

Sun Myung Moon: His Life

Editor: Vicki Tatz

April 1976



Sun Myung Moon in the early 1950s

Sun Myung Moon was the fifth of eight children born to a rural family in northern Korea. He became known in early childhood for the qualities of righteousness and perseverance, occasionally righting an injustice simply by protesting longer and more vehemently than its adult perpetrators could stand. At age 10 his whole family converted to Christianity and his personal depth began to be stimulated in a special way: I had a very strong desire to live a life of high dimension. When I was 12 years old, I started praying for extraordinary things. I asked for wisdom greater than Solomon's, for faith greater than the Apostle Paul's and for love greater than the love Jesus had.

Reverend Moon initially thought he would express these ideals through becoming a scholar and professor. At one point he envisioned himself the possessor of three doctoral degrees! In his early teens, however, his view began to change. Knowing the suffering of humankind in the past and the present, he realized that future generations would experience the same fate unless something was done on a larger scale. Therefore, he began to look beyond

scholarship for a broader way to express his concern.

On Easter morning of 1935, Jesus appeared to him to talk about his future life. Jesus explained God's desire to establish His Kingdom on Earth and presented the need for someone on earth to take up this mission. He asked Reverend Moon to assume the responsibility. Recognizing the seriousness of accepting such a request, Reverend Moon struggled with the decision. Ultimately, however, he did accept and the course of his life began to take shape.

Over the next nine years, he received the revelation which is now presented in the Divine Principle. God's revelation comes only in response to man's questioning. Therefore, these years were essentially a time of deep and arduous search. The revelation was received progressively through prayer, study of all religious scriptures, meditation, spiritual communication with such persons as Jesus, Moses and Buddha, and direct communication with God. At the end of this time, Reverend Moon had been led by God to solve a vast spiritual puzzle, and was now ready to bring this revelation to the world.



This shack, built with rocks, earth and cardboard boxes, is where he lived and taught in 1951-52

While he was internally involved with this spiritual search, keeping it a secret from his family and friends, he was externally continuing with his schooling. In 1938 he went to Seoul to study electrical engineering. After graduating there, he continued his studies in Japan.

Korea was liberated from Japan after World War II and Reverend Moon then began his public ministry. Pyongyang, in northern Korea, was at that time a stronghold of Christianity. Indeed, it was referred to as the "Jerusalem of the East." Also, however, a Communist form of government was taking hold

there. Knowing the threat to Christianity that Communism posed, Reverend Moon decided to go to Pyongyang. He arrived in June of 1946:

In Pyongyang his message was eagerly received and he quickly gained disciples. Their active dedication stimulated jealousy in established Christian churches who reported Reverend Moon as a heretic to the Communist-controlled government. Seeking to play upon any divisions among an otherwise strong Christian community and particularly concerned to terminate his anticommunism, the Communists arrested him, tortured and beat him, and finally left him for dead. Found by members of his congregation, he soon regained his health and began his work again.

His work continued to prosper but in February of 1948 he was re-arrested. This time, he was sentenced to a labor camp further north at Hungnam. In essence, this was a death camp. Men were given a cup of rice a

day and generally were worked to death. Few survived longer than six months.

Sun Myung Moon's extraordinary character is reflected in his attitude toward this situation. He resolved to surpass the virtually unreachable work quotas. He did, and was ultimately given an award for his work record. Also, rather than seeking to be comforted, he sought to comfort God. Explaining this, he said: *The Father knows me so well. He already knew my suffering. How could I tell Him about (it) and cause His heart to grieve still more. I could only tell Him I would never be defeated by my suffering.*



A recent picture of Rev. and Mrs. Moon and seven of their eight children

One episode at Hungnam reveals Reverend Moon's human sensitivity. A number of prisoners received rice powder from their families outside and kept it in closed bags on which they slept. Reverend Moon received a bag which he kept in a corner. One morning a noticeable portion of the rice was gone.

Although he said nothing, other prisoners found the criminal and

brought him for punishment. To their surprise, Reverend Moon stated "How hungry he must have been. Let him eat as much as he wants just one time before he dies." When the embarrassed man apologized and said he could not eat, Reverend Moon insisted, saying it was no sin to eat when one was hungry. The man then took the bag.

The Korean War broke out in June of 1950. In October of that year, the surviving prisoners at Hungnam were liberated by a United Nations landing force. After his release, Reverend Moon returned to Pyongyang to try to locate each of his former followers. Most were gone and only two followers, one of whom had a broken leg, returned with him to the South. He arrived there in Pusan in January of 1951, having transported the one person on his back on a bicycle for over 600 miles!

In Pusan, Reverend Moon worked as a laborer on the docks and started his spiritual work again. Active in that area was a woman evangelist who heard of two men living in a shack on a hill. She came to meet them and teach them. After two meetings in which the woman spoke and prayed, she asked Reverend Moon to pray. He did. She was quickly struck by the depth and power of his prayer, and then asked Reverend Moon to speak. She subsequently became the first female disciple in South Korea.

