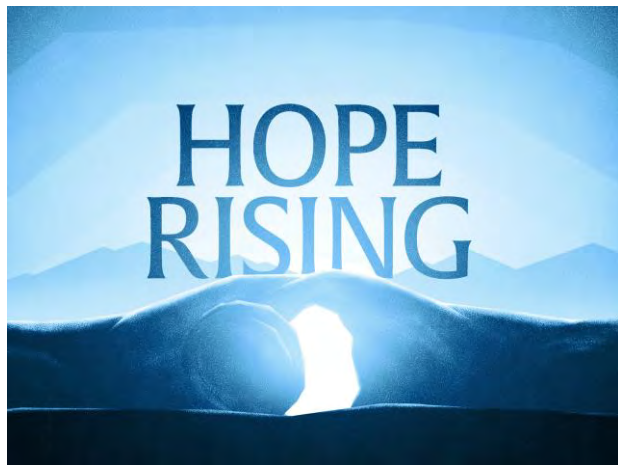


My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 64

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(Written one year ago, these thoughts strike me as still relevant to this historical moment).

As I sit down to write, it is Sunday evening and I must confess, I am retreating to my laptop as a refuge from the turbulence of our times and the accompanying heartache. The Feast of St. Augustine was celebrated this last Friday, on August 28 - the date of his death in 430 CE. While the Vandals besieged his city of Hippo, the great bishop, thinker, preacher, and writer ascended to the spiritual world. His timing could not have been better. Most citizens of the Roman Empire, like Augustine, could not conceive of civilized life

without Rome's governance, commerce, and political culture. The empire had been a source of structure and stability in the Mediterranean world for a thousand years. Though Rome's rule had often been cruel and unpredictable, the defeat of its legions, the upending of its authority, and the absence of its rule, would for centuries prove to be far worse.

I have been meditating on the end of empires and the emergence of new political and social orders, and those cataclysmic shifts are always accompanied by massive dislocations and suffering. Jesus warned us about the grief of these great and terrible days, and how our hearts would fail us from fear.

Like a postmodern Augustine, I cannot imagine a world without America, its political culture, military strength, and rule of law. And yet, as we endure the unraveling of our social fabric, the heightened polarization of our politics, and the pervasive sense of national decline, I am honestly beginning to wonder, how do we recover? How do we regenerate a cohesive national narrative, one that speaks to all of our citizens and calls us to duty, loyalty, and patriotic sentiment? How do we reach hearts soaked in nihilism and reveling in victimhood? The national collapse we are experiencing strikes fear into the depths of my heart. Is the racial conflict and the bitter disdain for our common political heritage, the inescapable consequence of America rejecting the Messiah? Didn't True Father warn us about this? As a nation, how can we be absolved of wrongly accusing Sun Myung Moon, prosecuting him unjustly, and imprisoning him? How far does the forgiveness of God extend? Or to better frame the question: does the forgiveness of God liberate us from the consequences of our sin? Within 70 years of the crucifixion, Jerusalem lay in ruins. The persecution and imprisonment of the Returning Lord by the Pyongyang Christians led to world conflict, a destroyed nation, and seven decades of conflict along the Korean DMZ. Is this our national fate?

My mind will descend into this darkness at 3:00 in the morning as I begin to stir from a night's rest. Seeking relief, I meditate, watching my breathing and noting the spiritual movement of my heart. I find comfort in the love of our Heavenly Parent and out of this depth, I embrace my country and its contending factions in prayer. I learned this on MFT: In moments of difficulty and trial, pray. Pray not only for brothers and sisters, but for those with whom we contend, who anger us, and despise us. Set conditions, especially when the external circumstances appear irredeemable. By the time I rouse myself from bed at 4:00, and retreat to my place of formal prayer and meditation, I feel a resurgence of hope, and not because God has communicated reassuring answers to my questions and concerns. Something else occurs - a certainty arises, a strength and willingness to go forward in faith and love, no matter the circumstances.

What matters at the start of the day is our resolve. MFT trained us in this practice, day after interminable day. We cannot alone, immediately reverse the trends of time. But we can contribute. To pray, to go in faith, and resolve to act in our sphere of influence, are what we can do. And it is infinitely better to commit ourselves to such a course, than to allow a sense of overwhelming despair to paralyze us in anger, fear, and resentment. However, to be spiritually effective, our actions must be rooted in faith, hope, and love - we cannot allow ourselves to be driven by political expediency and the demons of the age. This too, we learned in the hard school of MFT: When we lacked the right heart, our result reflected it.

New Hope will emerge in our troubled times, only if we embody God's love and True Parents' vision in our thought, lives, and personal resolve. Our collective contribution over time will affect our national life and pull our circumstances. And if a suffering course has already been set by our prior failures, it doesn't affect what we are called to accomplish as the children of God and how we must live. This may prove immensely hard to do but the alternative is much worse.