

Media in the Twenty-first Century: Focus, Roles and Responsibilities

Sun Myung Moon
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Photo date and location unknown

Honorable chairman, Dr. Paul Johnson, distinguished speakers, conference participants, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to extend my deep appreciation and welcome to all of you who have come from many different countries to attend the thirteenth World Media Conference, part of the World Culture and Sports Festival, here in Seoul, Korea.

I think this conference is both meaningful and timely, as it has as its main theme, "The Responsibility and Role of the Media." In only five years, the world will enter the new age of the twenty-first century. As we usher in the third millennium, we need to understand it as a historic turning point.

An era emphasizing the role and responsibility of the media

Throughout history, people have been striving to make their lives more comfortable through improving material conditions and seeking to create the best social system. However, the more people enjoy freedom and comfort, the more aware they become that these external developments are not sufficient. We need a new spiritual awakening. This is the time for humanity to turn its attention to discovering the fundamental value of human life and pursuing a new and deeper dimension of living.

Our era has been one in which the media's role and responsibility have become highly significant in the following respects: First, as democracy has expanded throughout the world, freedom of the press has continuously grown as well. In the modern political system, which elects its leadership through the democratic process, the media's role and influence are great, since organs of the media relate directly to the public at large.

Second, communications technologies that convey information throughout the world have become highly developed. Electronic and print media, especially, have developed technologies that allow far-reaching communication instantaneously. For example, communications satellites and the Internet, which connect all the countries in a global village, permit any individual's idea, whether right or wrong, to be conveyed to everyone in the world. This free, high-tech environment creates countless channels for today's media to influence public opinion.

Consider the impact on the political arena. The media at times can create an environment of public opinion in which a government can either be highly respected or be put in such a difficult position that it

can collapse. Also, media can lead a society to maintain a high level of moral standards or mislead it into moral confusion and chaos.

Furthermore, consider the viewpoint that history is not an objective record but is a selective record of historical facts. In this light, the media, more than any other human endeavor as we enter into this historical transition period, has a significant responsibility to record the day-to-day facts of history objectively, as they occur. From this viewpoint, the media absolutely cannot separate its role and responsibility from its historical context. The media needs to conduct its various functions, ranging from factual reporting to review and criticism, based upon the proper understanding of the direction of history and our historical responsibility.

As a religious leader, I believe there is a definite direction behind human history. God created humankind and He has been seeking throughout history to accomplish His providential Will and purpose. Therefore you, as journalists who are recording the facts of history, need to clearly understand God's providential Will and align with this understanding as you record history.

Honorable journalists, in this half-century following the end of World War II, the media's role and responsibility have come to the forefront. During this time, the media's first task was to expose the false doctrine and strategy of communism and awaken the free world to this threat. During this time period, however, most media practitioners were confused by a very liberal viewpoint. The fact that Washington, DC., the capital of the leading nation of the free world, had only the liberal viewpoint represented, led me, thirteen years ago, to make the very serious and important determination to create *The Washington Times*.

Since that time, I invested my entire heart, spirit and effort to overcome communism. As a leader of conservative journalism, I have borne enormous financial burden and prevailed against false accusations and persecution. I have even been called a false religious leader and suffered imprisonment in America over trumped-up tax charges. But the force of worldly concerns cannot overcome God's Will. I'd like to praise *The Washington Times* highly for its decisive contribution to the collapse of communism and the protection of global freedom. I believe *The Washington Times* will be honored throughout history for this contribution.

The media should take the lead in uniting the world

In the past half-century, the media had another mission: to restore fundamental values and construct a moral society. In 1991, when the Cold War ended and the tension subsided between East and West, we all expected a period of peace. But in fact, since the Cold War ended, social conflict and instability have increased. In America, for example, sexual immorality in the form of free sex and homosexuality is threatening to destroy the family.

An increasing divorce rate is putting more and more young people on the street. These children tend to get into drugs and criminality. For too many it is a path to suicide. In fact, the teen suicide rate has doubled over the past thirty years. Sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS have their origins in a corrupt social life. Some states in America and countries in Europe have legalized homosexual marriages. We take seriously warnings from ecologists and environmentalists about the potential extinction of certain plants and animals, but the phenomenon of the destruction of the human species is not taken seriously. We have given little thought to ways of preventing the extinction of our society.

We are well aware that these problems are not limited to one area of the world. Further, this moral destruction is a crisis not only for us humans but also for God. Love, which is the most precious element of human life, is losing its foundation in the family. And as the family is destroyed, the very foundation upon which God's love stands is also collapsing.

For this reason I emphasized the necessity of True Family Values at the celebration of the tenth anniversary of *The Washington Times*, and strongly urged the paper to focus on restoring the fundamental value of the human being. This advice was not intended only for *The Washington Times*; this was God's revelation given to all the world's journalists and leaders. *The Washington Times* is standing on the frontline to save America and the world by acclaiming and supporting, more than anything else, the need for a restoration of true families and a reconstruction of moral life.

This is a new spiritual revolution, of which *The Washington Times* has become the standard-bearer in America. People everywhere in the world consider the role of family values a very important and serious issue. It is not just a matter of changing some social statistics; it impacts the areas of education, religion, culture, politics and economics.

When I established the World Media Association in 1978, my purpose was to support the effort to solve these fundamental problems by providing a forum for the discussion of media ethics and responsibility. So I would also like to emphasize that the media must be in the vanguard leading the world into unity.

