

# Why Religious Freedom?

Key Issues in Their Practical Context

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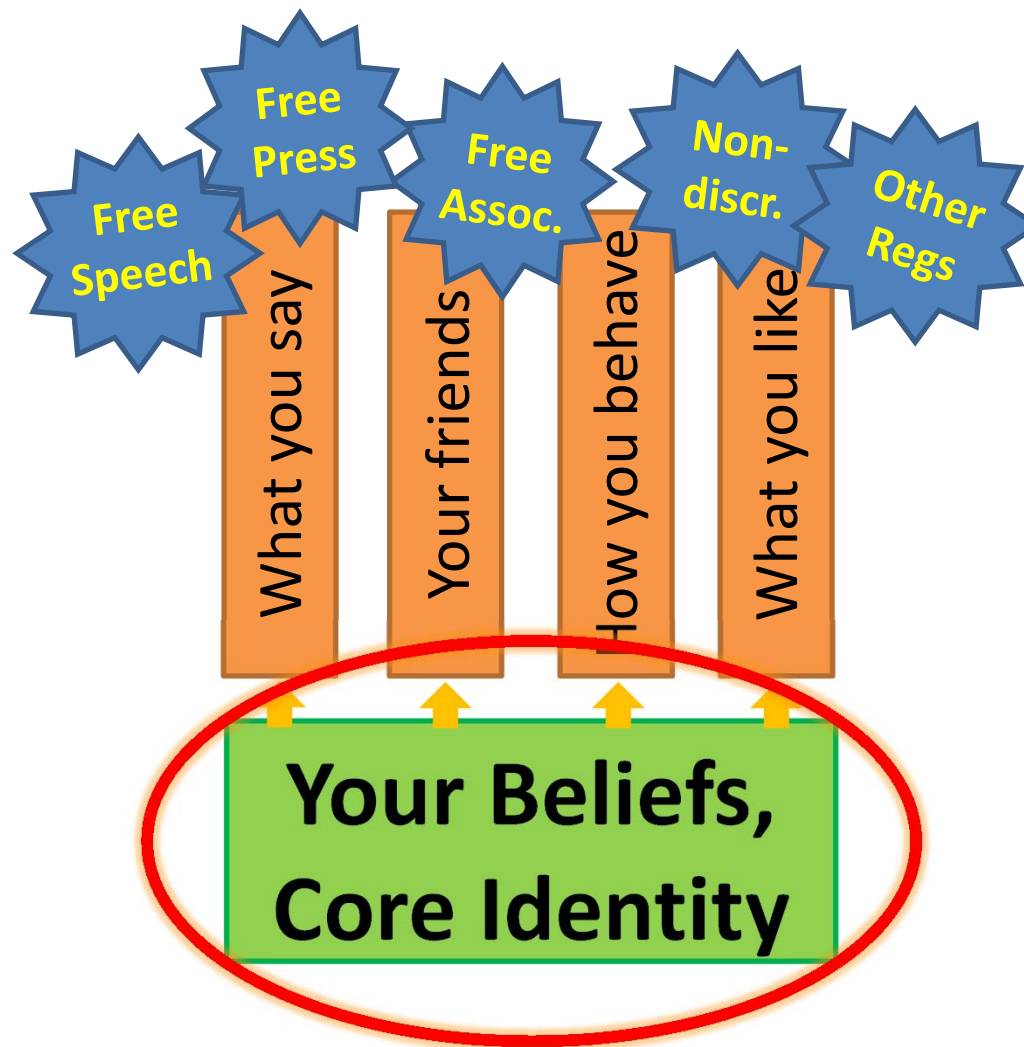
**What is most important to you?**

