprisoned, churches and mosques were vandalized or demolished, and those who engaged in traditional religious practices in Tibet faced “harsh and unjust persecution.” In addition, adherents of the Falun Gong spiritual movement had “been singled out for arrest and abuse.” These acts of persecution were signs of fear and weakness,

⁷⁶ G. W. Bush, “Remarks at the National Dinner Celebrating 350 Years of Jewish Life in America,” September 14, 2005, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=73766>.

⁷⁷ G. W. Bush, “Proclamation 8100—Religious Freedom Day, 2007,” January 11, 2007, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=24437>.

⁷⁸ G. W. Bush, “Proclamation 8338—Religious Freedom Day, 2009,” January 13, 2009, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85407>.

Bush argued, and clashed with China's quest to attain "national strength and greatness." They also contradicted China's long history as a tolerant society. He urged China to become "an open society that respects the spiritual dignity of its people."⁷⁹

On trips to Russia and China in 2002 Bush trumpeted the importance of religious liberty. After visiting a church and a synagogue in St. Petersburg and talking with religious leaders, Bush declared he was impressed with the amount of religious liberty in Russia.⁸⁰ Speaking in China, by contrast, Bush urged Chinese leaders to reaffirm their nation's long-standing "tradition of religious tolerance" and allow people to "worship as they wish." Faith benefited nations, he added, by pointing to a higher moral law and teaching people to love and serve others. The tens of millions of Chinese who were "relearning Buddhist, Taoist and local religious traditions or practicing Christianity, Islam and other faiths," therefore, were not a "threat to public order," but rather likely to be "good citizens."⁸¹

Through the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom, Bush declared in 2003, his administration had called "attention to religious persecution" and encouraged American "allies, friends, and trading partners to provide and protect this fundamental human right for all people. . . . By working together to secure religious freedom around the world," he added, "we can create a better future for people of all faiths."⁸² Through its Commission on International Religious Freedom, he told United Nations officials in 2008, the U.S. was helping leaders "understand that religious freedom is the foundation of a healthy and

⁷⁹ G. W. Bush, "American Jewish Committee."

⁸⁰ G. W. Bush, "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters . . . in St. Petersburg," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38 (June 3, 2002).

⁸¹ "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at Tsinghua University in Beijing," February 22, 2002, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64976>. See also Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush, Calling U.S. 'a Nation Guided by Faith,' Urges Freedom of Worship in China," *New York Times*, February 22, 2002, A8, and Charles Hutzler, "Bush's Focus on Religion May Strain China Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, February 25, 2002, A14.

⁸² G. W. Bush, "Proclamation 7640—Religious Freedom Day, 2003," January 15, 2003, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=61931>.

hopeful society.”⁸³ To be successful, he argued, nations must ensure that their citizens could “serve and honor God without fear of persecution.”⁸⁴

In 2006 Bush praised the work of the Office of International Religious Freedom in advocating religious freedom and actively opposing religious persecution around the world. Important progress had occurred in Vietnam, Laos, India, Georgia, the United Arab Emirates, and other nations, he argued, and many individuals throughout the world who had been imprisoned because of their faith had been released. Providing people in other countries with religious freedom helped increase human dignity and political liberty.⁸⁵

Some leading conservative Catholics, Jews, and evangelicals applauded Bush for promoting international human rights, religious freedom, and democracy.⁸⁶ The president believes that “America has a special role to play in spreading freedom and human dignity around the world,” Richard Land maintained.⁸⁷ Carol Hamrin, a former State Department expert on China, argued that Bush’s actions had been prompted by his belief that God uses his people “to do justice” in foreign affairs.⁸⁸

Conclusion

Religious liberty has rightly been called the first liberty.⁸⁹ All other freedoms—political, economic, social, and cultural—are closely intertwined with religious liberty. During its colonial

⁸³ G. W. Bush, “Remarks to the United Nations High-Level Debate on Interfaith Dialogue in New York City,” November 13, 2008, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=84853>.

⁸⁴ G. W. Bush, “Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,” November 6, 2003, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=844>.

⁸⁵ G. W. Bush, “Proclamation 7974—Religious Freedom Day, 2006,” January 13, 2006, Presidency database, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65100>.

⁸⁶ Tony Carnes, “The Bush Doctrine,” *Christianity Today* 47 (May 2003), Christianity Today database, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/may/3.38.html>.

⁸⁷ Richard Lacayo, et al., “A Spiritual Influence,” *Time* 164 (November 15, 2004), 84.

⁸⁸ Carnes, “Bush Doctrine.”

⁸⁹ See William Lee Miller, *The First Liberty: Religion and the American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1986).

years and especially since the ratification of the First Amendment in 1791, America has led the world in providing religious freedom through its separation of church and state, and guarantees that citizens can worship as they desire. Our presidents have played a significant role in ensuring that Constitutional provisions have been followed at home and in exhorting other nations to increase the religious freedom of their residents. As the Cold War ended, the Soviet Union imploded, Eastern European nations threw off the yoke of communism, a new world system evolved, and the United States and other nations faced terrorist threats and acts. Reagan, Clinton, and the two Bushes championed religious liberty and contributed to its expansion in many parts of the world.
