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Honorable Prime Minister Reynolds, Honorable Congressman Canady, respected leaders, distinguished colleagues, participants, ladies and gentlemen. It is our pleasure in the Washington Times Foundation to serve as co-sponsor for this important conference on "religious freedom and a new millennium." This is the third in a continuing series of conferences to be held in major international capitals, including cities in North America, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

As a person who is working at a daily newspaper in the capital city of the United States, I have a chance to see frequent evidence of the increase of religious persecution as a threat to democracy throughout the world. On page two of our Monday morning newspaper, we publish the summary of a sermon, delivered the day before, from the pulpit of one of the more than 3,200 churches, in the Washington metropolitan area. We started this three and a half years ago, and have now published more than 180 sermon summaries. Within a period of weeks, one can discover the inspirational words of a Lutheran minister, Catholic priest, Episcopal bishop, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Mennonite, Assembly of God or Pentecostal pastors, a Jewish rabbi, or Muslim imam. This feature demonstrates that valuable moral resources and future vision can be found in all religions, regardless of the denomination.

Religious freedom has become an increasingly preeminent human rights issue in the 1990s. The historical record chronicles many tragic episodes of religious persecution. This usually takes the form of a power struggle between the secular power of the state and a religious movement, or a doctrinal struggle between various religious organizations within the established body in conflict with a newer religious movement. When people of faith appear to threaten the dominance of the state, governments act with entirely unjust hostility toward those communities. Examples include the Roman persecution of the early Christians, the conflict between the kings and papacy in medieval Europe, the policies and practice of communist regimes and, in some cases, advanced Europe nations today. When a new religious movement grows and prevails to the level of threatening the doctrine or power of an established religious institution, the question of orthodoxy versus heresy becomes the issue. The dominant perspective through the ages has been that "my" position is orthodox while "your" opinion is heresy.

From the origin of the Protestant Reformation to the conflicts between Christianity and Islam;

from the clash between Catholics and Evangelicals in South America and in Europe, to the new problems of Russia; the struggle between competing views of faith continues to evoke human suffering in the name of God. The Reformation and Enlightenment stirred the pride of freedom for the individual; the basic desire for religious liberty and freedom of conscience laid the root that began to grow in the hearts of the people. Individuals could find God by pursuing truth directly from the Bible, and from their own conscience. When the Cold War ended, the world was liberated from dangerous conflict between the superpowers, and from the threat to religious liberty and human rights from the Communist bloc.

However, despite the end of the Cold War, we now see ominous trends that again threaten world peace. Anti-religious hostility is moving with force throughout the planet. In 1998, we find evidence of some of the worst transgressions against religious freedom occurring in democratic countries, often with the compliance or support of more established faiths. Despite its brilliant technology, modernity has brought catastrophic results by claiming that moral absolutes are merely a relic of the past. Consequently, we can now see the dangerous combination of government-backed hostility, supported by established religion, in a cultural environment dominated by a secular materialist worldview. A new level of religious oppression is enforced in the fields of education, mental health, and the news media. As mentioned, many news accounts detailing human rights violations of religious freedom pour into the pages of the newspaper I oversee. The first US State Department study on global religious persecution, released in January 1998, cites such examples of religious persecution violating individual human rights in 77 countries. Rev. Don Argue of the National Association of Evangelicals, who worked with the State Department commission on the study, accurately described the range of religious freedoms to include not only the freedom of belief, but also the freedom of religious practice. Religious persecution includes attacks on worship, social service, proselytization, raising funds, and even the very basic freedom to know more about, or doubt the truth, that originates from one's own conscience.

During the opening banquet yesterday, speakers Bruce Casino and Adrian Karatnycky described human rights violations in specific countries, so I don't think I need to reiterate what we have heard. Those violations take many forms such as torture, assassination, economic oppression, suppression of free movement and travel, including immigration and emigration, forcible kidnapping and deprogramming. According to the 1997 report from the United Nation Commission on Human Rights, even in respectful democratic nations, problems related to religious persecution were reported regarding Mormons, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses, charismatic Christians, members of the Unification Church, and others. In the latter case, the founder of the faith was prevented from entering Germany based on a misapplication of the Schengen Treaty.

Paul Marshall, in his book *Their Blood Cries Out, The Untold Story of Persecution Against*

Christians in the Modern World, states that the issue of religious persecution has grown, from mere obscurity two years ago, to become a focal point for both conservative and liberal groups, in and out of American government. In a Washington Times editorial last August, we noted the State Department report mentioned above and called attention to the fact that religious freedom has become a critical foreign policy issue for the United States, as a result of the dedicated efforts of individuals and organizations around the country who have pressed for greater awareness of the plight of Christians overseas.