In 1953 Reverend Moon moved to Seoul and in 1954 he officially formed the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity. His marriage in 1960 was a turning point in his life and the life of the Church. Married now for 16 years and the father of eight children, his family life has been a great inspiration to other families in the Church, For Reverend Moon, the family is the key element in building the Kingdom of God.

The reason is that the love of the family is the central place where God and man are to meet. In Reverend Moon's words, *In finding God, you must have three kinds of love: love from your parents, love with your mate and love for your children. These three loves must be combined in one in you.*

Early in his life, Reverend Moon recognized that God desired this ideal to be substantiated and that building such a family was a central aspect of his own mission. Therefore, this has been his goal.

It is also the goal to which he is leading others. In his teaching sessions with Church members, he frequently discusses the centrality of the family in building a new world. Also, for prospective marriage partners, his practice is to discuss in depth the attitudes and actions necessary for God to be a part of the marriage.

A unique aspect of Reverend Moon's work is his performance of simultaneous weddings for many couples. For him and for those who participate in them, these weddings symbolize the ultimate unity of mankind. After a series of mass marriages in the 1960's, consisting primarily of Korean men and women, Reverend Moon sponsored the first international mass marriage in 1970. This involved 791 couples from 10 countries.

In 1975, he married 1800 couples from 20 nations. In these later weddings, he encouraged those who want to marry inter-culturally or interracially to do so. This is one way in which he seeks to bring greater understanding and unity among the world's peoples.

In the 1960's Reverend Moon concentrated on developing the different works of the Church in Korea and Japan. This included strengthening its membership base through evangelism, establishing an economic

foundation for the Church by starting a number of businesses and spreading a superior ideological alternative to Marxism.

By 1965, the foundation for the Korean Church was sufficiently enough established to allow Reverend Moon to move to his broader mission. In that year he took his first world tour, travelling to forty nations, including the United States.



Rev. Moon visits New York on his first world tour in 1965

In 1969, he visited America again, remaining about a month. During this time he blessed thirteen American couples in marriage. At the end of 1971 he returned, staying this time about three months. During this trip he inaugurated his first public speaking tour, addressing audiences in seven major American cities. This tour is regarded as the formal beginning in America of his international ministry.

On a personal level, Reverend Moon would have preferred to remain in Korea. There, he spoke the language, was familiar with the culture and was surrounded by his family and long-term supporters. Coming to America involved abandoning all this in favor of an unfamiliar culture and uncertain acceptance. Nevertheless, he saw clearly that the salvation of the world depended on America and he felt that God had called him to come. As a confirmation that God had called him here, the America Church has truly blossomed since his arrival.

After his initial "Day of Hope" speaking tour in 1972, he initiated a 21-city tour in 1973. The

response to this tour was very encouraging, prompting him to begin almost immediately a further tour in early 1974. This tour brought him to 32 more cities. He spoke two nights in each city and completed the tour in 64 days. Later that same year he travelled to eight more cities, including New York where he spoke to an overflow crowd at Madison Square Garden. In 1976 his work in America will continue through the Bicentennial God Bless America Festival.

Just as he broadened the focus of his work from the Orient to America in the early 70's, he envisions working in other nations in the future. In the meantime, in his speaking tours as well as his daily efforts, he is pouring himself out to set up a new foundation for God's work in this country. His sincere hope is to be able to awaken all Americans to a new relationship with God and a new commitment to building His Kingdom. Through this, he believes, the greatest blessing can come to America and the world.

Conclusion

Throughout history God has summoned great spiritual leaders at different times and places, according to the need and His purpose. Preeminent among such men is Jesus Christ. Likewise, Abraham, Moses, Buddha and Confucius are examples of men whose work arose out of God's creative endeavor.

Today, Reverend Moon has come with a vitally needed message. He addresses a world which has newly become a "global village." In this new world, the various members affect each other as never before. For example there was a time when activities of the Arab nations had no effect on American driving habits. Such times have passed. Interdependence among nations is now a reality.

As separate elements become more interrelated, they need to become more unified. It is the only way to survive. In this century, thus, the need for global unity has intensified. We have sought this unity through such organizations as the League of Nations and the United Nations. Also, nations and races have organized themselves into blocs and are beginning to interact as such.

Our task today is to carry these efforts through and establish a lasting world unity. We must unite to guarantee our own survival. The possibilities of nuclear warfare, resource depletion and world food shortages make it imperative.

Into such an era, then, Reverend Moon has come. In stressing worldwide unity and love, and the spiritual approach required to achieve these goals, he is teaching the values urgently needed in our age. This message, so dearly appropriate to our time, is no historical accident -- it is a manifestation of God's eternal presence in the world.