**Who are you?**

**How do you define yourself?**

**How do you interact with others around you?**

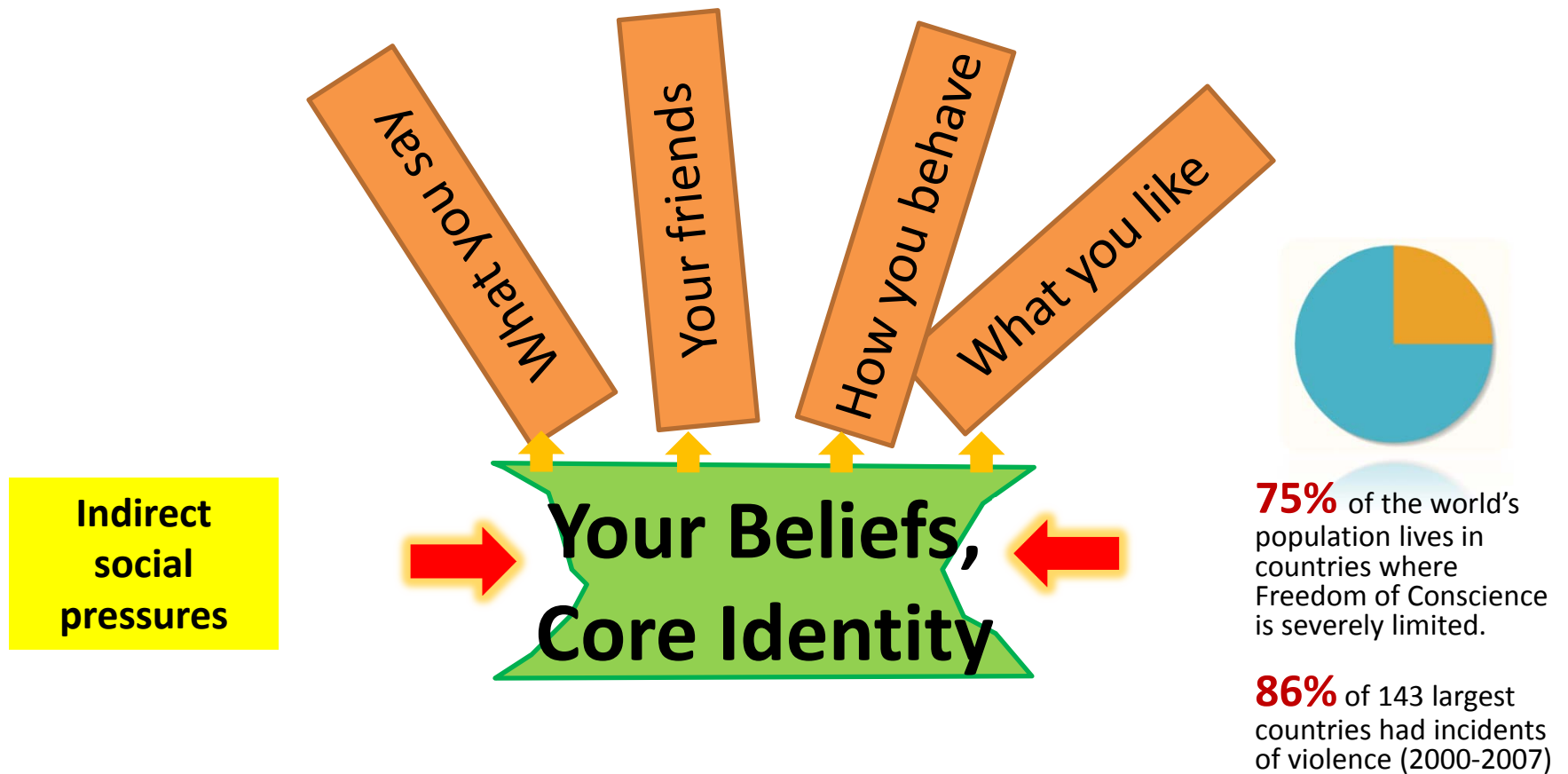
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Religious freedom protects our ability to define ourselves—individually and collectively with others—and then speak and act out what we believe.

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Like love, beliefs can't be forced to be authentic.

“[I]n its religious dimension, [religious liberty is] one of the most vital elements that go to make up the identity of believers and their conception of life, but it is also a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned. The pluralism indissociable from a democratic society, which has been dearly won over the centuries, depends on it.”

