

Terrorism: A Global and Personal Response

Delivered at the United Nations on 16 October 2001 by

Chief Robert Vernon

President, Pointman Leadership Institute,
Assistant Chief of Police (retired), Los Angeles

Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be with you, a very deep honor for me because this is my first visit to the United Nations. I have been to many of your countries and to many places in NY, but believe it or not, I've never been to your headquarters, and I am very pleased and honored to be here.

I am very happy that you all can understand English, because we Americans have a problem there. On my first trip to Europe, I was on an airplane, and the stewardess saw me studying my German dictionary. I speak a little German, because my mother spoke German, but when World War II came along, she told me to quit speaking it; I think you can understand why. At any rate, I was brushing up on some German phrases and words, and the stewardess said, "You are studying to speak German." I said, "Yes" She said to me, "Tell me, if speaking three languages is trilingual, and speaking two languages is bilingual, what is speaking one language?" I said, "Monolingual or uni-lingual?" She said, "No. American!" We Americans do err there; not too many of us do too well in speaking many languages.

I've been honored to visit many of your countries. I was just talking with the ambassador from Mongolia. I have been there four times, and will be going back in the spring. We'll be holding a seminar for the parliament members there in Mongolia. We have been to Russia six different times. I was speaking with the ambassador of Russia, and I do know how to say "Dobre vetshe", "Dobre don," and "Speciba", a few words I picked up in Russian. And they have treated us very kindly there.

But I am not here just to tell stories. Your Secretary General was quoted just yesterday as saying, "The world is a messy place, and unfortunately, the messier it gets the more work we [that is you] have to do." And so you do have your work cut out for you.

I am going to respond to a suggestion that was given to me, through Michael Leary of the Christian Embassy, from one of your colleagues who said, "There are three questions I would like to have answered: (1) How did we get here? (2) Where do we go from here? (3) What do we need?"

1. How did we get here?

How did we get here? There are many reasons, but in my mind two are preeminent: (A) We've taken a short term view of terrorism, and (B) Relativism.

A. Short-term view of terrorism

First of all, *we've taken a short-term view of terrorism*. What do I mean by that? We might say, "Terrorism doesn't really affect me today." That's kind of an immature versus a mature approach to decision making. What we should really be looking at is how will the decision affect the world in five years. So let's just pause there for one moment and talk about that.

I think we all have to share some guilt in the way terrorism exists in the world today, because most of us, and I have to include myself and my fellow Americans, we have said, “Well since it’s not here, it’s not that big of an issue.” Now maybe we haven’t said those words, but by our actions that’s exactly how we’ve behaved. In fact, there are some prominent Americans who have actually—it’s been publicized in the papers—have given [money] to some terrorist cause, because that cause is not on this continent, it’s somewhere else. Folks, that is shortsighted.

I remember when I first became a police officer that two officers had their guns taken away from them. They were taken captive in a very surprise incident that occurred. They surrendered their guns to these two bandits. The two bandits put them in a car, drove them over the hill of what we call the ‘Grapevine’ in the Los Angeles area, over the mountain range into the Bakersfield area. They took them out into an onion field and shot one of them to death; the other one miraculously escaped. It was written in a book called *The Onion Field*, which is a true story. Right after that incident occurred, we had an assembly and my lieutenant said, “I’m not going to order you to never give up your gun, but you may want to think about the advisability of giving up your gun. That would be a short-range solution to the problem, to surrender your gun. But now you are at their mercy. Now they may do exactly what they did to these men, take them out into the desert and murder them. Maybe you want to think in the long term of ‘What is this going to do by giving up my gun?’”

My partner and I had a practice when we agreed on something: we would look each other in the eye across the front seat of the police car, and we would make an agreement. One of us would then say, “Pact?” and the other one would say “Pact!” Then we’d grasp hands, and shake hands on it. So after that talk, we agreed that we were never going to give up our guns, regardless. We’d rather be shot in the city where someone might be able to get us to a hospital.

