

SUMMATION: THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE NATURAL LAW CONCEPT

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SUMMATION

I want to say just a few words in closing this session which will have nothing to do, probably, with most of the things that have been said here, and I want to say it not as a member of the Institute nor as one sitting up here at this table, but rather as a newspaper man who has observed a most unusual story.

Here we have had for some days men who are devoted to different faiths and different traditions; a Jew, a Moslem, a Confucian, a Hindu, a couple of Pragmatists, if you please, a Presbyterian and some Catholics, and an Irishman who has been "Sirred" by an English King. All of us are gathered in a Catholic University, and what we have been discussing here and arguing about and debating is a single phenomenon, which probably if we had had men of other sects, traditions and faiths, would have ended in the same way; namely, that we are trying to find some explanation, not only of our differences but of our manifest unity because in the fundamentals, and this is the big story, there is hardly a disagreement to be noted.

It is a very curious thing that this should have occurred in the year 1951 when so many minds in so many parts of the world are concerned only with the problem of food and clothing and shelter and the ways of government. Although Judge Hutcheson got in his lick for the law, our great concern really was not over the law, nor even over the way men actually live from day to day, but rather over the eternal problem as to how men would like to live, ought to live and what they believe is worthwhile

—permanently and everlastingly and universally worthwhile in life.

It is an amazing story. It is even more amazing, as I see it, that we could meet here at all. The Catholic Church does not have a good reputation with many of us. It is supposed to be bigoted and narrow and to assume that it alone possesses the whole volume of truth. And yet we have been made welcome here, we of different faiths, and in the great tradition of our country we have been unrestricted either by rules or regulations or even good manners. We have said what we believed to be true, and we have said it without restraint. That in itself is not only a proof of the vitality of our nation quite apart from what you will read in the newspapers or what is true of corruption, of dishonesty—these things don't matter. Fundamentally it is an evidence of the great vitality of our nation that this could have occurred here and that it could have occurred in a Roman Catholic University.

In the Middle Ages, for instance, it was customary, in places, for Jewish Rabbis and Catholic Priests to dispute. The object of the dispute was always to prove that the Jewish Rabbi was in error and the Catholic Priest right. But that was not a requirement here. The great, the only requirement here was sincerity of purpose and an honest, frank statement of what one believed. After that it will be printed and even when what is said is antagonistic to the fundamental principles of this faith it will appear in a volume under the imprimatur of Notre Dame, which is dedicated to her whom Catholics accept as the Mother of God.

Now, this story in itself is so dramatic and so tremendous both in a recognition of the universality of Catholicism,

and I am not a Catholic—and of the fundamental strength of our nation which fears nothing, not even the questioning of its civilization. I must say that if this Institute existed for nothing else or this University existed for nothing else, this meeting has fully justified their existence.

And I want to add just this—that when it is all over and we have heard all these speeches—the oratory, the language, the differences, the varieties of gropings—we all come to this: that there is a divine intelligence, that there is a divine law, that there is a rhythm in life that cannot be broken; that this rhythm, that that perfection of form and manner and substance and nature, if you please, comes somehow, perhaps far beyond our understanding, from the Creator who gave us not only the sun and the stars and the moon but also a law of life that is good, and that in that goodness is the greatest of hope and contentment and security for all human beings of all faiths, of all creeds, of all nations; and in that spirit—in that spirit of goodness—which can be called Natural Law, we have demonstrated even in our differences that we are all brothers under the fatherhood of God.