## European Court of Human Rights

*Kokkinakis v. Greece* (App no 14307/88) 1993, para. 31

*Nolan and K. v. Russia* (App no 2512/04) 2009, para. 61

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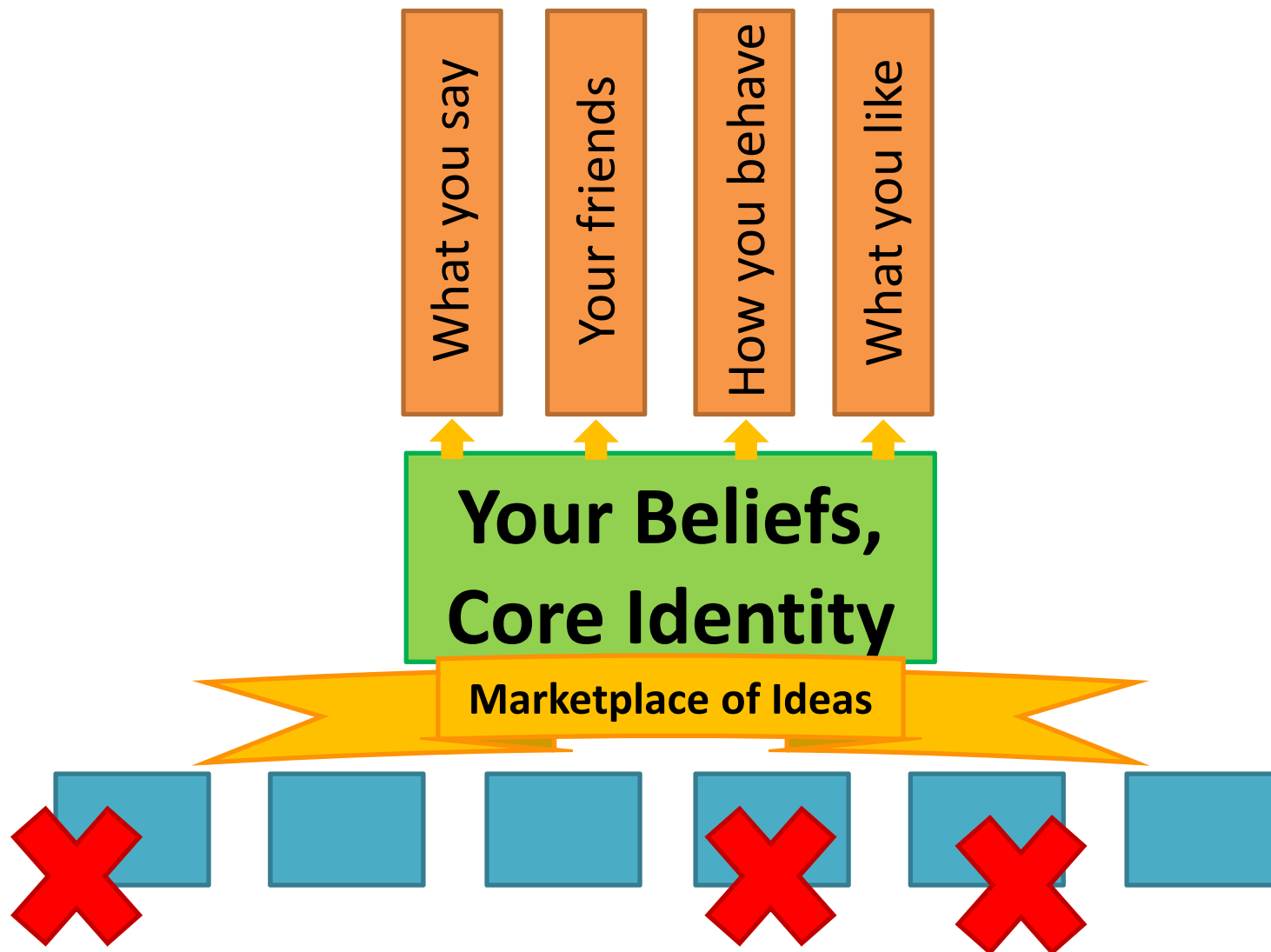
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# Why Religious Freedom?



