

Absolute Value Perspective

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Photo date and location unknown

Distinguished chairman, eminent scholars, ladies and gentlemen:

We have now come to meet for our eleventh International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences in the historic city of Philadelphia. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our chairman, Dr. Morton Kaplan, to the committee chairmen and group chairmen, to the International Cultural Foundation secretariat, and to all you distinguished professors and other ladies and gentlemen who bring your insights to this conference.

The world in chaos and the need for an absolute truth

If we are to characterize today's world in one phrase, we can say that it is a world of enormous confusion. Whether we look to the Orient or the Occident, the North or the South, the advanced world or the developing world, all societies are filled with contradiction, injustice and corruption. There is endless repetition of conflict, collision and rebellion. While people in advanced nations enjoy material affluence, many in the Third World, especially Africa, are suffering from hunger and even dying from starvation. If this state of confusion worsens and accelerates, humanity will face the danger of perishing, a danger from which it will be difficult to escape.

What could be the reason behind such worldwide confusion? The cause could be attributed to many factors, but the ultimate reason lies in the conflict of value perspectives. Confusion arises because standards of truth, goodness and beauty differ from person to person, nation to nation, race to race, and one thought system to another.

If, in the opinion of person A, an action is good, but person B considers it to be bad, A may persist with the action at any cost, but B would oppose it strenuously. In such a situation, we see confrontation and disharmony, and conflict will certainly arise. I cannot help but conclude that today's confusion stems from conflict and disagreement between value perspectives.

What, then, is the basis for differences in value perspectives? It stems, first of all, from egoism. Almost without exception, each individual is a prisoner of egoism, and each nation and each race is selfishly pursuing its own interests.

Secondly, the differences in value perspectives stem from differences in thought systems. The world abounds with various thought systems, and each keeps many adherents captive. Most significantly,

communism and democracy have, through their ideologies, now divided humankind into two major blocs.

Accordingly, we cannot help but state that the way to save humankind from certain destruction is, first, to eliminate egoism and, second, to solve the problem of differences between thought systems. To liquidate egoism, we first need to know why people fell into self-centeredness. Before we hope to resolve the differences between thought systems, we have to discover how and why humanity came to have these differences.

The origin of our differing thought systems is that humankind, because of the Fall, lost God, thereby losing both God's love and God's words. God's love is the source of values -- truth, goodness and beauty. Accordingly, God's love is the basis of absolute values, and absolute values form the basis of all religious virtues. They are the unifying values. God's truth is the basis of all truths and therefore of absolute truth, which is the unifying truth. As a consequence of the Fall, humanity lost God and lost absolute values, including absolute truth, thereby losing unifying values and unifying truth.

Absolute values, including absolute truth, are the foundation for an absolute value perspective, where "perspective" refers to viewpoint and theory. Accordingly, we arrive at the conclusion that the way to resolve worldwide confusion is to find the absolute value perspective.

God established religion to convey His love and truth to humanity, in order to save humanity. He established various religions, each in its own time and place. For example, He founded Buddhism in India and Confucianism in China about twenty-five hundred years ago, and Christianity in Judea about two thousand years ago.

We can confidently affirm that the absolute value perspective can be established only through religions, which revere God. In other words, it would be valid to claim that no solution to today's confusion is possible through those thoughts and philosophies that are not founded on God. It follows logically that only through God-centered religion is it possible for humanity to be saved from confusion. In history, we have such examples as Confucianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. Each one, in its own time and place, dissipated social insecurity and confusion and, on the foundation of peace and security, brought forth a flourishing of culture. This was true of the role of Confucian culture in the Han Dynasty of China, Christian culture in medieval Europe, and Islamic culture in the Saracen civilization of the Middle East.

Today, unfortunately, religion is no longer able to dissipate confusion and lead the human spirit. Religions today are gradually losing life, and faith is progressively becoming a mere form or habit. With few exceptions, people are increasingly losing interest in religion, and their original enthusiasm in faith is waning. This is a grave situation, because if religion, which is supposed to lead the human spirit, eventually loses its function, the world will turn to complete lawlessness, and humanity will sink into an abyss of violence and murder. Today, indeed, such phenomena are increasingly evident.

All this can be readily termed a phenomenon of the collapse of the religious value perspective. What then is the cause of this collapse?

First, with the development of science and technology and growth of the economy, the human spirit is drifting into a materialistic value perspective. Second, various atheistic and materialistic ideas are spreading rapidly and widely. Third, under national policies separating education and religion, religion is being excluded from school curricula, resulting in the rise of atheistic thought. Fourth, communists are using a strategy of intentionally destroying even the fraction of the religious value perspective that remains, to promote their own goal of communizing the world. Fifth, there is a woeful lack of ontological theory adequate for supporting the religious value perspective.

The lack of an ontology regarding the Absolute Being

Of these five causes, the last one, the lack of adequate ontology, is the most significant. By ontology, I mean the theory of Absolute Being. Each religion has an Absolute Being as a basis for its theory. The Absolute Being of Judaism is Jehovah; that of Christianity, God; and of Islam, Allah. Generally, no Absolute Being is specified in Confucianism or Buddhism. However, "benevolence," which is the basis of teaching in Confucianism, is linked directly with heaven; therefore, "heaven" may be seen as taking the place of the Absolute Being in Confucianism. In Buddhism, phenomena are transient; truth, however, can be discovered from *jinyo*, which lies behind all phenomena. Thus, *jinyo* may function as an Absolute Being in Buddhism.