Two weeks later we were confronted with that very situation. As detectives, we were knocking on the door of a cheap hotel trying to arrest a man. When he opened the door, we didn’t expect him to be armed. He was just a drug dealer and we were going to arrest him for selling narcotics. When he opened the door, he had a 32 automatic in his hand. Neither of us had our guns in our hands. Both of us had our guns in our holsters, under our coats. He said, “Cops, huh?” and, the way he said it and from the look on his face, we knew he didn’t have really good plans for us. I remembered my pact, and without even thinking, I went for my gun. I jerked my coat open, and I’ll never forget this button was sewed on pretty loose, and it broke. And I’ll never forget how it went really slowly through the air. You know how they say: when you think you are about to die, things slow down? That’s what happened to me. My hand was moving really slowly for my gun that was in the holster on my left side. I remember I was afraid to look at this man because I thought the gun was about to go off. I didn’t want to see it go off, so I was kind of holding my head down. I jerked my gun out of its holster, and right at that moment I had a very cowardly thought.

Later on, after the incident was over, I had to talk it over with my partner. I said, “Partner, remember when we were going for our guns in the hall?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “I have something I must confess to you.” “What’s that?” I said, “I was hoping he would shoot you first.” He just grinned, and said, “Guess what? I was thinking the same thing.”

Well, we both got our guns out and as I began to focus on the target, I began to pull back on the trigger, and I noticed a picture something like this. He still had the drugs in one

hand; it was in a bunch of balloons. But his other hand that he had the gun in was empty. He had thrown the gun over his shoulder into the room. We of course jumped in, I took my finger off the trigger, re-holstered my gun, stepped inside of his room and shut the door so that the people in the hotel wouldn't know what was going on inside there. I got under the bed because I had kicked his gun under the bed, and got the gun from under his bed. After we kind of settled down, we asked him, "Why didn't you shoot?" He said, "Well, if one of you had gone for your gun, I probably would have shot. But when both of you went for your guns, I thought one of these fools is going to kill me. And I thought I just better get rid of my gun."

You see, the point I'm trying to illustrate here is that the short range solution would be to say, "He has a gun on us, let's give him our guns. That will save our lives." But you know, you can't predict what will happen next. You have to think in the long term. In the long term, generally speaking, we came to the conclusion that it's probably best never to give up your gun in a situation like that. It's best to take your action, when not only you, but also the person you are facing, are still in a state of not knowing what to do.

So in this first short-term view of terrorism, I think we have all mistakenly said, "As long as it is somewhere else, in some other country, as long as it doesn't affect me, it's not really my problem." Folks, I'm here to say this is a world problem. I know you know that because I went on your web site and I've been looking at all the action you have been taking. I know that you are viewing it as a world problem, and I commend you for it.

B. Relativism

Secondly, another reason that I think we got to where we are is that idea of *relativism*. We're in a cult of relativism. We've adopted the premise that there are no absolutes in life. We have postulated that everything is relative, and therefore, no absolute truth exists. My experience has been that once decisions are made under the premise that no absolute truth exists, we find ourselves on that proverbial "slippery slope," and it drops off really quickly.

Many so-called intellectuals reject, scoff, and even ridicule one who announces strong convictions about things. Alan Bloom was a professor, (he passed away recently), at our University of Chicago, an esteemed professor. He has written a book called *The Closing of the American Mind*. It's a very difficult book to read, but I commend it to you; it's a very insightful book. This man, as far as I know, is not a religious man but he is a very honest man, a very intellectual man. He said, "What I found in my professorship there of mentoring Ph.D. candidates through their course, I found that they all had one thing in common. Coming through our educational system, they had been told, 'We have to get rid of all the absolutes in your mind, so that you can learn,' and so they were told there are no absolutes. 'Just sweep all that out of your mind. You must have an open mind in order to receive truth, so sweep away all of these absolute ideas that you have.' He admitted at the end of his career, "You know we made a grievous error. What we did was, we closed their mind to the possibility that there are a few absolutes." Listen to what he says: they've actually been told and taught to fear absolutes. I'll quote directly, "The danger they had been taught to fear from absolutism is not error, but intolerance. Relativism is necessary to openness, and this is the virtue—the *only virtue*—it is the great insight of our time." (He's saying that tongue in cheek.) "The point is not to correct mistakes and really be right, rather it is not to think you are right at all." Isn't that interesting?