# Marketplace of Ideas



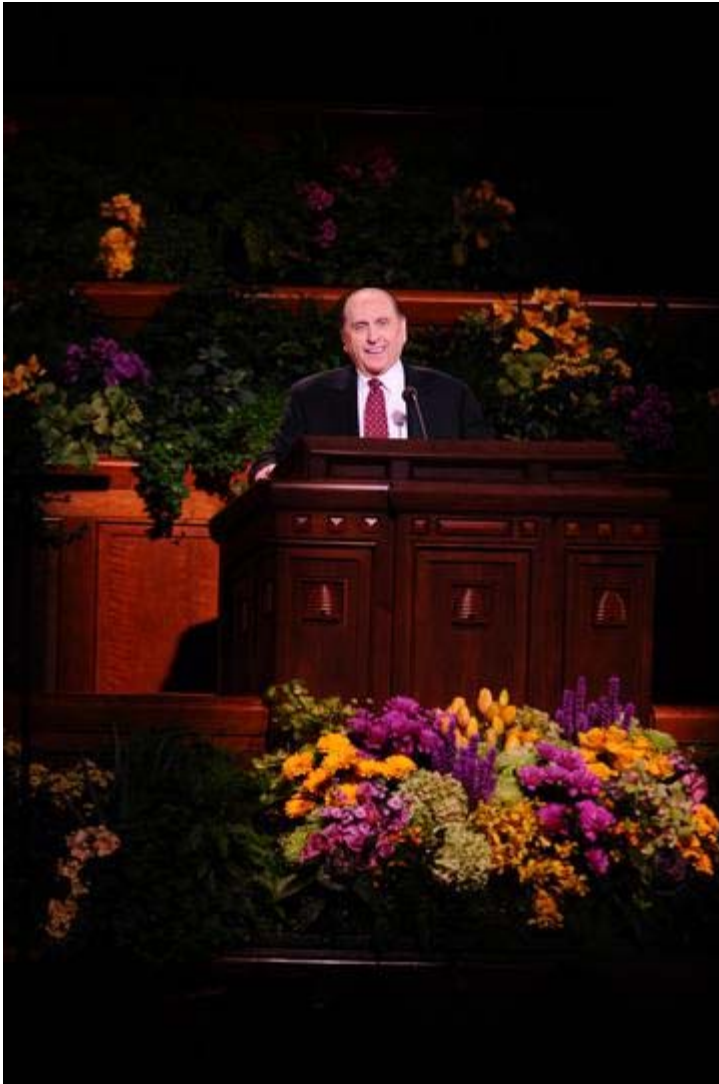


Religious freedom  
is the architecture  
that gives diverse  
beliefs space to  
coexist—the  
essence of  
democracy.

# Key Points

- Without religious freedom, all rights suffer.
- Applies to religious and nonreligious views.
- Fairness for All: It can't be selfish. To claim it for ourselves, we need to afford it to others.

# The Brethren Speak



**Elder Hales**, *Preserving Agency, Protecting Religious Freedom* (Apr. 2015)

**Elder Oaks**, *Loving Others and Living with Differences* (Oct. 2014)

**President Monson**, *Be Strong and of a Good Courage* (Apr. 2014)

**Elder Nelson**, *Let Your Faith Show* (Apr. 2014)

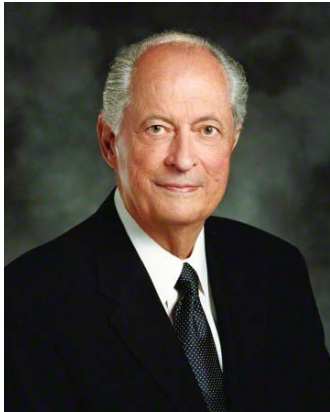
**Elder Holland**, *The Cost—and Blessings—of Discipleship* (Apr. 2014)

