

My Testimony: I accepted the Divine Principle in January 1962 (Part 1 of 2)

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Peter Koch with Young-oon Kim early 1960s

For the first thirty-five years of my life, I lived a somewhat normal life -- if you could call anything “normal” in Germany during the Hitler regime and after the war.

My parents had an exceptionally good marriage and had always been a shining example to my two younger sisters and me. We grew up in a family atmosphere of warmth and love. Although we went to a Protestant church only once a year, I think our life was more Christian than that of the regular churchgoers. To us a moral life had never been a dictate of law, but the most natural result of purity and honesty of heart.

I should mention that my father had been very successful even rather early in his career as a banker and insurance company president. So I had a lot of respect for my father and accepted his advice on matters of life -- rather than the opinion of my classmates. During that time -- at the age of about thirteen -- I made these three resolutions:

- Never let “the crowd” make up your mind. Without compromise, preserve your freedom of opinion and let nothing but the truth determine your opinion -- even if you don’t like it.
- Never become a slave of any vice.
- Always act according to your conscience.

My father told me, “One day in the future you will meet your wife. If you cannot meet her with a clean conscience, you will very much regret it then.”

This is the kind of attitude I had developed when I was drafted into the German army in February 1943 at the age of fifteen. Ever since then, I have had to cope with life pretty much on my own. I had to come to terms with absolute values and questions of eternity in a time in which I did not know whether I would still be alive the next morning.

Once our battalion was cut down to twenty-five men, and we found ourselves caught without any armor-piercing weapons and surrounded by thirteen Russian tanks. In this hopeless situation, I prayed to God that I would really believe in Him if He would get me out of there. I think this experience was the beginning of my relationship with God. In the following weeks, my life was saved several times in miraculous ways.

When I was released from prisoner of war camp in August 1945 and returned home, I found that my

father had been killed during the war. Eighty percent of our town had been destroyed by bombs. Our house had no windows, doors, or roof. There was no work, no money, no food and no ideology.

At that time, I was eighteen but not quite as immature as boys usually are today. This was a time not only of great physical hunger, but of spiritual hunger as well. Many people went to church at that time looking for answers. Physically the churches were full, but spiritually they had nothing to offer. God was not in the church. At that time I went back to school for a year, then learned business and did all manner of work until I emigrated to America in 1957. There, I first worked with one of the biggest Wall Street stockbrokers for two years in order to make enough money to be able to study engineering -- a long cherished dream of mine. In summer 1959, I went to San Francisco and started my studies as an electrical engineer. At that time, I was led to the Spiritualist Church of San Francisco and I had many spiritual experiences.

Love for God, a motivating force

One day I went to a spiritualist church. One of the mediums got up and described my situation and then she said, "In summer, after school, there will be something entering your life which will absolutely, completely change your life. I cannot see yet what it is, but it is something positive." That is the last thing that could happen to me; I was absolutely set on studying engineering and not doing something else. Of course, I could have an accident that would change my life, but it was supposed to be something good.

I went to a birthday party where I met Ursula [Schuhmann], a German girl. She was supposed to talk to me about spiritualist churches. She was saying:

"I have studied many things, and they were all very interesting, but in all these groups the solution is missing. Recently, a few months ago, I met this group in San Francisco. There is a Christian woman theology professor from a group in Korea that teaches that Jesus should not have been crucified. She explained the mission of the Messiah, that we are again in an age when the Messiah has to come and that he is already here."

Everybody laughed and said she was crazy

I thought, maybe she is right; maybe she is wrong, but the things she is talking about are of such tremendous importance that I cannot afford to just brush it aside. Jesus, a young man of thirty years old, with no special education and no real following, ended his life on the cross after three years. Nevertheless, he left such a tremendous impression on history -- much more than Caesar, or Alexander the Great, and all those like them -- after being practically rejected for three years. There must be something to that, I thought. As she had said, Jesus tried so hard and he could not fulfill his mission of realizing the perfect object for give and take with God, so that God should have a foothold on earth and really work with humankind. That's how she explained it.

If Jesus did not succeed in that, the foundation he built could not really work. Now, though, she was saying that this foundation had already been laid. I was sure if this were true, that the Returning Lord's force on history would be been more than a thousand times that of Jesus. I thought this was of such importance; I had to know more about it.

So, the next day I got a city map and at ten o'clock in the morning I arrived at the Cole Street Center and knocked on the door. Doris Walder [Orme] opened the door. Dr. Young-oon Kim was out shopping. She said, "Why don't you sit down? She'll be back in a minute. You can listen to something in the meantime." I was left alone with a tape recorder for two hours. I was to concentrate on a lecture of the Divine Principle. When the tape was over, the door opened and Miss Kim came in. She just looked at me, pointed to the tape recorder and asked, "What do you think of it?"

"I am used to concentrated studies at Berkeley," I answered, "but that is too much to digest in two hours. I have to come back and look at it in detail." Miss Kim later told the members that she had not believed I would return.

Three days later, I came back. That was January 30, 1962 -- my spiritual birthday.

When I accepted the Divine Principle in January 1962, I knew I had found the door to a living relationship with the living God. All of a sudden, God became a reality to me -- not just in abstract terms. I had not known how much God had been searching for His lost children -- and for me -- for thousands of years. I had not known how much God had given to man and how miserable He had been treated by man in return.

When I heard that, I said to God, "You have done so much for us now let me do something for You. You sit down, rest and don't worry anymore. I will do Your work from now on."