This has proven to be wrong. We desperately need to draw the line in pursuit of truth. Call evil what it is: evil. September 11th was an act of evil; let's call it that. Let's not be afraid to say that. Some people are saying, "Um, well, I don't know." That was evil. Now, we can get into why did that occur, and we're going to do that in just a few minutes, but pluralism has been championed and pluralism offers much. According to Dr. Ravi Zacharias, it "offers much in the way of variety, and the enrichment we bring to one another is incalculable. But when pluralism breeds a doctrine of relativism, the cost is much too great." It really is.

Let me illustrate the cost of relativism. I was in Lithuania when this first occurred, and I was presenting our seminar on ethics to a group of businessmen. He happened to own a company that made television tubes, a very successful company now doing very well. As is the case in most previous Communist block countries, when I asked the question, "Are there any absolutes?" everyone says, "No. There are none." By the way, that's pretty close to being true in America as well. In America, I may have a third of the group say there are a few absolutes, but most Americans will also agree and say, "No, there are no absolutes." So I challenged this man. I said, "Do you have any children?" He said, "Yes, I have a daughter." I said, "How old is your daughter?" He said, "Eleven years old." I said, "Suppose some bandits break into your house one night. They tie you and your wife up at gunpoint. Then they take your eleven year old daughter and they rape her." You could see he was very troubled by me even suggesting that this could occur, you could see it on his face. Then I said, "When this man is through raping her, he takes out a knife and he cuts her throat, and every time her heart beats, you see her lifeblood being pumped out, and she is saying, "Daddy, please help me. Daddy..." and she is getting weaker." Suddenly, this man actually got up out of his chair, and he said something in Lithuanian that I don't know, but he was very angry with me even suggesting something like that. So I said, "Sir, under any circumstances, can that be considered good or moral or right?" And he shouted in Lithuanian, "No! No! Of course not!" "Ah, we have just discovered that you have at least one absolute, that it is always wrong for someone to rape and kill your daughter. That is an absolute, is it not?" He said, "Yes! I agree with you."

We did this in Russia. We led one Russian colonel down the same path of logic, and when I asked him, "Could that ever be right?" he started to say, "Well, under certain circumstances..." He didn't want to admit that there were some absolutes. The rest of the colonels and generals in the room turned to him and went, "Ooooooh...come on." Then he had to admit, "Well perhaps in the area of morality there are some absolutes, but not in the rest of life." I said, "Well, that's what we're talking about, is it not? Now we're talking about ethics."

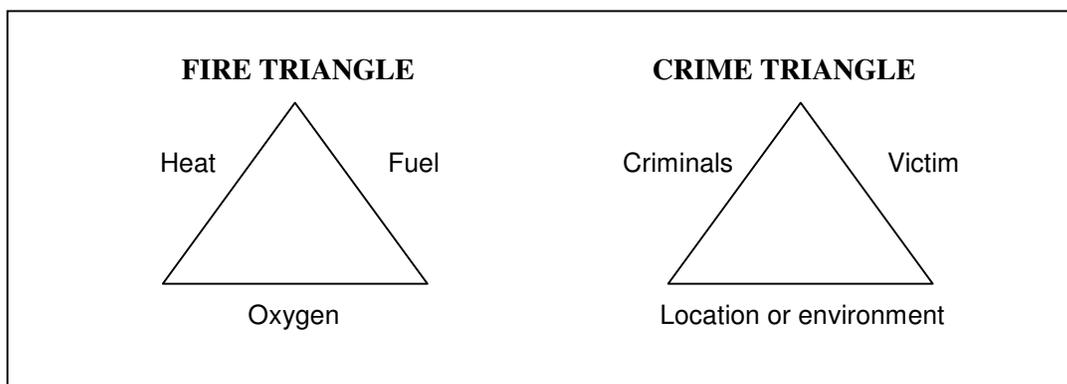
How did we get here? Let's review: We have taken a *short term view of terrorism* when we conclude that it is someone else's problem. Secondly, we've seen that *relativism* is built on the premise that there are no absolutes, leading to a fear of intolerance. If there are no absolutes, then there is no evil. But there is one thing we can agree on: terrorism is evil.