**Elder Oaks**, *No Other Gods* (Oct. 2013)

**Elder Hales**, *Stand Strong in Holy Places* (Oct. 2013)

**Elder Cook**, *Lamentations of Jeremiah: Beware of Bondage* (Oct. 2013)

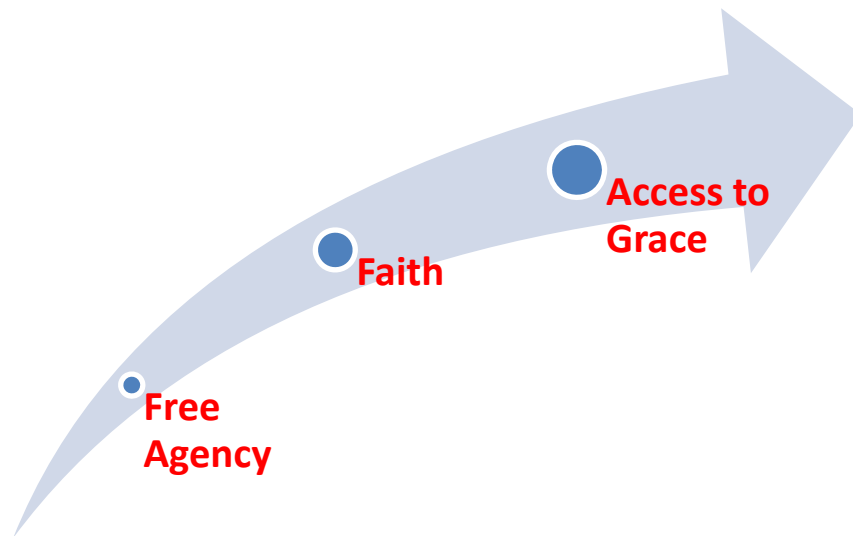
**Elder Cook**, *Let There Be Light!* (October 2010)



Elder Robert D.  
Hales

General Conference  
April 2015

“[Religious Freedom] is essential to our spiritual life and our very salvation. ... Brothers and sisters, we are responsible to safeguard these sacred freedoms and rights for ourselves and our posterity.”



“Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct that life is God’s greatest gift to man.”  
Pres. Monson (Oct. 2010)



