

My Unificationist Memoirs - Chapter 4

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I was praying about the content of this post, when I read an account by a friend, Michael Downey, describing how he sat outside of the New Yorker Hotel office of a venerable Unification Church leader, Takeru Kamiyama, for three long days, waiting for a chance to speak with him. As I read, a conflicting jumble of thoughts and feelings rushed over me. Where should I begin? How should I begin? So many issues and threads need untangling: Providential and practical, cultural and institutional, personal and... very personal. I can make no pretense of adequately resolving the cultural conflicts which often beset us. I can only set out how they eventually affected me, not as an excuse, but as a case study. I alone am responsible for all of my actions and choices.

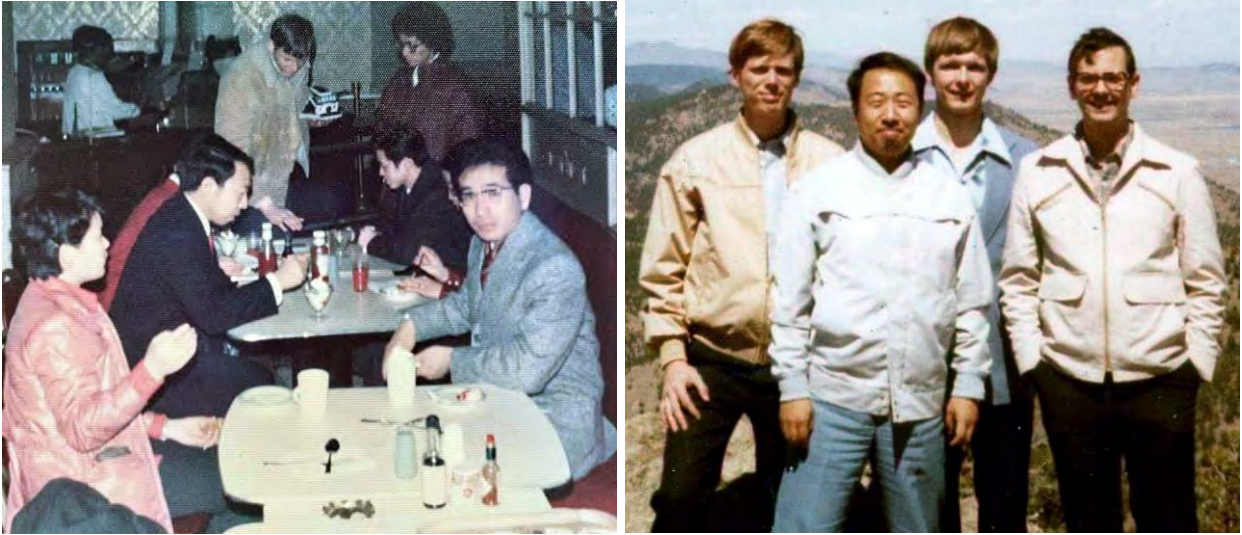


Prayer to know the will of God for my life led me to Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church. Along the way, I found myself in various Catholic institutions: Marquette University, Holy Cross Abbey, and the Catholic Worker. Though each of them were denominated as "Catholic," they operated by very different charisms and rules, which expressed their differing missions, histories, and traditions. The culture of the Jesuits radically contrasts with the Cistercian Trappists, while the Franciscans are in a sense a blend, friars who actively serve the poor and contemplatively pray. The Jesuits are noted for their academic and

worldly prowess, they have served as councilors to kings and emperors, but also as missionary doctors and social workers. They are noted for their outspokenness politically with views that run the gamut from left to right. The Trappists could not be more different. They intentionally leave the "world" to free themselves of distractions, to immerse themselves in silence, for the sake of prayer, study, work, and meditation. The Rule of St. Benedict exhorts the monks to live a quiet and balanced life. The understanding in the Catholic Church is that these various paths are essential to the work of God. Each person possesses a charism which draws him or her to the path best suited for a person's nature as well as God's work. I think our movement has unfolded in an analogous fashion. At the time I met my spiritual mother, I was days away from returning to the monastery to enter the novitiate as a Cistercian Trappist. I thought my decision had been made. How wrong I was!

Instead, I met the movement and eventually joined the Mobile Fundraising Teams ("MFT"). While a fundraiser, I adopted the Franciscan charism of contemplation and action as a spiritual paradigm to help me digest my daily life. Though, out "in the world" every day, I was in fact very alone with my service, sacrifice, and prayer, begging like a mendicant monk - with the added benefit of being able to endure

persecution both by an oppositional society and very often, my team captain or regional commander.