Modern developments in transportation and communication have allowed people to overcome the obstacles preventing human interaction. It is as if the world has been shrunk to the size of a basketball. It sounds reasonable to call the world a global village. However, even though science and technology have eliminated the spatial obstacles, it is premature to call humanity one global family. We human beings ourselves keep many barriers of our own design in place.

Every day we receive news of racial and cultural wars in parts of Europe. It is no longer unusual to see long lines of refugees leaving their beloved homes, sadly crying over their lost families and struggling with pain and disease. Even in small geographical areas, war and conflict arise out of differences in race, religion, languages, culture, and political and economic systems. Millions and millions of people die of starvation and disease every year, and we have no solution.

How can we overcome the many barriers rooted in self-created, conflicting interests that keep us apart from each other? The solution is to inform humankind that we originally come from one root. Even though we appear to be different by race, culture, language and other aspects, the root of humanity is one, and that root is God. God's true love, true life and true lineage are the origin of all human beings. In front of God, we are all His children who can share our love together. All people are brothers and sisters having one origin.

The true family is the starting place of a truly peaceful world

Three days from now, on Friday morning, Mrs. Moon and I will conduct a worldwide holy wedding ceremony for 360,000 couples. The Blessing ceremony will be held in Seoul Olympic Stadium. This stadium is the largest facility in Korea, but can accommodate only one hundred thousand people. The other couples are gathering in major cities around the world to participate in this great event via satellite.

Since 1960, Mrs. Moon and I have blessed more than fifty thousand couples. So the holy wedding ceremony on Friday will be the largest by far. It is highly significant that so many people will gather in one place and, by transcending race, nationality, religion, culture and traditional customs, will bond together in this holy wedding. Marriage is the most meaningful event in a person's life. The fact that so many people have come together for this purpose proves that it is possible to have one shared view of human value respected by everyone, rooted in the fact that everyone wants to have a true family centering on the true love of God.

Although the couples may come from different racial and cultural backgrounds, when they unite as one family centering on the true love of God, there cannot be any racial or cultural conflict between the children. If your father is black and your mother is white, or if your father is Arab and your mother is Jewish, can you as a child have any prejudice against one race over the other, or one culture over the other? Surely you will love and wish to protect both cultures and traditions even more than you love your parents.

When we expect to solve worldwide racial conflict through political or economic means, the inevitable result is failure. Racial distinctiveness is evident from the cradle, so without the ideal of true family centering on true love, the fundamental solution to the problem of race will be impossible. Thus even though the size of this holy wedding is huge, the central idea is focused on the creation of each true family experiencing the true love of the one God.

My dear distinguished journalists, if man and woman had united with God from the beginning, they would have established true families centering on true love. Further, these families would have expanded to create a true nation and a true peaceful world by realizing true love, which is continually giving for the sake of others. However, Adam and Eve, our first human ancestors, fell and united with Satan.

Ever since, God and Satan have been fighting over humankind. Within ourselves, our mind is always directed toward God while our body is on Satan's side. Mind and body are always in conflict. Perhaps the world could have avoided World War I, World War II or the Cold War, but it cannot avoid the fight between mind and body. Conflict between mind and body has expanded throughout history from the individual to the family, society, nation and worldwide levels. In order to end the historical fighting, humankind has to return to God.

To do so, men and women have to form true families centering on God. They have to invite God back into their homes. A true family centering on true love will become the base on earth where God can dwell. This will become the starting point for the establishment of a true nation and a true, peaceful world. From this, the world of true freedom and true happiness will be opened.

Media people should be leaders in fulfilling their responsibility

Throughout history, humankind's earthly dream has been to realize the ideals of freedom and equality simultaneously. But pursuit of the ideal of freedom makes the realization of equality extremely difficult.

Similarly, under the banner of equality, the ideal of freedom has been limited in the extreme. This has been the lesson of history. However, neither ideal by itself can completely satisfy human desire. This is an ideological, fundamental contradiction that can be resolved only through the ideal of a true family centering on true love. Only by true love will true freedom be preserved. And only by true love will true equality be possible.

Therefore, we will realize a truly peaceful world of both freedom and equality only when we find God, the origin of love, and unite with Him. This fact ought to send a serious signal to atheists who claim there is neither a God nor a need for God. At this turning point in history, when the world is seeking a new dimension, it is extremely important for all journalists to emphasize God-centered values.

Today polls all over the world reveal a growing distrust of the media. This arises when practitioners of journalism and mass media stubbornly persist in thinking only of their narrow self-interest. They believe only they have the truth and fail to understand the value and importance of preserving the family and society. From this perspective, it is understandable that the public is critical of them. This implies that there is a big gap between the absolute standard of value humankind commonly recognizes and pursues, and the various perspectives typical of the media.

The true family centering on God's true love, in which there is mutual respect, needs to hold sway as an absolute standard of value shared by the media and society. The true and peaceful world pursued by humankind cannot be created from the top down, nor can it be created from the bottom up. Rather, centering on God, all individuals can form true families and live together with God. Then at last we can establish an eternally free and peaceful world.

Respected world journalism leaders: a new history is dawning. This is the time for God and humankind, who have been divided since history began, to meet together in this ideal of the true family. I hope that you journalists will become the pioneers in this precious, historic period and take a leading role and responsibility. The future will be the age of a common life, common prosperity and common righteousness. I expect all journalists to come into accord with God's Will, even ahead of others, and remain as historical victors. I hope this conference will be successful and most fruitful.

May God bless you and your families. Thank you very much.