

America and the World at a Turning Point: A Time for Leadership and Good Governance for the Sake of Peace

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Your Excellencies. Most Honorable Members of Congress, Ambassadors for Peace, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you for gathering here on Capitol Hill this evening for what I believe is a very significant event. It is my high privilege to address such a distinguished audience on behalf of the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace and its Founder, the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon.

The world situation at the present time is filled with both danger and opportunity. On the one hand, the shocking and tragic events of September 11, 2001 rudely awakened us from any illusion that the world is at peace in the post-Cold War era. It also made us very aware that we in America cannot understand our own security outside the framework of the international situation. Both global terrorism and nuclear proliferation are serious matters that threaten our security. Recent tensions in both the Middle East and the Korean peninsula evidence the dangers we face at this time.

But while we face profound challenges and threats, our time is also one in which we can hope for a brighter tomorrow for our children. Human history does not follow a course laid out by fate or total predestination, but, rather, human history unfolds according to the ideas and actions of human beings. When good people, who live according to wisdom and principle, act courageously and righteously, the course of history can be set on the correct path to peace and universal well-being. In this way, goodness and peace may prevail, where evil and tyranny might otherwise have ruled.

Within human history, even after decades and centuries of noble accomplishment, there can be no time of moral relaxation. Surely this principle applies at the present moment.

Historically, most civilizations have embraced worldviews that affirm a divine and guiding force in human history. This divine power does not seek to totally control the outcomes of human history, but does seek to fulfill the divine will. Here in America, we say "one nation under God." That is truly a beautiful and correct expression of God's ideal. But, God also seeks a unified world under God's blessing.

The ancient people of Israel, as recorded in the Torah, understood themselves to be a covenant community, called to live according to God's will and called to establish a God-centered nation. As the ultimate origin and source of all life and love, God's heart is not for the wellbeing of any single nation or people. God seeks universal joy, happiness and peace, through true love. At the same time, in order to achieve this ideal, God works his will through a particular individual, family, society, and nation, all for the sake of creating one harmonious world and cosmos of true love. Individuals and groups, even within God's providence of salvation, have their portion of responsibility. When we fall short or fail, we must repent.

Christianity emerged on the foundation of the first Israel and Judaism. It has its roots there. Unfortunately, owing to the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, along with the history of Christian antisemitism that followed, there has not been enough mutual respect, appreciation, and cooperation between Jews and Christians. This is one of history's tragic realities, a fact which has been harmful not only to Jews and Christians, but to the world. For, had Jews and Christians united and worked together, they could have done much more to help the entire world.

Christianity, building on the foundation of its roots, spread beyond the boundaries of ancient Israel. Moreover, through the early Pilgrims and the many devout Christian communities who came in search of religious freedom, and the opportunity to establish a "city upon a hill" or a "new Jerusalem," America was born with a religious vision at its center. As the representative and largely Christian nation, America stands in the position of a central nation in the providence of God, and one with a similar responsibility to the people of early Israel. That is, America inherited, as a largely Christian nation, the mission to receive and follow the Lord and, in turn, serve the world with true love.

Of course, American leadership in the world today is unquestioned. The recent display of force in both Afghanistan and Iraq, aimed at undermining both terrorism and tyranny, has made clear the military superiority of the United States. America's position and power, however, are rooted in deeper conditions and qualities. If America departs from its moral and spiritual foundation, and fails to serve the world with a heart of love and sacrifice for the sake of others, it cannot stand as a true "elder brother" to the world, a true "second Israel" in a covenanted relationship with God.

There are internal purposes related to the rise of America. Just as the first Israel understood its mission in relation to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, America, too, has been blessed by God in order that it may create a nation of goodness, and stand as an example of God's true love for all the world.

America's history in the 20th century is remarkable. In both World War I and World War II, America played a leading role. After World War I and World War II, these situations of global crisis gave rise to major peace initiatives such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. It was in the wake of World War II, with the full support and backing of the USA, that the United Nations was formed.

That is, after both World War I and World War II, America quickly moved from a display of its strength on the battlefield to a display of its strength in beating swords into ploughshares. If America is to be a God-centered nation, it must have a heart of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, even toward enemies. Even if war or conflict is unavoidable, in its aftermath, a nation that knows God's heart and the ways of God, will quickly work to establish peace and reconciliation.

While the founding of the United Nations is a part of American history, it remains necessary for more work to be done, both in terms of the renewal of America and in terms of the renewal of the United Nations. For, at this present time of crisis---at this "turning point" in history---we need to seriously examine our principles and practices of governance.

At the present time the world is uniquely poised for, and in need of strong, courageous, unselfish, and loving leadership coming from both the United States and the member states of the United Nations. It is for this reason that the IIFWP has proposed the establishment of an inter-religious council at the United Nations. In his address at the United Nations in 2000, IIFWP's Founder, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon stated that:

"The existing United Nations structure, composed of national representatives, may be regarded as a congress where the interests of each member state are represented. However, I submit that serious consideration should be given to forming a religious assembly, or council of religious representatives within the structure of the United Nations."

The United Nations, as currently structured, cannot fully benefit from the spiritual, moral and social vision that comes from religion. This situation weakens the United Nations as it seeks to carry out its most crucial mission. To correct this imbalance, the United Nations should develop a council of men and women who are uniquely and specially appointed to the task of representing universal, spiritual and moral principles that are related to the issues under consideration by the General Assembly. Many of these representatives can be religious leaders, and others may be lay professionals in various fields, but who are known for their spiritual wisdom and exemplary character. Some could be nominated for a position on the Council by United Nations member states and others by their religions. The selection process should be untainted by narrow or special interests, and, if necessary, the final selection should be carried out by a lottery system of some kind. The process should stand above any nationalistic or sectarian self-interest.