The outside persecution was always easier to process than conflict with a central figure. Even though I could intellectually grasp that Father had placed the formerly enemy nations of Japan and America together for restoration purposes, that perspective could easily be lost in the turmoil of the moment. Moreover, as time went on, one always hoped that the give and take process would yield a Hegelian synthesis more suited to all parties and closer to a heavenly tradition, one that could be enduring for generations to follow. I can see the young Michael Downey, Marine and Moonie, sitting outside of Mr. Kamiyama's office, as just such a moment. The Western religious tradition always provided an avenue for consultation and spiritual guidance as an individual monk, friar, or Jesuit sought to work out a personal path in line with the various opportunities the church structure allowed. However, MFT operated along a very different, Eastern principle, one that can be encapsulated by Father's words in *The Way of God's Will*: "an offering has no mouth." The latter concept fit perfectly within the Bushido tradition of our Japanese leadership. Never was I consulted regarding my future or changes in my mission. As much as I love Mr. Kamiyama (to this very moment, I feel his heart of concern for me) to leave a Western member cooling his heels for three days without conversation was unconscionable. Within the Japanese Zen tradition, such behavior is acceptable and even a common means of training monks. But most American MFTers were not culturally attuned to that training. I deeply regret lost opportunities, such as these for a cultural shift, because there was a real cost to us in terms of shattered lives, lost members, and institutional growth.



But wait, even as I wrote the last lines above, I argued with myself. Maybe Mr. Kamiyama had a strong intuitive sense of Michael, and knew he could take the tough love medicine of Zen style training. Possibly, he prayed for him for three days and his ignoring Michael evinced a deep sense of respect for

his individual growth, his strength, and his determination. And after all, didn't it work out to Michael's ultimate advantage: he changed his mission to a path in the church more in tune with his personal charisma, akin to moving from the Franciscans to the Jesuits. And what is tradition, if not something we literally come to embody through training and experience. Thus, an entirely different narrative is possible: Michael's perseverance made him the embodiment of Eastern and Western tradition, a Marine reborn through Bushido, an emerging Zen Moonie who patiently indemnified and restored the historical resentment between enemy nations.



I believe this to be entirely plausible as a narrative. But then, I stumble over my own case. I know from personal difficulties that this leadership style can prove insufficient, even disastrous. When I most needed a voice, I had internalized the standard of obedient silence, while minimizing my own circumstances and longings. Little did I understand myself, my emotions, or my own divided heart. What I desperately needed was an open path of communication, one through which I could treat a wound, the severity of which I didn't even realize.

After the May 1979 Matching and Holy Wine Ceremony, I had made great strides gaining my family's acceptance of my match, K. I had

forgotten the struggle involved, but in preparation of writing, I have gone back and read a few of my remaining journals and letters from this time. Though the words appear immature to me now, there can be no doubt of my sincerity or my desire to win my parents over to our future Blessing. Importantly, K's visits to my family proved quite successful. I increasingly felt the weight of the providence in America. My mother worked for Senator John Warner, Republican of Virginia, and my younger sister had recently begun work for a Republican congressman, Jim Johnson of Colorado, a job that would eventually lead her to work in the Reagan White House. I saw the acceptance of my Blessing as the path by which my family could overcome their disdain for True Father and our movement, and help us gain broader acceptance. We seemed to be on that course. Moreover, as my family assumed political roles more central to the American conservative movement, I saw that my personal external development was important, and began to seriously pray about continuing my education.

Unfortunately, in July 1980, K. had sex then disappeared with a brother while on a Ginseng selling mission. Her mistake shattered me. In my journals, I write about forgiveness, taking responsibility for K., and if she were willing, to keep our matching and start over. However, Mr. Sawamukai came to visit me, and asked for all of my pictures and letters from K., to destroy them. I felt a furious shame from him over the failure of a Japanese sister. I was instructed, from that time forward, to prepare myself for another matching. Silence. Obedience. An offering has no mouth! However, that did nothing to assuage the pain in my heart or my spiritual turmoil. From my Catholic monastic formation and MFT training, I knew how to fight the individual battle, to be chaste and faithful, but those tools failed me as I quietly tried to wrestle with these unfamiliar challenges. I couldn't bring myself to disclose my turmoil to Mr. Kamiyama. I couldn't find my voice. Instead, I focused on my mission as a regional commander and suppressed my personal feelings. I stopped writing in my journal. Maybe it was my fault, but no natural avenue of communication felt open to me.

I didn't realize then, how incapable I was of making a commitment to another person, in my distraught and divided spiritual state. I should never have gone to the matching again when I did. It was so terribly unfair to the sister with whom Father matched me. I hope for her forgiveness. I certainly never should have been standing in Madison Square Garden on July 1, 1982, repeating vows that I could not affirm in my heart. But there I stood. Unresolved. To this day, when I repent, tears come easily.