However, the explanations of all these Absolute Beings have been consistently deficient on such issues as the characteristics of the Absolute Being, the manner of creation of things, and the motivation for creation -- or whether God or an Absolute Being exists at all. Each religion has been uniquely unclear on these points, and therefore unclear about the basis for all religious virtues. Thus, religion today has little persuasive power.

In order for the virtues, precepts, commandments and teachings of all religions to be appropriately honored, we need to have enough knowledge about the existence of the Absolute Being, the characteristics of this Being, the purpose for which this Being created things, and so on. In early times, people were not so analytical or theoretical, and thus were willing to blindly obey such commandments as, "Love your neighbor as yourself" or, "Be loyal to the king and filial to your parents." Today, however, such maxims are questioned. The unfailing response to a "Thou shalt" is, "Why?" Unless and until these questions are answered, the teachings remain unconvincing.

Such fundamental questions as, "Does God really exist?" are raised. There are challenges to descriptions of God as "almighty," "omnipotent," "omnipresent" and "Father of humankind," and to such ideas as utmost goodness, utmost beauty, utmost love or absolute justice. Other fundamental questions include: Is there any way of knowing or proving any of these claims? Why did God create a universe when He does not have to do anything? What is His purpose for creating? By what method did He create all things? If God is of utmost goodness, why do strong-eat-weak phenomena prevail in His creation? It is being taught that the world became sinful because of the Fall, but how did the creation of a perfect God become capable of falling?"

These are but a few examples of the numerous questions that are raised. Unless reasonable and consistent answers are available and given, today's intellectuals are not willing to accept religions such as Christianity. Thus, most religious commandments remain unpracticed, and much of the Christian teaching of universal love, the Confucian code of family morals, the Buddhist code of conduct, and the Islamic teachings of the Qur'an are generally ignored or even rejected. The basic reason for the ambiguity of ontology is that in recent years Europe, which has historically been the cradle of Christianity, has given rise to materialism and atheism. We can cite the examples of Karl Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Nietzsche, who were all raised in Christian families but turned atheist and anti-Christian.

Even more lamentable is the fact that the very religions that were supposed to serve as the leading element of the human spirit and as the leading mediators between conflicts are themselves becoming the reasons for conflict, further diminishing religious dignity and authority. For example, there are clashes between Judaism and Islam, conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism, and contradictions between Christianity and Buddhism. Even within a single religion, there are disputes among different denominations.

The fundamental reason for these religious antagonisms is ambiguity in the area of ontology. There is only one Absolute Being, not two, but when each religion advocates its own concept of the Absolute Being as the true one, it may seem that there could be many different Absolute Beings. This leads to the view that the god of each religion is only a god of relative status, and that there is really no such thing as an Absolute Being.

Here we can see that, although the absolute value perspective related to God's love and truth was to be enhanced through religions, it has not been developed. It has remained relative instead of absolute. In other words, we can conclude that religion until today has been incapable of establishing the absolute value perspective that can dispel the prevailing confusion. This is the inevitable result of all religions having been unable to explain the Absolute Being clearly.

We can logically say that, under these circumstances, if an absolute value perspective is to be established, a new religion needs to emerge, with an ontology that can clearly and accurately explain the unique, absolute God.

We have said that because all religions are founded by God, their purpose has been to realize absolute value. However, when we observe that so much religious conflict prevails, we can confidently state that the god of each of the existing religions cannot be understood as the absolute God, and therefore the absolute value perspective cannot be established by these religions. Therefore, we conclude that a new religion needs to emerge for the sake of establishing the absolute value perspective.

A new religion and a new ontology

The ontology of the new religion needs to make it clear that the Absolute Beings of the various religions are not separate gods but are one and the same God. Since each religion has revealed only a part of God, making that part its religious perspective, the new ontology should make it clear that a complete revelation of God will show that all religions originated from the same God and pursue the same purposes, being like brothers. Furthermore, by explaining God's characteristics, His motivation for creating, and the purpose and rules of creation, the new ontology needs to explain that purpose and law control the motion of all things in the universe. In addition, it has to show that the norms by which we humans should live spring from that same purpose and law, namely, the heavenly way.

The relationships between the sun, moon, planets and stars involve heavenly patterns of vertical and horizontal interactions. Likewise, in the family there are vertical relationships, such as between

grandparents, parents and children, and there are horizontal relationships, such as between brothers and sisters. There are value perspectives corresponding to each of these relationships.

In explaining things, this new ontology should not contradict the knowledge that has become available through the natural sciences. At the same time, it needs to be in accord with the human conscience, and it needs to be in resonance with historical maxims such as, "Those who follow the heavenly way prosper, and those who go against it perish."

The value perspective established through the new ontology is in the truest sense the absolute value perspective. By establishing, understanding and practicing absolute love, absolute truth, absolute goodness and absolute beauty, a new reformation of the human spirit will be accomplished and the confusion of the world will be dispelled.

After the new ontology clarifies our understanding of God, and after it is shown that there is one unique God common to all religions, each religion can retain its own name. In effect, however, the unity of all religions will have been accomplished, and all will be able to move forward together for the realization of heaven on earth, which is God's ideal of creation.

The new ontology will remedy all the deficiencies and unresolved issues in religious doctrines, and that will eventually lead to the unity of all doctrines. In this manner, all religions will perfectly attain God's very goal or purpose for establishing religions on earth.

The Unification Church has emerged to solve various problems by presenting the absolute value perspective. This value perspective can resolve the great confusion in the world. The Unification Church offers a comprehensive, logical and reasonable system of thought. Its teachings, known as the Unification Principle and Unification Thought, have the power to engender complete spiritual awakening in all people of conscience and intellect.

May your continued efforts and studies during your participation in this conference deepen your understanding of the absolute value perspective, and may God's protection remain with you always.