We are certainly honored to have Congressman Charles Canady with us in Berlin today. He lent his strong support to the Freedom From Religious Persecution Act that recently passed the United States House of Representatives with an overwhelming majority of 375-41. Sponsored by US Congressman Frank Wolfe from Virginia, the well-respected bill makes it all but certain that governments, which abuse religious minorities, will face some kind of US economic censure. The US Senate is expected to take up a similar measure, sponsored by Senator Don Nickles of Oklahoma and co-sponsored by Senator Jesse Helms, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The Nickles-Helms bill broadens the definition of religious persecution to include many nations. This issue of protecting the rights of religious minorities has now become an impassioned cause for many people, churches and the Congress of the United States.

Ladies and gentlemen, as one who works in the field of journalism, my main concern used to be freedom of the press and freedom of speech. These widely recognized rights protect the right of communication between human beings. Religion, on the other hand, is concerned with communication between human beings and God. Why is it that freedom of speech between human beings is so widely upheld, while the sacred communication between God and human beings is so frequently assailed? The arrogance of any government to establish a religion, or other power to restrain the sacred communication between any person and God, is not only tragic, it is unjust.

There is an irony of history. All the world's major religions began as minor movements, and were considered heretical. However, over the ages they became major influences on civilization and eventually came to be considered mainstream. The motivating force for each was a profound religious conscience, coupled with the thirst for spiritual renewal. Nevertheless, these movements became institutionalized and, over time, the spring of spiritual life that empowered the earlier years became completely dry. The vitality of dynamic spiritual force gives away to an encrusted culture, like the hardened trunk of a tree.

History knows the transforming impact of men and women of conscience. Gautama Buddha, Confucius, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Martin Luther King, Mary Baker Eddy and hundreds of

others raised the torch of freedom, acting and speaking from the depth of their conscience. In 1521 the Martin Luther stood before the Diet at Worms and was asked if he would recant his challenge to the Roman Church: "Since your Majesty and your Lordship request a simple answer, I shall give it with no strings and no catches. I am bound by the scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the word of God. I neither can deny or revoke anything, for it is neither safe nor honest to act against one's conscience, Amen."

Introducing a bill for establishing religious freedom, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

...that Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burdens. . . are a departure from the plan of the Holy Author of our religion. . . . No man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place or ministry, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion.

The right to worship together in religious communities of faith, and to practice one's faith according to the dictates of conscience, is a most fundamental human right, and should be guaranteed by every state, religious group, and other power in the world. When we lose true freedom of conscience, we lose God. When we lose God, we also lose freedom of conscience. Throughout the world, we see moral and spiritual corruption, and the tragic breakdown of the family. Shocking occurrences of extreme violence and sexual perversion among the young show that the problems have reached uncontrollable levels. Therefore, this must be our focus and greatest concern.

Secular authority—political, economic, military, and legal—and traditional religious institutions have proven incompetent in dealing with those issues. As we enter the new millennium, the historical cycle of religious intolerance between established religious bodies and new religious movements, and between the secular states and people of faith, must end. Beyond tolerance and dialogue, as many speakers have suggested, religious leaders and believers must unite with a common purpose: to provide a foundation for a new moral renaissance. We need every hand in this urgent task of black and white, East and West, big and small, or old and new. Most importantly, we should know that the one exclusive mission given to the religious community is to be responsible for reversing the anti-religious trends that continuously spread and infect our world.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, the most essential current flowing through history has always been the moral force of religion and freedom of conscience. This is not simply an expression of human culture, but is a manifestation of God's providence. Because this is motivated by God, no social, political or military force can withstand its progress. In this light, I believe that God has called us together today. Because no group can solve these problems alone, every religious organization must support freedom of conscience and freedom of religious life for all. We must reaffirm God's desire for all religious institutions to combat secular cultural trends, and especially to strengthen the family in our society. It is vital that the government recognize, respect, protect, and support the principles of democracy, which are based on individual civil liberties and basic human rights, including freedom of religion.

During a recent national speaking tour, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Washington Times, stated that the goal of history is beyond one nation under God, or one denomination under God. Ultimately, the goal is one world under God. As we recognize our common origin and identity as God's children, true unity can become real. Adrian Karatnycky of Freedom House referred to the transcendent idea of the equality of human beings as the creations of God, and as an expression of God's creative design. This is why all people throughout the world must have the right to pursue their own relationship with God. This must not be a one-time effort that ends with the adjournment of our conference.

I appreciate the hospitality of the European Chapter of ICRF for this conference in Berlin, the city that symbolizes liberty. It is from Europe that the concept of individual freedom, and religious reformation originated. Thus Europe, particularly Germany, can once again champion the noble cause of religious freedom, the bedrock of democracy. Let us be responsible to enter the twenty-first century, in which religious freedom blossoms like spring throughout the world. Can world peace be achieved in any other way?