

The Ultimate Purpose of Twenty-first-Century Religion (2)

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Photo date and location unknown

The twentieth century was a time of tremendous change. Most happened in that hundred-year period than during the past two thousand years. It was the century when there were two world wars and when communism rose to great strength and then disappeared. It was also the century when humanity turned its back to God and buried itself in material things. What about the twenty-first century, then? Some say that advances in science have proven that many religious beliefs are mere superstition and irrelevant to the modern world. I contend, however, that role of religion will always be relevant as long as the spiritual aspect of human beings remains a reality and a world of peace has not been established.

What is the purpose of religion? It is to bring about God's ideal world. The reason religions evangelize is because they desire to increase the number of citizens under God's sovereignty. If everyone were to live under God's sovereignty, we would have a world of peace where there would be no war or division. The ultimate destination of the path followed by religions should be peace.

God created this world out of a desire for love and peace. If we create division by insisting that our own religion is the only path to salvation, we go against God's desire. God wants everyone in the world to work hard for peace, reconciliation, and coexistence. If people say that coming to church create division in their family, then I do not hesitate to tell them that they should put their family first. Religion is only a mean to bring about God's perfect world; it is not an end in itself.

Humankind's destiny is to bring together all points of view that are now divided against each other. The philosophy that will lead humanity in the future must be able to bring together all religions and philosophies. The days have ended when one country stands at the forefront and leads the humanity. The era of nationalism has also ended.

If we continue the era of people congregating only by religion or race, then humanity cannot avoid a repetition of war. The age of peace absolutely cannot come unless we transcend cultural customs and traditions. No ideology, philosophy, or religion that has influenced humanity in the past is capable of bringing about peace and unification that is needed for the future. We need a new ideology and philosophy that goes beyond Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. For my entire life, I have called on people until my voice is hoarse to transcend their religious factions and even religions.

There are more than two hundred countries in the world, and each has its own national borders. A border separates one country from another, but countries separated by borders cannot endure eternally. Only religion can overcome national borders. However, religions that should be bringing people together have instead divided themselves into many factions that are busy fighting each other. They have fallen into a selfish thought process that puts their religion or faction first. They are oblivious to the fact that the world has changed and a new era of selflessness has dawned.

It will not be easy to tear down the religious walls that have stood for thousands of years, but these walls must come down if we are to advance into a world of peace. Religions and their factions must stop their meaningless fighting, find a middle ground for their differing opinions, and develop concrete ways to advance the world of peace. For humanity to be happy in the future, material affluence alone will not be sufficient. It is urgent that struggles of modern ideologies, cultures, and races be overcome through interreligious understanding and spiritual harmony.

All my life I have made the following appeals to the wide variety of religious people I have met around the world. First, respect the traditions of other religions and do everything you can to prevent conflict and discord among religions. Second, all religious communities should cooperate with each other to serve the world. Third, the leaders of all religions should work together to develop a structure that will let us accomplish our mutual mission of establishing world peace.

The right eye is there for the left eye, and the left eye for the sake of the right. The two eyes together exist for the sake of the whole body. The same can be said for every other part of the body. Nothing exists for its own sake. Religion, too, does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of love and peace. Once world peace is accomplished, there will be no further need for religion. The ultimate purpose of religion is to bring about the reality of a human community filled with love and peace. This is God's Will.