2. Where do we go from here?

The second question is, "Where do we go from here?" I want to talk about prevention and about the concept of triangulation. We use this concept in the fire service and also in the police service. If you look at the illustration below, the triangle on the left is what

we call the fire triangle. In order to have a fire you have to have heat on one side, fuel on the other side, and you have to have oxygen. If you can collapse any one of those three ingredients, you can put out the fire. If you get rid of fuel, the fire will stop because it doesn't have any fuel to burn. If you can cut off the oxygen with water or foam, the fire is contained. Finally, if you can somehow get rid of the heat, it will stop.

The crime triangle works in a similar way. If you can do something about the criminals being involved in crime you can reduce crime. Or you can do something about the behavior of victims, like train people that they shouldn't walk around in certain bad areas of town late at night by themselves with a great big purse of money in their hand. There are certain behaviors that you need to change. Finally, the last leg of the triangle is location or environment. For example, we have places in Los Angeles where there are many things stolen from cars. We solved this problem by putting in a lot of lights in that parking lot. Criminals do not like to operate under bright lights. Put one TV camera up in the parking lot, and a lot of the crime will go away. In this way, you are dealing with the environment. In a crime situation if you collapse any one of those three sides of the triangle, crime goes away.



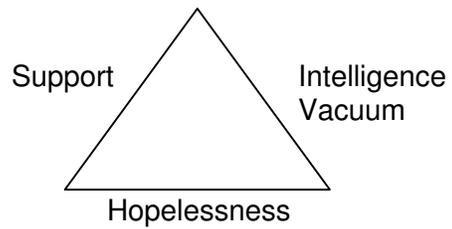
I want to suggest to you today that there is a similar triangle as far as terrorism is concerned. The terrorism prevention triangle also has three sides. First of all, there is *support* for terrorism. If that can be collapsed, you can really make an impact on terrorism.

Then there is the *intelligence vacuum*: when we don't have intelligence, when we don't know what's going on, when we haven't infiltrated some of these groups, when we don't have people who are informing us as to what is going on, that also breeds terrorism.

Finally there is *hopelessness*. You may say, "What do you mean hopelessness?" I am talking about hopelessness amongst the masses of people in a certain country. Most terrorists are not without hope. In fact, we have found that some of the greatest terrorists that have done the greatest harm are rather wealthy. They have a lot of money. They have a lot of things going for them, but the people in their country who are without hope will support them because they don't know of any other place to turn. When the terrorists say to them, "I'll take up your cause, I'll do something for you," since they are without hope, they will support him. My concept here is that we must address all three sides of the triangle, but let's first of all look at hopelessness.

TERRORISM PREVENTION TRIANGLE

Terrorism is controlled by collapsing one or more sides of the triangle. It is most effective to collapse as many sides as possible.



A. Hopelessness. Even though many terrorists are not in that situation, I think we need to focus on the area of humanitarian assistance to bring up the level of hope in every country in the world. Every citizen in the world must have hope. As long as we have people completely devoid of hope, it's a fertile ground for terrorists to do their job; somehow we must bring hope. We must bring hope in terms of humanitarian aid, medical assistance, food, and opportunities to work. I really like the concept that I am sure you've all heard before: "It doesn't help so much by giving a person a fish to eat; it is best to teach people how to fish." People respond more to a colleague-type of assistance than they do the paternalistic: "Here let me give you something because you can't do it yourself. Let me help you. Let me be your daddy." People don't like that. That's insulting! We need to teach them how to fish, and thereby address hopelessness.

