

True Father I Know - My Spiritual Pilgrimage Until Meeting True Father

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1988



My parents had no affiliation with organized religion. In the middle of my teen years I began to wonder about the purpose of life: Why am I here? What direction should I go? What happens after death? Such questions didn't go away but became more intense.

At age 14 I went to a relative's house to live. This very wealthy family lived near a mountain. In the midst of this luxury. I came to observe the inner emptiness of material wealth. Living with my aged grandmother I came to realize that long life is not necessarily a blessing. Dwelling continually on the past, she had no future and indeed no real present.

Observing the college students returning from Japan on vacation, I saw how puffed up they were. I wondered if education really forms good character! Finally I noted that all married couples around me did not appear happy but seemed to be just surviving. Already, as a young girl, I had lost all realms of happiness common to youth. Life seemed purposeless.

During this time perplexity, I used to wander on the hillside. Then I said to myself, "If there is a God, He will have the answers. And if there is no God, then Life is meaningless and not worth living." Sometimes I cried out, "If there is a God, please appear to me." But nothing happened, at least not immediately.

Then one midsummer day, while I was standing alone under a wisteria arbor in our yard. I suddenly heard a voice on my right side, saying, "He loves you, He loves you. The Bible says so." The voice was audible but not a human voice. It was strange but my heart was uplifted. Within a week the voice came back inwardly a second time. The voice urged me to go to a church.

So I went to a Japanese Methodist church which was nearby and attended its Wednesday night prayer meeting. Only five people were present. The minister began the service with a hymn about the shepherd looking for a sheep. I followed the singing with a subdued voice. All of a sudden, from above, I heard a strong voice saying, "It was not you who have been seeking Me. It was I who have been seeking you." Had God been with me all the times I had wandered around the hills, calling out for Him? Tears gushed from my eyes. Even when I knew nothing about God, He had known me and had longed for me. From that night my heart was filled by God, filled wholly with thought of God. At dawn I again went to the hillside and prayed Every morning I went up there to talk to Heavenly Father.

One day on the way to work, I passed a large sign that spoke of a revival with Reverend Yong Do Rhee to be conducted through the current week. That evening I went to the large Korean Methodist church to hear Reverend Rhee. Though arriving on time, I had to squeeze in because already many hundreds were in attendance. Reverend Rhee was a young Methodist minister who was quite intellectual and also very rich in feeling. He had studied in a liberal Methodist seminary. As he preached I could feel the Holy Spirit through his fiery words. Yes, there was a judgment in his preaching urging everyone to repent. The hearts of everyone present were melted because his stern words were supported by an ardent love of God. Ministers, elders, deacons, doctors, lawyers, business men, teachers -- men and women alike -- cried in repentance with deep humility.

Reverend Rhee was a humble, meek, reticent man. But once he stood in the pulpit, he became a most

eloquent, dynamic, fiery preacher. But there was nothing fanatic in him. Even after the meetings many people stayed and continued praying. During the night some would speak in tongues; some would prophesy; some would go into a trance. Such spiritual phenomena occurred night after night through the whole week of revival. Reverend Rhee was a man of deep prayer, passionate love for Jesus, and compassion for hungry souls. He would give all his pocket money to beggars on the street and then, without bus fare walk home.

After Reverend Rhee left, the congregation which had tasted of the Holy Spirit craved more. But there was no one who could maintain the high spiritual atmosphere. Gradually Methodist and Presbyterian ministers, not only in my home town but throughout the country, came to charge Reverend Rhee with dividing their churches. Eventually he was condemned as a heretic and forbidden to preach anymore. Thus was he forced permanently from the pulpit. A year later he passed away at age 33. But today, 50 years after his death, Reverend Yong Do Rhee is highly respected throughout Korean Christendom as an authentic messenger of God. He gave me a lasting image of a true disciple of Christ.

Deeply stirred by Reverend Rhee, I began a nightly prayer vigil at the church where he spoke. There one night at Christmas time I saw a vision of Jesus being crucified, such an overwhelming expression of his love for me. At the foot of his cross I saw myself repenting for my ignorance of his love. As I left the church before dawn, a bright light shed radiance over everything. A voice came saying, "I created everything for you". After this experience I became a totally different person, as even others noticed.

