

Sun Myung Moon Christian Crusade - New Hope Festival Fills Biltmore Hotel NYC

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Over twice the number of expected guests filled the Bowman Room of the Biltmore Hotel to Standing-Room-Only capacity for an outstanding New Hope Festival on Wednesday, September 17, in New York City. The exuberant crowd of close to seven hundred inspired a topnotch performance by Sunburst and a dynamic "Who Is God?" speech by Mr. Salonen. The IOWC had worked intensively for two weeks in midtown Manhattan to bring a successful result to this program, taking place just two blocks from the Headquarters building. Each team handed out thousands of pieces of literature and steadily increased the amount of commitments received on the street until 15,000 commitments had been collected by September 16.

The street activity was backed up by a public relations effort coordinated by Helen Glass. Letters of invitation including tickets were sent to New York Church contacts made since Madison Square Garden; IOWC members also wrote too many of their contacts from previous campaigns. Press releases were sent to the major media. On September 17, ads appeared in the

New York Daily News and a large circulation Spanish-language paper, El Diario. Radio spots based on Sunburst's "Oh Happy Day" were aired at key times on two popular radio stations. As a final touch, the IOWC, work staff, and HSA staff flooded the streets with special "TONIGHT" leaflets rushed up from the publications department in Washington, D.C.



Highlight of the final stretch of the campaign was leafletting done by members in skunk, kangaroo, teddy bear, rabbit (pink), squirrel, and chipmunk costumes at Grand Central Station, Times Square, and Rockefeller Center. This tactic delighted jaded New Yorkers, who flocked to them in curiosity. They even became like little children: one woman said to one of the figures as she went into the Biltmore before the performance, "Are you a little boy squirrel or a little girl squirrel?"

The room's three hundred seats were filled well before the 7:30 starting time. Several hundred seats were added, which were also quickly filled. People lined the back of the room, and remained standing there throughout the program. The audience warmed to Sunburst so that midway through their first performance Patsy Johnson received a hearty round of applause for "Flower." The crowd listened attentively as she gave her testimony. "Since I was able to live with people from all over the world (as a child with her father in the Army) it didn't take me long to realize that people everywhere are looking for the same things: respect, love, dignity. As I got older, though, this kind of thinking got me into a lot of trouble.... When I came to the Unification Church I was amazed because there I saw people working together with such unity of heart."

September 17 was also the first night of Sunburst's new program, revamped to match each of the three night's speeches. The Festival opened with slides of the creation and narration by Sunburst based on the creation story. Their version of the "Day of Hope" song, at the close of their first section, had great dignity, which was balanced by a lilting flute and xylophone accompaniment.



Mr. Salonen's speech, "Who Is God?" was based on the Principle of Creation, stressing polarity and God's need to have a give-and-take relationship of love with man. He began by asking that "we come together in a true spirit of openness. For just one evening, let's leave our preconceptions at the door." He pointed out the irony of the common debate over whether or not God exists, emphasizing that our concern should rather be about the nature of God.



He then outlined man's growing knowledge of God, from his worship of the sun to his monotheistic law-centered understanding during Old Testament times through his concept of God as a loving Father brought by Jesus. "But growth must continue to take place," said Mr. Salonen. "The parent and child must eventually become one. Our relationship with God should evolve so that it resembles that of a husband and wife."

In presenting the principle of polarity, he said: "Nothing in the universe exists by itself." He continued to describe the relationship between mind and body, mentioning the recent experiments suggesting that the same principle applies to plants. He stressed the dual nature of God, acknowledging that there is some justification to the Women's Liberation-inspired idea to pray to Mother God. He took this further to explain that man and woman are the most complete reflection of God: "God is a family God," he said to

an applauding audience.

In discussing the principle of give-and-take, he emphasized that cooperation, not conflict, is the key to success. Labor and management, for example, both benefit when they work together, he said. He used the discussion of give-and-take as a jumping-off point to speak about God's longing for a relationship with man. "God has been ever faithful to us," he said. "Our pain is just a taste of the pain He feels as He watches us struggle apart from Him."



Mr. Salonen concluded by describing the joys of the intimate relationship with God that such knowledge can encourage, giving a few examples from his own life. "I have received through this revelation such a deep understanding of the nature of God that it changed my life. But don't just take my word for it. Don't even take Reverend Moon's word for it. "Decide for yourself."

After watching the eight-city tour film, the audience was treated to more songs from Sunburst, including a lively sing-along of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands."

The program closed as it had opened with Sunburst's theme song: "Pass It On." As usual, the guests stayed and stayed. But this time, to the delight of Sunburst and the IOWC members, there were more of them to talk with. The evening closed with Dr. Salonen, the three IOWC captains -- Mr. Smith, Mr. Pell, and Mr. Walton -- and all members in a state of exuberance.