B. Intelligence vacuum. In my opinion we have suffered in America for about two decades from an anti-spy mentality. In America, 'spy' is a bad word. The general feeling has been that if the LAPD had an intelligence operation, we must stop that immediately. An anti-spy feeling has pervaded so much so that it's like the proverbial pendulum. Somewhere there is a middle ground, and maybe at one point we had too much attention as far as spies, and there were too many spies infiltrating too many organizations, but now the pendulum has swung and it's gone past the middle point way over here where we have very little intelligence at all on certain organizations. So it was a big surprise when things happened on September 11th. No one knew! Someone should have known! There should have been some warning.

C. Support. I recently read an op-ed piece that drew a parallel between America's response to Pearl Harbor and a response to terrorism. The writer of the editorial expressed that the response in World War II was not just to go after the planes that carried out the bombing missions, but to go after the aircraft carriers that sustained them. Countries that support and give safe haven to terrorists are the terrorists' aircraft carriers. I thought that was a brilliant analysis. There is an ancient proverb that was written over 4000 years ago in the Bible and there is a parallel thought in the Qur'an. King Solomon said, "Condoning evil, or overlooking it, eventually leads to sorrow; but bold confrontation eventually leads to peace" (Proverbs 10:10). Confrontation at the time is not pleasant. None of us likes to do that. I don't like to fire people. To be honest with you, I didn't really enjoy arresting people. You say that is strange for a police officer. I've arrested thousands of people, but I didn't really enjoy any of it. It was a negative part of the job; I had to do it and I did it as professionally as I could. We must understand that if we overlook evil it grows, and eventually comes back to get us.

Another editorial said, “Only when the cost of harboring, aiding, abetting, and/or allowing sanctuary, training grounds, and domicile is made so high as to dissuade these practices, will terrorism be truly snuffed out. That cost must indeed be tenfold the damage inflicted by those terrorists.” That’s quite a dramatic statement! A person’s character (and a nation’s character) is revealed by their choice of friends.” That was also written by King Solomon in 2000 BC. You can measure a person’s character by the friends they choose, and I believe you can get the sense and the pulsebeat of a nation by what nations a state chooses to be their allies and friends.

There are three aspects of support to consider: (i) repression of terrorism, (ii) prosecution, and (iii) building a moral consensus. Let’s take a closer look at each of them.

i. Repression. Prevention isn’t the only thing we need to do in combating terrorism, but let’s look at it first. The first step in repression is to have *visible security measures* in place. As I walked in your U.N. building today, even though I had police credentials, I had to go through careful screening. They had to look at everything I had. When my badge set off the alarm, they had to see that. They had to see everything and anything that was metal. You have good security here—that’s good! We need good security. We need to have visible security measures. Secondly in repression is *monitoring and controlling weapons of mass destruction*; that really needs to be addressed. Thirdly, *an alert and cooperative public* is important. The best source of intelligence is from the common ordinary person on the street. If everyone in the world is rallied against terrorism a lot of the information about terrorists will come from just plain ordinary citizens. We will not have to have every organization infiltrated with spies, because a lot of intelligence will come from the alert public.

ii. Prosecution. Then of course, we must prosecute *all terrorism*. I want to emphasize *all*. I’ve already admitted that in times past I think all of us have somewhat tolerated terrorism, and in my opinion this must stop.

Second, *sanctions and rewards*. People are interested more in actions than they are in rhetoric. We can say a lot of things, but we must actually follow through with performing what we say. There was a recent study by a Harvard professor that was reported in the Harvard business review that said, “People who belong to a company are more interested in what the CEO sanctions and rewards than in what he says.” The head of a company can say, “I believe in this. I think we should stop this,” but that really doesn’t make that much difference to them. But when he begins rewarding certain behaviors and sanctioning (or punishing) other behaviors, then he has their attention. “If you want to get a promotion around here, you’ve got to do this,” and “If you do this then you will get fired or you will have your pay reduced.”

