

Dialogue and Alliance

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Assembly of the World's Religions



Photo date and location unknown

Honorable chairman, scholars and leaders from religions around the world, ladies and gentlemen:

I welcome you from the bottom of my heart to the Assembly of the World's Religions. Our gathering here is not an ordinary event. It is itself a great accomplishment that we, from eighty-five countries and with such a diversity of religions, cultures, traditions and nationalities, can come together to open our minds, to harmonize with each other, and to share our concerns about the future of humankind. I am sure that God also is delighted with this historic event.

Humankind has yearned for eternal true love, happiness and peace

We come from different religious backgrounds. Our answers to the fundamental problems of human existence are not identical. Our understandings of the causes of human suffering do not have the same frame of reference. Our ways of seeking world peace are diverse. Yet we still have common ground. All of us try to solve problems in the context of our relations with the Ultimate.

Throughout East and West, North and South, people living in the situation of sin, disbelief and confusion have yearned for love, happiness and peace that are true and eternal. They have been making every effort to overcome the temptations that entice their evil desires and, by following their good desires, to find the happiness with which their original mind will rejoice. Although human experience throughout history cautions us that pursuit of such ideals is rarely successful, people's original minds are not likely to give up. All humankind, irrespective of its diversity of nationalities and traditions, pursues this ultimate goal.

If we human beings are not able to fulfill such a purpose by our own effort, then we can depend only on the eternal, true, Absolute Being beyond ourselves. We know that we are finite beings. Since we cannot determine our own destinies, we are bound to depend on the Absolute to whom we ascribe supreme power. We believe that since there is an Absolute Being who wills true love, peace and happiness, all these things can surely be realized only with Him. We need to know more about this Absolute, the source of the ideals that humanity is seeking.

I have become familiar with the content of the spirit world through my own spiritual experiences and through deep communication with the Absolute. I have learned about God's Will, love and heart. Religion is not merely truth or ethical teaching; it is rooted in people's original impulse to find that which they can absolutely depend upon and relate with.

True religious intuition meets the Absolute and the Infinite. Through this intuition, we can hear God's call to each of us. Such a state of original communion with the Absolute transcends any particular religious system or form. Only in this state do humans reach perfection and happiness. This God-human relationship is one and universal. Because the transcendental power is one, and humanity's capacity to enter into the relationship that it offers is universal, the ultimate goal of human beings cannot be more than one. The goal of an individual is one. The goal of a family consisting of such ideal individuals is one. The goal of the ideal nation and world is one. All ways run toward God's ideal world of love, happiness and peace. The ideal of love, happiness and peace is not possible for an individual in isolation. It can be found only in relationship with another. Even the Absolute Being cannot fulfill the ideal without relationship.

The ultimate goal of religion is to construct the ideal world of peace

If God is alone, who is there for God to love? In what is God to find His ideal? In this light, we can understand God's motive for creation. God created humanity in order that He might realize His ideal and fulfill His love. Only in human life in the world can God realize ideals such as love, happiness and peace.

In this sense, how precious is the original human being! Human beings are not on the same level as God. However, God and human beings are supposed to be in a relationship and ultimately are to become one. In other words, God and human beings are in a parent-child relationship. Just as God is eternal and absolute, human beings also become beings of absolute and eternal value as the children of God.

Furthermore, human beings are object partners for the realization of God's ideal. God's eternal and absolute Will is consummated where He becomes completely one with humanity. Thus, the purpose of human life is also absolute and eternal.

God is eternal, unchanging and absolute. God's purpose of creation was also eternal, unchanging and absolute, and was to found one ideal world, united through one purpose. Today's world of sin, conflict and disbelief came into being because humanity fell from the original way. God has worked through the world's religions to restore fallen humanity to its original state. The salvation of fallen humanity will be completed by God's providence through the Messiah.

As God's purpose of creation is absolute, the purpose of God's restoration providence absolutely must also be fulfilled. We cannot leave the messianic hope of an ideal world only as a vague dream. We need to make it a substantial reality in our lives. Likewise, the purpose of all religions is to realize God's Will in our daily life on earth. For the purpose of the whole providence, God has been broadening the foundation of goodness through many religions, each appropriate for its own age, people and environment. However, the ultimate purpose of all these religions is only to realize God's Will, that is, the ideal world of peace and happiness. Religions need to be concerned with God's Will for world salvation more than with the salvation of the individual or the welfare of their own denomination. I think that now is the time for all religious bodies together to search again for the true Will of God.

As far as I know, God is not sectarian. He is not obsessed with minor details of doctrine. We have to liberate ourselves quickly from the theological conflict that results from blind attachment to doctrines and rituals, and instead focus on living communication with God. I think we urgently need to purify the religious atmosphere into one in which believers can have living faith and every soul can communicate with God. In God's parental heart and His great love, there is no discrimination based on color or nationality. There are no barriers between countries or cultural traditions, between East and West, North and South. Today God is trying to embrace the whole of humankind as His children. Through interreligious dialogue and harmony, we need to realize one ideal world of peace, which is God's purpose of creation and the common ideal of humankind.

An interreligious movement and practical service

Respected representatives of the world's religions, when we take an honest look at reality today, we come to see that it is time not only for belief but for action as well. Why do we find such serious problems prevailing in our societies, problems including confusion in value systems, moral corruption, drug addiction, terrorism, racial discrimination, genocide, war, unjust distribution of wealth, disregard for human rights, and totalitarian communism? These vices are the natural outcome of hedonism, atheistic materialism and secular humanism that deny the relevance of God. All these are the effects of the declining faith and the spiritual exhaustion of this generation.