Then Easter came. On Easter eve I was back in the church wanting to meet the risen Christ and be resurrected with him. Again right after midnight the triumphant joy of the resurrection poured into me. I could not stay bowed down any more but had to sit up and sing, "Jesus Is Risen". The rest of the morning I kept singing. With this experience I resolved to dedicate my life to witnessing to the risen Lord.

A couple of years later I learned from a devout minister Reverend K. S. Rhee that he had, on the same night, had a vision of the risen Christ telling Mary Magdalene not to touch him but to go and tell the disciples that he would see them in Galilee. The Reverend Rhee then saw that vision being poured into me. "Let us watch Young Oon Kim from now", he told someone.

At this time I was working in a bank.

One day a voice came, "Do not work with dead numbers but with lives". I thought I should become a teacher. After taking government training and passing the examination, I went to the countryside to teach second grade -- a class of some 70 boys and 10 girls. In my teaching I just poured out my energy and love on them.

During this time, I began to read the works of Emanuel Swedenborg. He was a notable Swedish scientist, a philosopher, and a lifelong member of the Swedish parliament. At age 55, his spiritual senses had been opened, and he freely communicated with the spirit world. He repeatedly emphasized that we must understand divine truth and live by it, serving others not with power, position, money, or any reward, but for the sake of love and truth, and for the sake of God alone. Swedenborg's message is a most precious truth which became the foundation of my theology.

Again a clear voice came to me, saying, "Do something of eternal value". The work I was doing could be done by anybody. I felt my life mission must be something else. Having learned from Swedenborg that the Word of God has eternal value, I decided I must study the Bible.

The way was opened for me to attend Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan and to study in its theological seminary for five years. This was a liberal Methodist seminary teaching the Bible and other subjects historically and critically. After two or three years of study I began to wonder about the value of academic theology and prayed about this. God's answer was, "Know the weapon of your enemy". This seemed to mean that Christianity, on one hand has been preserving and transmitting divine truth which has been revealed through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Christianity also contains human errors based on wrong interpretations of the truth. I need to discern and distinguish the errors, and rectify them. To do that I need to understand fully conventional Christian Theology. Therefore I continued to study hard without further questioning, believing my future was in God's hands. Upon returning to Korea, I began teaching at a woman's Bible College in Pyongyang. Japan's control of Korea was becoming tighter and tighter; in time I was forbidden to teach the Bible. I decided to go to the Diamond Mountains to pray.

After the war the Japanese went home, but the Russians arrived. Soon the Communists approached me and asked that I give a speech. I saw the need to escape immediately, and, with a few church members, fled to Seoul. There I took a job first at a Catholic high school and then at a newly opened theological seminary. During this time, Dr. Helen Kim, President of Ehwa Woman's University invited me to meet with her. She asked me to teach religion courses in the newly formed Department of Christian Social Work.

While at Ehwa, I met some Canadian missionaries. They were seeking two qualified Koreans -- a man and a woman -- to send to study in Canada. In 1948 I received this scholarship and went to the University of Toronto where, at Emmanuel College, I continued my study for three years. during which time the Korean war broke out.

Soon after the Canadian missionaries invited me to go to Europe. I asked them why. They responded that they wished me to see how Germany was reconstructing itself after the war's devastation, and that I should attend various ecumenical study groups throughout Europe and hear the lectures of prominent theologians.



As they arranged, I attended various ecumenical study groups in Germany, Switzerland, and England, as well as World Council of Churches' youth projects, and visited universities. After six months of stimulating experiences, I took a Danish freighter heading for the Orient and my home. The voyage took two months. When I landed at Pusan it was early February 1952. The truce between North and South Korea had not been signed, but the guns of war were silent in the southern part of the country.