People are very interested in what the boss sanctions or rewards, and I submit to you it’s the same way in the world community. Once the world knows there are certain things that the United Nations approves of, rewards, and honors, terrorism will decrease. It doesn’t have to be something tangible. It could just be a statement or resolution from the United Nations saying, “We approve of what you are doing. You’re doing right. This is good. We honor you.” But there must also be sanctions against terrorism. I agree with Paul Greenberg who said, “it’s a delusion to think that terrorism can be appeased. Violence feeds upon itself. The demand of the demons inside every hater are never satisfied, not even when they drive the hater to destroy himself along with others, for hatred has no final demand. Its appetite grows with its conquests.”

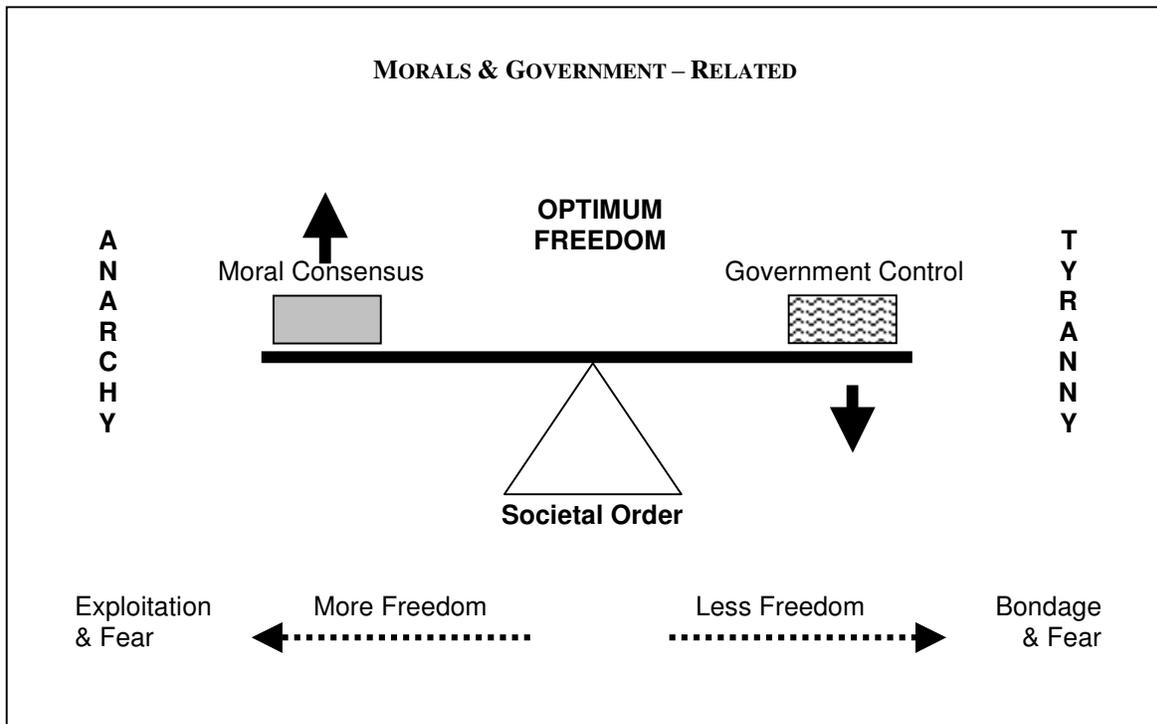
I want to conclude this point about prosecution on a more positive note. Thomas Paine was one of the so-called Founding Fathers of America; he said, “Tyranny like hell is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumphs. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. ‘Tis dearness alone that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods, and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated.”

iii. Build a moral consensus [This section was omitted from the original speech due to time considerations]

I don’t think it is possible to completely eliminate all terrorism, especially if we are to maintain a reasonable level of freedom and liberty, but I do see a broad spectrum upon which we can array the various alternatives for reducing terrorism to an absolute minimum.

