

Media Standards and Journalistic Accountability

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Tenth World Media Conference

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Photo date and location unknown

Distinguished chairman, esteemed guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the tenth World Media Conference, in Washington, DC.

It was reported to me that the participants and speaker selection this year are by far the most distinguished in the history of the conference. I am delighted to meet you all, many of you for the first time. I hope you are as happy to see me as I am to see you.

As you all know, I am primarily a religious leader. And yet my work has not been limited to the field of religion. I have a tremendous interest in the media. Since 1975, I have created many newspapers and publishing enterprises in different parts of the world. In 1975, I established a daily newspaper, *Sekai Nippo*, in Tokyo. In 1976, I founded *The News World* (later renamed the *New York City Tribune*), in New York. I have started a chain of Spanish-language dailies, called *Noticias del Mundo*, in several major cities of the United States. In 1981, I began the daily *Ultimas Noticias* in Montevideo, Uruguay. In the Middle East, I started *The Middle East Times*.

But I am best known as the person who provided the alternative voice in Washington, DC, the nation's capital. After the demise of the 128-year-old *Washington Star*, the city was left with only one newspaper.

The Washington Times in less than seven years has become a respected newspaper and has won many awards for design and editorial content. It is recognized by the Associated Press as one of the three most-quoted newspapers in the United States, *The Washington Times* Corporation also publishes a weekly news magazine, *Insight*, and a monthly academic journal, *The World and I*. Furthermore, I have just returned from Korea, where we launched a new major daily newspaper, *The Segye Times*, which has achieved a circulation in excess of 1 million in less than two months. In addition to these publications, in 1978 I founded the World Media Association to explore issues related to media ethics and responsibility.

The question arises, why does a religious leader expend so much effort and resources in media enterprises? My reason is quite simple. It is because I recognize the power of the media. The latter half of the twentieth century is an age dominated by communication. The electronic and print media are the most powerful and influential means of communication the world has ever known.

In a world of conflict and differing ideologies, the media play a large role in determining whether we live in peace or at war. My ultimate goal and desire is to achieve lasting world peace -- a peace based upon a system of true values. The achievement of this goal is far more likely to be determined by the work of the media than by military might. So perhaps it is accurate to say that this room contains the most powerful people on the face of the earth -- those who have the power to shape, for better or worse, the future of humankind.

In spite of the media's great power, most free nations have very few laws governing the conduct of the media -- in contrast to the great majority of professions in the world. Given this situation, when one considers the tremendous power wielded by the free press, it is clear that media professionals must continuously exercise their own powers of self-examination. We created the World Media Association as a forum for that self-examination. Our purpose is to promote the free press wherever freedom of expression does not exist and to promote responsible exercise of the media where the free press is already established.

Freedom is one of the most precious gifts of God to humanity. Human beings are created to be free -- and also to be responsible for how we use our freedom. To use freedom properly requires self-discipline and self-control based on a fundamental understanding of right and wrong. When asked to define right and wrong, the answer is often given that anything is acceptable as long as it causes no one any harm. But clearly, even to determine what constitutes harm requires an absolute standard -- a standard that must derive from the purpose of life itself.

God, being the Creator, has already determined the purpose of human life. We realize our spiritual well-being as we accomplish our life's purpose in accordance with the moral laws established by God. When we violate these principles, we invite self-destruction, just as we do when we violate the laws of nature. I say this because, before one is a journalist or a scholar or a clergyman, or even a husband or wife, each person is a child of God. We are the sons and daughters of our Creator. This is where our sacred nature and unique human dignity originate. The first responsibility of a human being is to exercise freedom to preserve our God-given value. In order to do this, we must live in accord with basic moral principles given by God.

America is a nation that has put a high value on individual liberties. Americans and anyone living in America may worship as they wish, assemble at will and print or speak just about anything. At the same time, the American founding fathers stressed the concept of self-government. In America today, we find an abundance of freedom but a shortage of self-government.

Certainly the media must be free and self-governing. But self-governing media must also be moral media.

What do we mean by moral media? Moral media use their freedom to protect, preserve and promote God-given human rights and dignity. The preservation of human rights and human dignity must be the standard of all ethics and morality.

Therefore, the media has to stand at the very forefront in the defense of human dignity and freedom and in opposition to all forms of injustice. Doing this is the best possible way to cultivate world peace. The media has to lead the fight against all forms of oppression. Furthermore, in the service of morality, the media needs to oppose corruption and racism and vindicate the unjustly accused. Moral media must lead the fight against drug abuse, pornography and many other destructive vices of our society. Thus the media has to become the conscience of society.

At this year's conference, we have two firsts: delegations of journalists from the Soviet Union and from the People's Republic of China. We are very pleased to welcome you. The communist world is rapidly changing. I encourage the new policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and the reforms being enacted in China. The media of both countries are playing a leading role in these changes. The World Media Association, in its commitment to free and open discussion, is happy to serve as a forum with your participation.

Both the democratic and communist worlds are searching for solutions to the problems of corruption, greed and exploitation. And both worlds are still far from achieving the ideal. As I see it, there are fundamental problems with both societies. They are both excluding God from their search for solutions. God has been forgotten.

Forsaking God is the most serious problem of this century. When you forsake God, either in the name of totalitarianism or a godless secularism, the result will be the same: self-destruction. Both East and West are struggling with this fundamental issue.

As I said, I founded the World Media Association to promote free expression in the media wherever it is suppressed and to encourage a responsible media wherever freedom of the press already exists. Furthermore, I founded this important organization to promote the spirit of truth so all media professionals can become uncompromising champions of truth. We have held this conference almost annually and have organized numerous fact-finding tours for media professionals to important areas all over the world, including the Soviet Union, China, South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Cambodia and Central American countries.

These tours are searches for truth, giving journalists an opportunity to experience the world firsthand. As an excellent old saying goes, "Seeing is believing." Journalists must always have their finger on the pulse of the world in order to report accurately. The work we will undertake in these next few days is important -- an examination of the performance of free and moral media.

Finally, I am sure you have seen many stories about me on television and in your own newspapers. You might even agree that some of the more exciting stories about Rev. Moon have helped sell more newspapers or bring a bigger audience to your newscasts. So, since I have helped you all these years, I would now like to ask you for one favor: find out what I am teaching and what kind of life I am living. Conduct your own open-minded and thorough investigation, and draw your own conclusions. This conference is a good place to begin.

I hope you will enjoy your stay in Washington and will enjoy the conference.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless you.