Dr. Moon, from Korea, a land where Christianity thrives, and a place where Rev. Moon's own worldview took shape, stands distant from the birthplace of the three Abrahamic faiths: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Yet, he understands God's heart and His providence. For this reason, for nearly thirty years, he has devoted himself to promoting peace in the Middle East, especially by encouraging dialogue, respect and cooperation among religious leaders and believers.

Traditionally and in part because of the closeness between Judaism and Christianity, America has a very close relationship to Israel. America also has a close relationship to Korea, and remains committed to South Korea's protection. Israel, America and Korea are in many ways at the center of the world's current crises. In this respect, America is looking both East and West as it considers its global responsibilities. It is not by accident that these three nations are at the center of the current world situation. These three nations have a significant place in God's providence at this time. They are each related in very significant ways to God's providence to establish an ideal nation and world of peace and goodness.

The De-Militarized Zone that stands between South and North Korea is symbol of the suffering caused by conflict and war. The pain and misery of that place is too deep to be fully comprehended. This situation should be reversed, and a place of war converted into a place of peace. The DMZ should become a peace zone that provides a model of peace, harmony and cooperation among people of all races, nations, religions and cultures, living together as one family. Rev. Moon and IIFWP have encouraged the UN to consider making the DMZ into a peace zone.

Both the United States and the United Nations need to address the critical tensions in the Middle East and Korea. In this regard, the United States and the United Nations should work closely together, for the sake of the world.

As America emerges from the recent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is in a unique position to draw upon its history of peace-making, compassion and unselfishness. The recent decision to strike Sadaam Hussein's regime in Iraq, taken without Security Council support, dealt a serious blow to the United Nations. In this sense the very nation that gave birth to the United Nations has threatened its relevance, if not its existence.

It is also most important that Americans are aware and sensitive to the views and feelings that many, many people around the world hold about America at the present time. Suffice to say that, fairly or unfairly, there is, in many places, a deep hurt, anger and resentment toward America and Americans. Of course, what is most important is not how you or I view this situation, but how God views this situation. Based on all we know of God, through the founders and the scriptures of our world's religions, God seeks peace and harmony. Thus, war is to be avoided. But, when it occurs, suffering must be minimized and the peace must be quickly restored.

At this time, the United States can take an unprecedented step toward world peace. While it continues its loyal support of both Israel and South Korea, it should show the world its global compassion and desire for justice. But more importantly, America should show the world its secret of success. That secret is not simply the freedom we value. Rather it lies in the religious and spiritual life of the people. The roots of America can be seen in the Pilgrim Fathers who sacrificed everything for their faith in God. They put God's will for the establishment of his Kingdom above their own comfort or desire. In particular, they remained open to God's providence. This same heart and commitment must be renewed in America today. For we stand at a turning point.

It is with this in mind that the IIFWP has been working since 1998 to share its vision and build support in every nation around the world for Rev. Moon's proposal to establish an inter-religious council at the United Nations. Recently, the Republic of the Philippines has indicated that it is preparing to submit a formal resolution to the 58th General Assembly of the United Nations this September 2003, advocating the establishment of an inter-religious council at the United Nations. I hope that the United States, and many of you will support this very important initiative. The time is right and the need is great. There is too much at stake to allow for delay. This is an historic moment a turning point.

Truly, if America takes a stand to support this initiative it will be making a significant step, demonstrating its true spirit and character as the leading nation of peace. In this way, it can stand as a loving elder brother to the nations of the world.

God's desire is much broader than for "one nation under God." God's eternal longing is for one worldwide family of true love, where all children live together in mutual respect, harmony and cooperation: one world under God. The era of inter-religious conflict and disharmony must come to an end, just as the quarrels among nations must come to an end. In this respect, all religions and all nations should repent for past mistakes, and make a new determination for peace. It is precisely through the establishment of an inter-religious council at the United Nations that the entire world can show its resolve in starting a new history of peace, and ending the suffering caused by war, disease, poverty.

America, together with the United Nations, can lead the way to a new era centered on God's will for a unified cosmos of universal true love and joy. In God's ideal, wealth, technology, and quality of life should be enjoyed by all his children. There should be no discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, geographical location, etc.

In order to realize this ideal, an institution such as the United Nations is essential. As technology, communications, transportation, and international trade develop, unification will occur more and more around the world. We see evidence of this in the increasing tendency toward regional cooperation, for example, in the development of the European Union. This trend will continue. It is unrealistic for developed nations to think they can continue to prosper in isolation from teeming masses that suffer from disease, famine and poverty. The United Nations can be the instrument to facilitate this change. However, and this is so very important, any institution dedicated to peace and global governance, such as the United Nations, must inherit the vision, heart and love of God if it is to successfully carry out its mission. Hence, the inter-religious council is imperative at this time in history.

We are at a turning point in history. Let us work together for peace. Let us work together to fulfill God's will for America and the world, and let us work together to establish an inter-religious council at the United Nations. In this way we can solve the world's most critical global problems, and end the suffering of millions around the world.

Thank you. May God bless you and your families. May God bless America, and may God bless the world.