

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 51

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All words fail. I can describe a rock - its heft, rough texture, shape, and edges. However, until a person actually holds the rock, he has no direct experience of it. Moreover, no matter how precisely the rock is described, no words can convey the full substance of its being. If this is true for a simple rock, how much more so for the eternal and infinite God? For this reason, theologians ought to be the most humble and open thinkers, always attuned to the experiences of others.

Words may also succeed. To borrow Martin Buber's formulation, our words and our stories "point the way." All experience is momentary, and limited by time, space, circumstance, and a person's unique subjectivity, and no two persons can have the exact same experience of God. Nonetheless, our words can inspire action, provide understanding, orient and direct another person. Thus, we have entirely fresh and distinct but similar experiences - after all, we are engaging the same eternal and absolute Being.



The limitation of our descriptive powers is why spiritual teaching is often paradoxical. To paraphrase Shunryū Suzuki Roshi's succinct framing of the issue in his Dharma Talks, "Not Yes. Not No. But Yes and No." I am attracted to Zen for the pithiness and wit of its wisdom. And I have come to the conclusion that True Father was the greatest of all Zen teachers, and MFT, the perfection of Zen training.

True Father exhorted us to "live for the sake of others." Yet, he also said, "we should teach living for the sake of 'others and me.'" Father was aware that the sense we are "living for the sake of others" could also be a trap for our ego, saying "Those who think that they alone are the best will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven." He did not want us to adopt the arrogance of those Christians who prided themselves on "being saved." Thus, Father emphasized, "our heart and body have to be united based on a greater heart through the principle of 'others and I'" (CSG 4:3.3.7). I am reminded of John Lennon's "I Am the Walrus" lyrics: "I am he as you are he as you are me/ And we are all together[.]" So, yes, we must live for the sake of others, but no, you are not superior to the other, as a matter of fact, you are the other, and you are living for yourself by dying to yourself.



And this was MFT. I do not think that it was a providential oversight to have Japanese leaders, steeped in a traditional culture utterly suffused by Zen Buddhism, training American members in so many paradoxical ways. Everyday, we rose to pray, to work, to die to ourselves and yet live. We sought oneness of heart, with God, True Parents, our central figures, our brothers and sisters, and the people we approached, losing ourselves so our unique original natures could emerge...and we could live truly. We had to work hard, give 100%, be self-motivating and responsible, and yet not rely on ourselves or our own powers to achieve our goal. We endured persecution, incarceration, humiliation, and rejection; dismissed as beggars, criminals, dupes, or worse, we maintained our dignity as the sons and daughters of God. True Father was training us in the paradoxical manner of Jesus, "For whoever would save his life, will lose it..." (Matthew 16:25). I think it is no small thing that Franciscan friars were mendicants, Zen monks live by begging, and we were sent to die daily on MFT in order to live.

All words fail. But words may also succeed. Father trained us on MFT because to own restoration history, to own Father's words, we had to walk the path his words described and then possess them in the only way possible: by dying to ourselves and being reborn. And in this, we became the most fortunate of history's beggars.