Morals and government are related. On one side of this spectrum is complete authoritarian control by government. At this extreme, all liberty is sacrificed for security and control. This is tyranny. This results in crushing the human spirit, bondage and fear. It is a result of elitist thinking. The elitist are those in government who believe they have some sort of superior knowledge and therefore the right to force their will on the populace.

On the other side of this spectrum is complete freedom. Those adhering to this type of extremism are also elitist. But they are naïve extremists. They naively believe that human nature is basically good. They believe that, if left alone, the human spirit will lead society to peace and fulfillment for all. There is no such thing as complete freedom. What is freedom for one can mean bondage to others. The condition of absolutely no social control leads to exploitation and ultimately anarchy.



Somewhere between these extremes is the concept of optimum freedom. The notion of optimum freedom is quite different from complete freedom. It means that there is a point where granting additional measures of theoretical freedom begins to diminish actual freedom. For example, granting a group of children the freedom to play on an interstate highway would either result in their injury, death and/or a massive traffic jam, and that would translate into a severe restriction of freedom for many.

Optimum freedom in a society is a balance of government control and individual responsibility. One way of describing this balance is a scale with the fulcrum of the balance being social stability. On one side of the balance scale is government control. On the opposite side of the balance scale is moral consensus.

3. What do we need?

The final question, “What do we need to do right now? What is our personal response?”

A. Develop what is good.

Calvin Coolidge said, “Little progress can be made by merely attempting to repress what is evil; our great hope lies in developing what is good.” I like that. That’s positive. In the Bible, in the book of Proverbs it is written, “By the influence of a godly person a city-state shall prosper” (Proverbs 11:10). That’s an ancient proverb, and I believe it’s just as true today as when it was written. Governments and government officials who are kind, honest, and fair are secure according to Solomon (Proverbs 20:28). Do you want to be secure in your positions? Do you want your country to be secure? Do we want the world to be secure? Then I think we need to hear that governments or world communities that are kind, honest, and fair are indeed secure.

B. Transcend human failure.

But the big question is, “How does one transcend the natural tendency of mortal man?” Do you know what one of our Founding Fathers called us here in America? He said that we are selfish; we are vindictive; we are rapacious. We need to be brought out of our delinquency. In my opinion, this is possible only with the help of Almighty God.

Now I know that we have people of various religions here, but I think what William Bennett said is right. “Now is a unique moment. It is a unique learning moment, a time where we can talk about what is really important, and a time to share what we believe and hold dear.” I’m going to share some things I hold dear in these last few words.

I hold dear a personal relationship with God. I happen to be a follower of Jesus. I’m not going to force that on you. Like I said, there are many religions expressed here today in this room, but for me I have a relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ. We who are followers of Jesus believe that when man was created and placed on the earth, God told him, “You can do everything but one thing. You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” We believe that really happened. (By the way I was listening to the radio about six months ago and they said, “We have proven through DNA that we all have a common mother”, and I yelled to the radio, “Yes, and her name was Eve!” Well they may not be able to prove yet that we have a common father, but they did say we did come from a common mother. I believe that!) When they were placed there, guess what?! They did

exactly what God told them they could not do. The one thing they could not do, they did! God had said, "In the day you do that you will die" (Genesis 2:15). The question is, did they die that very day? Many people say, "No, or we wouldn't be here"; other people say, "Yes, they did." Guess what?! They're both right! I believe that we died spiritually.

I believe we are three people. I believe we are a body, a soul (the Bible uses the Greek word *psyche*, from which we get words like psychology, in other words an intellect), and finally spirit (*pneumas*). Many people think that soul and spirit are the same thing, but in the Bible it is not like that. They are different words. So when our ancestors disobeyed God they did in fact die that day. They died in their spirit.

