

**THE SEARCH FOR ABSOLUTE VALUES
IN A CHANGING WORLD**

FOUNDER'S ADDRESS

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**THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE
UNITY OF THE SCIENCES**

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Honorable Chairmen, distinguished scholars and scientists;

It is my great pleasure to extend to you my warmest welcome to the 6th International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences. Many of you have attended these meetings in the past and have some familiarity with them while others are attending for the first time. Be that as it may, each time we meet offers us all a fresh opportunity to have a frank exchange of views about the issues this conference raises in a world context which changes from year to year.

As a religious leader and scientist, I have long been interested in the concerns of religion and philosophy as well as science. These conferences which I have initiated stem from these concerns. I believe that there is a relationship between different academic fields whether a person be engaged in the contemplation of eternal verities or whether he be observing an event. Indeed, how could it be possible to conceive of events occurring in space and time unless it be in relation to transcendent realities.

Religion and philosophy concern themselves with metaphysical and moral questions that have long occupied man's consciousness. Where do we come from? Why is there suffering? What is good and evil? Is there life after death? These questions are a concern to all of us no matter what our academic discipline.

Science limits itself to concern with the regularities of the universe and understanding things in space and time. As we all know, scientists have made tremendous advances in knowledge in the last few hundred years. However, science without a standard of value to guide it could be destructive. The possibility of nuclear warfare attests to this. Thus, at this conference as well as at past conferences the theme has dealt with the relation of science to a standard of value.

In my view, the whole range of knowledge from theology to the physical sciences has no meaning unless there can be an understood purpose and direction to this knowledge. The search for the standard of value is the search for this purpose. In this common quest, the knowledge of all the different fields of study relate to one another. Surely, true knowledge cannot be contradictory. In fact, the discoveries in one field of study might have significant impact on the other fields of study. In this last century the findings of the hard sciences have had tremendous impact on the behavior and beliefs of individuals who pursue knowledge in all fields of study. For instance, relativity and indeterminacy, however much misunderstood, have undoubtedly affected philosophy and theology. It is sad to see that, although knowledge in various fields of study does interrelate all too often scholars prefer to concentrate only on their own field of study. Extreme specialization provides knowledge which may have little meaning for anyone other than the individual who pursues it. The joy of discovery should inspire a scholar to communicate his findings to others in terms they can understand. We should all be willing to listen lest our knowledge be superficial and imprecise.

Religious people have felt a threat from the discoveries of science—especially since the time of the Renaissance. Yet how can a so-called religious person be concerned with salvation without being concerned with developing the knowledge and techniques necessary to solve the problems of hunger, disease, old age, and inadequate housing and clothing? Certainly science has contributed much towards these ends.

Furthermore, in contemplating the mystery and wonder of man and the universe, religion and science through inspiration, logic and observation both seek to explain, or at least

point to, the Cause that brought into existence the universe and mankind. Such contemplation of our origin and purpose is certainly one of the things that distinguishes us as human beings and which provide us with never-ending sources of energy. In this regard, 20th century cosmologists and biologists concern themselves with matters related to the concerns of theologians and philosophers.

One cannot help but think of the economic and political context and meaning in contemplating the wonder of the person and his world. Each person has qualities of love, goodness and beauty with a potential for their expression. Yet, we find that in many countries today, governments define people as animals who have value only in terms of economics. All too frequently governments will persecute people simply because they express different beliefs than the state professes. Unfortunately, anarchists and terrorists recently try to break down democracy through terrible acts of violence. As we have the opportunity to pursue our studies of the standards of value here in this conference, it is important to remember some of the political and social realities of our times that gravely threaten the creative advance of mankind in respect of values, such as justice, freedom and dignity.

The ideas and findings of you scholars and scientists influence governments, the media and social trends— not to mention the direct influence you have on your students. Thus, you have a great responsibility to do what you can to improve the conditions of man and the world in which he lives. It is important for all attending this conference to recognize and appreciate the findings and developments which have been happening in your various pursuits, so that we might all better understand the future.

The theme for the conference this year is “The Search for Absolute Values in a Changing World.” I urge all of you to bring the results of your studies and research to bear on this theme in the context of your meetings. Feel free to express your beliefs fully. This type of atmosphere will allow for a most meaningful meeting.

Thank you all for attending and taking on the enormous task of the conference theme in the next three days. I hope the conference will be enriching for each one.

Thank you.

