

Frontier '78 has its first tour: New Haven, CT; Boston, MA and Tallahassee, FL

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Reverend Moon meets with the three Frontier '78 teams. Standing directly behind Rev. and Mrs. Moon. are the three team leaders. From left: Dan Fefferman, President Salonen and William Bergman

Since the beginning of 1978, three teams headed by national Unification Church leaders have travelled to each state in the U.S.

The mission of the three teams, the Frontier '78 project is two-fold: to inspire local membership and educate the public about the purpose and activities of the Unification Church. A typical visit of the team will include fellowship with the members, their friends and their families; public talks; media appearances; and visits to local leaders who have expressed an interest in learning about the Church. Following is an impression of two visits made by Unification Church President Neil Salonen.

I have visited three Frontier '78 cities since the beginning of their first tour, New Haven, Connecticut; Boston, Massachusetts, and Tallahassee, Florida. The experience has changed my idea of the kinds of people who are interested in the Unification Church, and their reasons. Not just college students or drifters, but people on all levels of society, from the man on the street to university deans, really want to know what the Unification Church is all about. And their questions go beyond the hackneyed, "Do you brainwash your members? Do you believe that Reverend Moon is the Messiah?" Instead they ask, "What do you believe about the trinity? I've heard that you place a great deal of emphasis on the family. Could you explain its place in your theology? What makes Reverend Moon different from Billy Graham and other contemporary religious leaders? To what factors do you ascribe the brainwashing controversy? What makes you think that the Unification Church will last?"

These questions were consistently asked in each of the three cities I visited. All forms of the media have asked: "What do you really believe," have waited to hear the answer, and have printed or broadcast the response. Professors have asked to be taught the Divine Principle. Ministers have asked the Frontier '78 spokesmen to explain the teachings of the Divine Principle to their Sunday school classes.

Why this response? Perhaps because the usual charges of brainwashing and family alienation have worn thin and people are looking for more substance on which to base their opinions. Also, many people are genuinely concerned about the questions which the Divine Principle raises and never took seriously all of the superficial or inaccurate charges brought against us. Certainly the hand of God is working across this country. And Rev. Moon of course tells us we would not be paying for past failures in history but would be moving on from level ground to build for the future.

My impression of our own responsibility is clear. First, we must change our concept of who can become: a member or supporter of the Unification Church because the range of interest is much broader than most

of us think. Second, with the interest in our beliefs increasing every day, we must ground ourselves in knowledge of the Divine Principle so that we can communicate to them what they need to know.



Mr. Salonen (center) appearing with Dr. Dean Kelley, theology professor and National Council of Churches official on "Mass Reaction"; a popular Boston audience participation show

Boston

On January 18, I attended a talk given by Mr. Salonen in Boston entitled: "Destined for Controversy."

Mr. Salonen began his talk by describing common response he has seen in the people he has met during the "Frontier '78" tour. On the one hand, people say that they are very impressed with our members, especially with their enthusiasm. Then, inevitably, the question comes up: "I don't understand why there is so much controversy surrounding your Church."

The most basic answer to that question, Mr. Salonen pointed out, is that Reverend Moon is a prophet, having received a new revelation from God. "While the revelation stands on the foundation of the past and has much in common with other religions, his message is new. That something new is what has answered so many questions for those of us who have joined the Church; at the same time it excites other people, who can't accept new things so easily."

Many people, Mr. Salonen noted, have a hard time believing that America, the land of freedom, has difficulty in accepting new religious ideas. "But a look at the historical record is very surprising," said Mr. Salonen. "Many groups, such as the Puritans, who came to the U.S. in search for religious freedom, did not extend that freedom to other groups."

He went on to give background about the struggle of Irish Catholics in Boston as well as the trials of the Mormons and other religious minorities. "The Mormons were literally thrown out of the country. No one wanted Utah, so no one minded that the Mormons had it. Later, Americans found out that Mormons were patriots, good citizens, and very respectable. A great tribute to this country is the fact that we have moved step by step ever closer to freedom. But those principles have not been accorded abstractly. Rather they have been strengthened when a group seeking freedom has acted as the conscience of the nation. We accept every group, but only after they assert their rights."

Mr. Salonen went on to give some of his testimony and included his view on the attractions of the Unification Church. "God is continuing to lead His people by revelation, both in the Christian community and other religions as well, working to bring His people back together as brothers and sisters in one true family. Men and women are more important to God than anything else. Our members; are finding a great sense of purpose and a new moral commitment at a time when the moral codes of society are breaking down.

"I am never going to say that our way is the only way. I am saying that it has meant a great deal to those of us who have studied the doctrines of Reverend Moon, so much that we have felt called to devote our lives to spread that message so that others might have the opportunity to make the same decision. To those who think that we may be disruptive, as the Mormons were once thought to be, I can only ask them to trust us and look at the lives we lead and the families we create as we grow."

Mr. Salonen concluded his talk: "I hope that tonight is the beginning of a long and warm relationship, and that you will come to see that the members of the Unification Church are very different in reality from the image which is generally held of us. If you ever meet Reverend Moon, you will see a man who has inspired people around the world to devote themselves to God, a man who has spoken a message of sacrifice and service to a generation increasingly seeking its own personal goal, and a man who has shown people how they can establish value in their lives and in society. It gives us so much pain to hear the things that are said of him when we realize that but for him, many of our lives would have been in utter disarray. Each of us has found tremendous personal fulfillment in the message of Reverend Moon. I invite all of you to find out what has changed our lives so dramatically."

Afterwards, the Boston center hosted a reception for the guests; many had informal discussions with President Salonen.

Tallahassee

The first major event of Mr. Salonen's visit to Tallahassee, beginning January 30, was an informal luncheon with ministers and theologians at Florida State University. The group, which included representatives of all denominations met every week to discuss a number of topics, theological and practical. After Mr. Salonen gave them a brief testimony of his involvement in the Church and appealed to them to keep an open mind, one of the guests replied to the effect: "We don't take press accounts of your church seriously. We would like to hear from you exactly what you believe." Thus began a several hour discussion which included a summary of the Divine Principle by Mr. Salonen, numerous questions, and an additional perspective given by Unification Theological Seminary Professor Warren Lewis, who happened to be visiting Tallahassee at the same time. While the guests disagreed with many points of the Principle, they were sincere in their desire to understand our movement.

The rest of that Monday consisted of several interviews at the center. They, like in most interviews in this city, asked: "Why do we need another preacher? We already have Billy Graham and others like him. How is Reverend Moon different?"

That evening, Mr. Salonen spoke at the Florida State University Student Union explaining our beliefs and the origin of our persecution to about eighty guests.

Again, Dr. Lewis provided valuable commentary. Questions afterwards lasted for well over an hour, and still some students came over to the center at 11 pm for more discussion.

The next day, Mr. Salonen spoke to an MFT early in the morning and went on to more press interviews and several appointments with professors at Florida State University. The Tallahassee center had invited its contacts to a dinner at the local Hilton in honor of Mr. Salonen where again conversations went on into the night.

On the concluding day of his visit, Mr. Salonen met with some additional ministers from the FSU campus and continued with press interviews, mostly at the center. Then he brought the visit to a very happy conclusion for the members as he took them all out to dinner. Seated around a large round table, each member got a chance to share his experiences in the Church.