Church Holds News Conference

# Mormon Leaders Call for Laws That Protect Religious Freedom





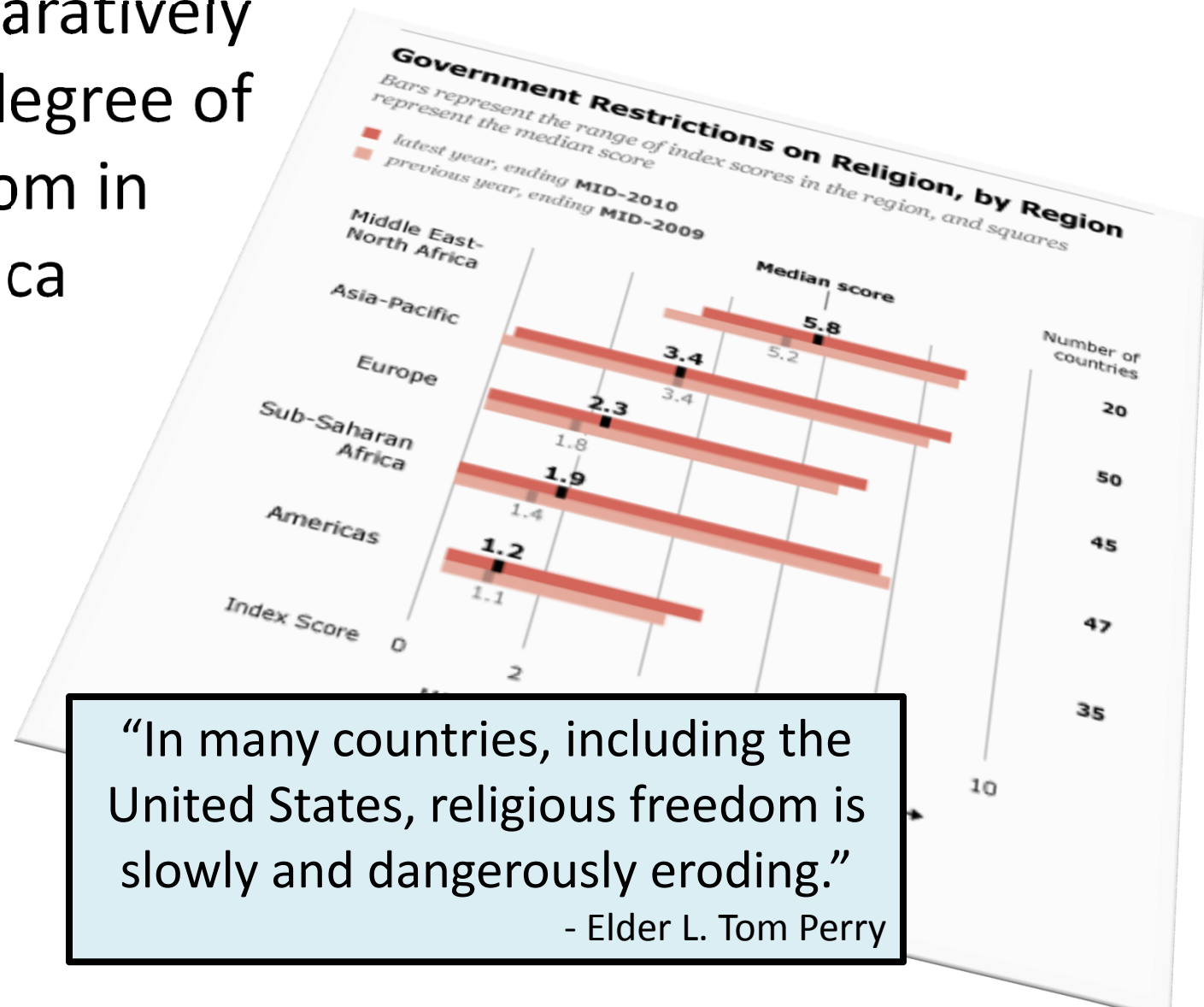
“We believe that religion is instituted of God; and that men are amenable to him, and to him only, for the exercise of it, unless their religious opinions prompt them to infringe upon the rights and liberties of others; but we do not believe that human law has a right to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men, nor dictate forms for public or private devotion; that the civil magistrate should restrain crime, but never control conscience; should punish guilt, but never suppress the freedom of the soul.”

Doctrine & Covenants 134:4

- [Video omitted pending copyright approval from the Church. For a longer version of the same video, see <http://www.mormonnewsroom.org/official-statement/religious-freedom>]

# Top Religious Freedom Threats in North America

- Comparatively high degree of freedom in America



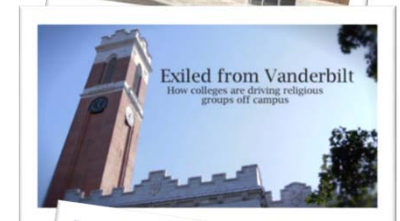
# For Individuals...

- **FREE EXPRESSION:** Will religious viewpoints be suppressed in the public square and other places where people live out their lives?
- **PARENTS TEACHING CHILDREN:** Will parents of school children be able to ensure that their religious values aren't undermined through classroom instruction or intimidation?
- **THE WORKPLACE:** Will employees be able to maintain their religious identity in the workplace and be reasonably accommodated when work and religious duties conflict?



# For Individuals ...

- **PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS:** Will professionals lose or be denied licensing for expressing religious views or declining to provide services that are available elsewhere but that are at odds with their beliefs?
- **SMALL BUSINESSES:** Will family and religiously oriented businesses be able to maintain their values in the face of anti-discrimination laws?
- **COLLEGE CAMPUSES:** Will campus student groups be able to select their own leaders or express a religious message?
- **FREEDOM FROM RETALIATION:** Will those who voice beliefs be retaliated against?