Who can take responsibility for today's world? Can the military or the politicians? Can businessmen or people with new technologies? Never. God is asking religious leaders, today's prophets and priests, to solve these problems.

All religious people must feel responsible for the shaky spiritual foundation of this generation and repent.

Throughout the long history of religion, we have not been a convincing witness for our living God. We have not been sincere in the practice of love. Our past hypocrisy has allowed atheism to prevail. We ought to feel deeply responsible for this.

Today God is calling us. All religious people, standing on the internal foundation of deep self-reflection, must challenge the prevalence of all evils and work creatively in order to realize God's Will on earth. The living God does not want to relate with us merely in the context of scriptures and rituals. Instead, God hopes to dwell in the hearts of people who keep God's Will in their minds and live it in everyday life.

After long prayers and reflections on the future of the world and humankind, I have begun to feel that God's enthusiastic hope and the Holy Spirit's strong power are sweeping through the whole world. Today the world has to be renewed. Religious leaders all throughout the world must join together and encourage a movement of purification in every religion.

There needs to be repentance and the renewal of true commitment. The world must change! There needs to be a new Reformation! The banners of "living faith" and "practical faith" ought to be waving everywhere around the world. Every religion must work beyond consideration of its own benefit to liberate the world from poverty and disease. By the practice of love and the burning conviction of faith, our witness will convince even atheists of the truth of the living God. Only through a religious and spiritual revolution bringing great harmony, love and compassion will we finally realize the ideal world of peace.

The value of harmony between religious denominations

Respected representatives! In response to God's sublime call, the world's religious bodies have to emerge from the quagmire of hostility, misunderstanding and ignorance. With mutual respect and friendship they need to build a large, cooperative community of religions. Then together, we will be able to show our religious will in action and practice everywhere on this planet.

Religion is not merely oriented to the world beyond. The earth is God's creation, and it is on this earth that God's Will is to be realized. If the kingdom of heaven, or as Buddhists say, *Sukhavati*, is God's ideal place, we cannot go there merely by hoping. Rather we ought to live for, love and care for our brothers and sisters and the things of creation. It is through relationships with others that we can realize the ideal.

Even though religion transcends ordinary social ethics and social policy, we cannot ignore its function in society. Religious people ought to be concerned with actual problems and apply God's Will to their practical solution. Moreover, religions need to stimulate spiritual renewal and give an elevated value perspective to those in charge of politics, the economy, social programs and education. People can solve the problems in their fields only when the Holy Spirit enlightens their minds. God is calling for religious people with living spirituality to uphold the truth of religion and to relate it to the situations in their societies. People who are grounded in truth and in living communication with God are bound to influence others and bring about a revival of spirituality everywhere. True religions do not follow the trends of the secular world. Emphasizing God's Will, they enlighten the world and lead the people, even in the face of opposition and persecution.

The movement for interreligious harmony and unity, and for living faith, may go through a lonely path for some time, but it will soon receive tremendous support from many fresh-minded people who see things from a historical and global perspective.

I have been putting all my energy into reforming the world and realizing God's ideal on earth in accordance with the direction of God's providence. I have been mobilizing the total energy of the Unification Church to work first of all for world peace through interreligious harmony. I sincerely hope your religions also actively cooperate and join in this path, not because I want to reduce my effort or spare the financial resources of the Unification Church, but because I hope to see as early as possible a total mobilization of spiritual resources and creativity from all religious traditions in the direction of God's providence. This path will lead to the realization of the world of peace.

The Assembly of World's Religions will achieve the realization of God's Will on earth

As you may know, the Assembly of the World's Religions is a project with historic significance. While even the secular world is seeking harmony through the United Nations and similar organizations, how can religious bodies fight each other? I have long been expecting certain leaders of the elder religions to initiate an assembly of the world's religions. After a long period of waiting, I have initiated this project because I believe it must be done at all costs. While this first event itself is a meaningful accomplishment, the Assembly will, I hope, become increasingly significant with each successive meeting.

I have three hopes for this Assembly. First, world religious traditions must respect each other and at least work to keep in check any interreligious conflicts and wars. Second, the Assembly will hopefully serve

the world by becoming a cooperative community of religions. It will hopefully agree upon and make resolutions calling religious people to practical action, encouraging all people to live by God-centered values, and fostering the development of the human mind and spirit. Third, the Assembly needs, I believe, to develop into an organization in which the major leadership of all religions participate. The Assembly needs to lift up the highest values and purposes of life and offer them to all religious people, all groups and all nations. Only in communion with the Absolute and with love for one another can individuals, groups and nations prepare for and become a part of the kingdom of God on earth.

I hope all of you, as representatives of your religions, find spiritual unity that can be the foundation for a bright future and for a new religious reformation that can lead the world. Through presentations and discussions, during plenary sessions or in committee meetings, in artistic performance, meditation and prayer, please respect each other's faiths and contribute as much as possible to the harmony of the whole. Let us all march forward to fulfill the world-historical mission of religions: the realization of God's Will on earth.

I thank all members of the Planning Committee for their efforts in planning and preparation and all the staff serving the Assembly's practical needs for their hard work.

May God bless this historic conference and each of you representatives.