Europe has been the heartland of Christianity for many centuries, and Germany has been the brains of modern theology since the Enlightenment. In fact, the theology of North America has been led by the Germans for over a century. While I was in Europe I began to wonder where Western Christendom was headed and what vision it possessed. I could sense the grave agony modern Christianity was suffering and which continues today. First of all, churches were losing young people who could no longer find any spiritual satisfaction in the established religions. Second, Christianity lacked united determination to combat the global monster of Communism, even though Christians have constantly felt its threat and suffered its malice throughout the world. Third, if even a completely unified Christendom would not be strong enough then how could the divided and divisive denominational Christianity be of any help? The World Council of Churches had been established in 1948 with open-minded and progressive denominations and began an ecumenical movement, but the achievement of a unified Christianity is not in sight, and looks almost impossible.

Observing the postwar European churches, I lost my naive inspiration in Western Christianity and came back to Asia with a heavy heart.

After arriving in Korea, I had become quite ill from the water and living conditions in Pusan, flooded as it was with war refugees. A year later Ehwa University returned to its old campus in Seoul and I moved along with it. I remained ill and worsened to the point where I thought I was to die. During this time I heard a voice that said, "This is a spiritual crisis". After a few days, a woman came and told me that the Lord of the Second Advent had appeared in Korea and that I should study the new truth that he brought. I laughed. This was so shocking! But I felt curious and wanted to investigate, knowing that if it were false I could quickly dismiss it, but that if it were true, it was a matter of life and death! Soon I became terribly ill, and Dr. Helen Kim sent for an ambulance, which took me to the university hospital.

After returning home I visited the house where Reverend Moon was teaching and heard lectures on

Divine Principle. On the third day I was completely healed of my lingering illness. The night before my healing, the inner voice of God had spoken again: "It was I who led you to Jesus., it was I who led you to Swedenborg; it was I who led you here". During the last four days of my weeklong visit to the center, I heard the testimonies of some members and most significantly, the life story of Reverend Moon. I had been moved by the Principle of Creation, because it was close to Swedenborg in its concepts of polarity, the stages of growth, and the unity of the physical and spiritual dimensions. I was, however, stymied by the fall of the archangel, how could this be? The Divine Principle's Christology was also unsettling, as I then agreed with Swedenborg that Jesus and God were one and the same. I was, nevertheless, deeply touched by the astonishing conclusion that God had chosen a Korean who was my contemporary.

Two women teachers from Ehwa University had studied Divine Principle, and one of them introduced it to me. Then she began attracting many students to it as well. Since I, their teacher, had already accepted Divine Principle, they felt it must be true. Having no predetermined theology of their own, they were quite open to new teachings. They spread the message among their fellow students and brought them to our lectures. Most of them lived in dormitories, and rumors of our work spread quickly. School authorities began to wonder if this were an unhealthy, fanatical movement. Worse, if it continued to spread quickly it would be impossible to control. So they began to put pressure on the faculty and students. Ehwa's President, Helen Kim, said to me: "Do you really have to throw yourself into this movement? Can't you just study it in a detached and objective way, like other movements?" My answer was, "For me religion is not a means of living but a matter of life! Therefore, I cannot be uninvolved ... " A week later she called me to her office and asked that I refrain from mentioning Divine Principle teachings in my classes or on campus. If I kept my faith to myself, everything would be okay, she said. To this I replied: "President Kim, the whole world is my parish to teach in, so I can easily leave out this campus." (In fact until then I had spoken to no one in the University and had violated no law or regulation of the institution.)

About a week later she sent me an ultimatum: "Please choose one of these: Either you completely cut off your ties with the Unification Church or you give up your teaching work here." Similar notes were sent out to Ehwa students, some with only one semester before graduation.

But they were determined to follow this new truth. Their parents intervened, protesting to the University. The media also showed sympathy for the students, criticizing the University for denying religious freedom. At Yonsei University the same repressive policy was applied to one professor and two students. A few at Ehwa comprised with the administration, but thirteen students and five faculty members refused to give up their new faith. The two universities took action.

The students may have felt sorry to give up their studies, but they felt no sad depression and no sense of defeat, because they had discovered clearly interpreted divine truth for this new age with its promise of a glorious future. As for me, since my mission would take all my time, I felt it was God who freed me from the University. I felt no animosity toward those who condemned and expelled me as a heretic. However, the decision of Ehwa University in this matter was a grave mistake which obstructed the work of God and blocked the way to eternal life for many.