# For Churches ...

- **RELIGIOUS EMPLOYMENT:** Will churches continue to have the right to employ people that affirm and live the church's beliefs? Will they be forced to provide employment benefits that contradict their beliefs?
- **PRIVATE PROPERTY:** Will churches be able to build and maintain houses of worship and other facilities? Will they be able to preserve their religiously important properties for activities that are consistent with their religious beliefs?
- **TAX EXEMPT STATUS:** Will churches and schools that affirm the traditional definition of marriage lose their tax-exempt status? Will donors' contributions be tax deductible?

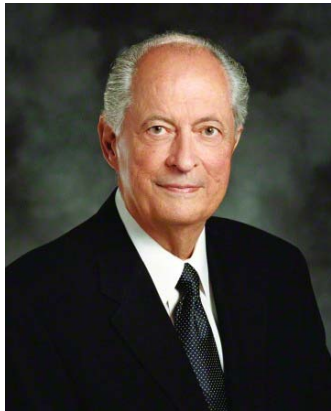
A photograph of a tax form titled "990-T Exempt Organization Bu (and proxy tax und)". The form is from the Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service. It includes sections for "Check box 1", "Check box 2", "Check box 3", "Check box 4", "Check box 5", "Check box 6", "Check box 7", "Check box 8", "Check box 9", "Check box 10", "Check box 11", "Check box 12", "Check box 13", "Check box 14", "Check box 15", "Check box 16", "Check box 17", "Check box 18", "Check box 19", "Check box 20", "Check box 21", "Check box 22", "Check box 23", "Check box 24", "Check box 25", "Check box 26", "Check box 27", "Check box 28", "Check box 29", "Check box 30", "Check box 31", "Check box 32", "Check box 33", "Check box 34", "Check box 35", "Check box 36", "Check box 37", "Check box 38", "Check box 39", "Check box 40", "Check box 41", "Check box 42", "Check box 43", "Check box 44", "Check box 45", "Check box 46", "Check box 47", "Check box 48", "Check box 49", "Check box 50", "Check box 51", "Check box 52", "Check box 53", "Check box 54", "Check box 55", "Check box 56", "Check box 57", "Check box 58", "Check box 59", "Check box 60", "Check box 61", "Check box 62", "Check box 63", "Check box 64", "Check box 65", "Check box 66", "Check box 67", "Check box 68", "Check box 69", "Check box 70", "Check box 71", "Check box 72", "Check box 73", "Check box 74", "Check box 75", "Check box 76", "Check box 77", "Check box 78", "Check box 79", "Check box 80", "Check box 81", "Check box 82", "Check box 83", "Check box 84", "Check box 85", "Check box 86", "Check box 87", "Check box 88", "Check box 89", "Check box 90", "Check box 91", "Check box 92", "Check box 93", "Check box 94", "Check box 95", "Check box 96", "Check box 97", "Check box 98", "Check box 99", "Check box 100".

# For Churches ...

- **ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT RESOURCES:** Will religious organizations be able to participate on equal terms with other non-profit organizations in government programs and the use of government facilities and properties?
- **RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS:** Will religious schools be able to maintain their religious values and standards while also retaining their accreditation and the ability to participate in federal educational and research programs?







Elder Robert D.  
Hales  
General Conference  
April 2015

“Don’t walk! Run! Run to receive the blessings of agency by following the Holy Ghost and exercising the freedoms God has given us to do His will.”

- “become informed,”
- “join with others,”
- “work side by side to protect religious freedom,” and
- be examples.

“I expect to see the day when the elders in Israel will **protect and sustain civil and religious liberty and every constitutional right bequeathed to us by our fathers, and spread these rights abroad in connection with the gospel for the salvation of all nations.** I shall see this whether I live or die.”

— President Brigham Young

“There is a battle over the meaning of [religious] freedom. The contest is of eternal importance, and it is **your generation** that must understand the issues and make the efforts to prevail.”

— Elder Dallin H. Oaks (Oct. 2009, BYU Idaho)

**Questions?**