When I, Bob Vernon, was born, I was born with a body in contact with the material world, but there is more than just a body up here speaking to you. There is a person looking out at you, an intellect or personality, and the Bible calls that the soul or *psyche*. But there is the third part, a spirit that gives contact with the spiritual world. When a man came to Jesus named Nicodemus, who was a ruler of the Jews, he said, "How can I have eternal life?" Jesus answered him, "You have to be born again." The man said, "Born again? I am an old man! How can I enter into my mother's womb again?" Jesus said, "No, no, no. That which is born of the flesh is flesh (body), that which is born of the spirit (*pneumas*) is spirit" (John 3). I'm talking about the spirit.

I think it's good that we understand one another. I think it's good that some of you who are Buddhists or Muslim, or atheists or whatever, that you understand what followers of Jesus believe. You may be asking as I did, "How do I come alive in my spirit?" Here's what I believe, and how I came into a spiritual awakening. Here is how I came into a personal relationship with God: I accepted the fact by faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God uniquely, born without an earthly father, that he lived a perfect life, was crucified, and died as a substitute for my sin.

It was real hard for me, to be honest with you, because it involved three prayers. Number one, I prayed a prayer of confession, admitting to God, "You know that I'm guilty as charged. I'm not perfect like You." Many people wonder what does sin mean? There's a verse in the Bible that explains it. It says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, if you're not perfect like God, you are a sinner. That certainly includes me! I don't know about you, but I'm not perfect like God, so I had to confess to God that I'm not perfect. I cannot make it on my own. Number two, "I'm willing to turn from my way to You. I'm willing to look to Your plan and accept Your way through Christ." Number three, I asked Jesus Christ and his Spirit to come into my life.

Let me illustrate this. We have a device we all wear as police officers. I don't have one on now because I figured I'd be pretty safe here. We wear bulletproof vests under our shirts. Ballistic vests stop bullets, yet every year in Los Angeles we have two officers killed with chest injuries. Do you know why? They're not wearing their vests. You have to wear the vest for it to help you. Likewise, you have to receive Christ, not just believe in him. That's what I believe. I'm not saying you must believe with me, but that's where I'm coming from; that's what I believe.

To overcome terrorism, our world needs hope. Our societies need renewal. I don't know if he's a religious man, but John Gardiners wrote, "Societies are renewed, if they are renewed at all, by people who believe in something, care about something, and are willing to take a stand for something." I have tried to do all three of these things here today. I believe something, I care enough to share it with you even though I am not requiring you to agree

with me, and I'm willing to take a stand up here and say here is where I stand. I believe to have a relationship with God, I, Bob Vernon, needed to receive God's plan: His Son, Jesus Christ. In Him, I found both forgiveness and hope.

I'll close with the words of Winston Churchill. When talking about terrorism and war, he said this, "Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terror. Victory no matter how long and hard the road may be. For without victory, there is no survival."

Think about that, and may God bless you.

This message was delivered at the United Nations to ambassadors from every region of the world on Tuesday, 16 October 2001, just 5 weeks to the day after the 9-11 terrorist attack on the United States.

Chief Robert Vernon is the founder and president of Pointman Leadership Institute. PLI training seminars have been held for government leaders in 31 countries, demonstrating the relationship between the development of a necessary moral consensus and the successful application of humanitarian and democratic forms of government in a civil society.

Previous to his work with Pointman Leadership Institute, Mr. Vernon had a 37-year career with the Los Angeles Police Department, retiring in 1992 as Assistant Chief of Police. While in an executive position, he had the responsibility of overseeing the operations of the Anti-Terrorist Division for three years. He was also a senior member of the anti-terrorist interagency task force, working with the FBI during the Summer Olympics. His experience and training have provided him with unique insights into the present international situation.

Christian Embassy is a non-political, ecumenical NGO. We are here to serve the spiritual and social needs of the United Nations community through relevant events such as this and the International Prayer Breakfast, held this year on 11 September.

It is our conviction that the worthy goals of world peace and mutual respect among peoples and nations are best achieved by men and women who have experienced personal peace with God.