At that time, I took responsibility not just for my personal past but for history as well. I had always wanted to build a better future, but up to that point, I had never known how to do this. Now I began building a better world, motivated by my love for God. I had many spiritual experiences with God and True Father. At first, I used to write them down, but later they became so much a part of my daily life that I stopped recording them. At times, I met True Father in the spirit five times a week.



True Parents with the Koch Family

First encounter with Father

Two weeks after I first encountered the Principle, before I had even seen a picture of Father, I had a dream. In the dream, I was in the basement of my house looking for something. I did not know what. There was a swinging door and a sign that read, "Restricted Access."

What does that mean? Does it include me, or not? After all, I thought, this is my own house!

I opened the swinging door and went in. A rope stopped me two steps into the room. I really wanted to go that way. I saw something like a podium, a strangely shaped bench and a table. I saw many people whom I did not know sitting at the table. Intuitively I perceived that they were extremely high-level church people.

One gentleman was sitting right in front of me, and every once in a while someone would ask him a question. People treated him with the utmost respect. I wondered why these high-level religious people treated him so respectfully. Some of the people who had been sitting stood up and I realized Dr. Kim was one of them. Dressed formally, she came all the way behind the bench and stopped, just looking at

me. She was standing behind this important person looking at me. The door opened, and somebody came in representing six thousand people who were waiting outside. This man began to give a speech. But the important man gently asked him to finish speaking, and then said, Don't bring them all in here. Be extremely selective.

I looked at this special man, whom I had never seen before. He was Oriental. I looked at him and asked myself, Who is he? In response, a great voice from heaven said, The Lord at his Second Advent. With that, everything filled with light. I felt as if my cup was overflowing. It was an overwhelming feeling. Then immediately, I woke up.

On some other day, Miss Kim took me to her room, where she had many photographs. In one of them, I recognized the Oriental man from my dream.

I will tell you another spiritual experience. We were all living in a center when one member came to inform us that a gang was coming to beat us up. They really wanted to beat us up, and we had to fight them. Finally, we threw them out.

I was in a very crude room and had only my underwear on. There was a big opening in the room, a very large door. I looked through that door and saw a beautiful garden with a beautiful castle. A certain person invited me to come to supper with the king in the castle. I said, No, no, no. Not like this.

I went around again and arrived once more at the same spot. He said, Why don't you come to supper? I answered, No, no not like this, just in my underwear; I can't go into the castle.

I came a third time. Father just stood there and said, "Come on Peter" and pushed me into the castle.

Spiritually it was an abundantly rich time. I had many experiences with Father. Those in the spirit world helped me a great deal.

I want to tell you about three other spiritual experiences I had. One was just before I returned to Europe. I originally had not intended to go back to Europe, but I felt responsible for my people at home. I had been in the Principle for only a year and a half, but that was a long time at that stage. I wanted to bring the Principle to Europe. Of course, at that time I thought I knew everything and had all the answers. Now I

realize how poorly prepared I was for the job. I knew almost nothing. God really had to guide me. That was very important for me to be open to God, so He could use me and guide me. Just before I decided to leave for Europe, in one night I had three dreams.

In the first dream I was told if I went to Europe, I would be taken from the earth very soon.

The second dream was the same. In the third dream I was shown exactly how I would die if I went to Europe -- in a traffic accident. Getting the message three times -- if you go, you will be killed -- made me feel uneasy, but I thought, That's not going to stop me. Of course, if I make up my mind to go to Europe, I go to Europe. No matter what happens, I go!

I also want to tell you about my being in a place, like a Greek temple with pillars. That was the first time in my life I saw many angels. One angel was tall and beautiful. I looked at this tremendously beautiful angel and he looked at me, very proudly. He asked, Are we not like God?

Accusing him of [involvement in] the Fall, I replied, "Are you like God? No, you are Satan!"

All of a sudden, he was not there anymore. He was just gone. Two other angels took me by the hand and led me out of the room. One of the angels asked me, "Do you realize how privileged you are?"

Being a person who wants to understand everything quite specifically, I asked him in return, "What exactly do you mean by privileged?"

He was referring to my being one of the first in the West who knows these things. He told me this just before the whole experience vanished.

As you may know, I had known less than the average person does about God. When I came to the Principle, several things impressed me very much, but the point that most impressed me was looking into the history of restoration. I could see how much God has been longing for humankind and how much God has been searching for each person, including me, for thousands of years.

When I realized God's great love for me, I could not turn around and walk out on Him. That was impossible. I had no other choice; I had to give Him all of my heart.

I said, "God You have worked for thousands of years. We will take over now. Don't worry, we'll do the job, we'll bring the world back to You."

That was an absolute change of heart. It was really a new birth. When I look at the history of restoration, it is really the restoration of man's heart. If I want to repair man, fallen man, it's pretty much like repairing a car. If a car all of a sudden doesn't run anymore, and perhaps the carburetor doesn't work, replacing the left rear tire doesn't solve the problem....If the damage done to man is his relationship to God, that is exactly the point that needs to be repaired.

If I study the Principle, I may become a very smart person, but that doesn't help me. The decisive point is that I turn my heart to God. People can take away my money and my job and burn down my house, but they cannot take away my relationship to God. Even if I die, that is of eternal value. This is the most important point for the life of a person -- his love of God, his relationship to God. And the strongest relationship is love. I've told some of you already to fall in love with God. In doing so, all your problems will fall away. I've had my ups and downs, I've had difficult times, but this love for God has always carried me through.