

## How True Father witnessed to me in my cab in New York City - Part 2

Tom Conneally  
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*Tom and Ina Conneally*

Five years passed. It was September 17, 1976. I was working in Sante Fe, New Mexico for a drilling company. I had been working all day long drilling a hole into the dry ground. Feeling dry myself, I went to my favorite bar hoping for a drink or two. Unfortunately, my paycheck had not been cashed yet, and I only had small change in my pocket. It was good to have the week behind me, but without money what was I supposed to do? Leaning against the bar counter, I saw a few girls come in trying to sell flowers. When I went outside after a while, there was one little Japanese "flower girl" standing at the corner, smiling at passers-by and holding out a bunch of roses.

Curious, I asked her, "Whom are you selling those for?"

"Oh," she answered, extending her smile, "we are fundraising for an event. Tomorrow there will be a rally in Washington DC and the main speaker is Rev. Moon. Have you heard about him?" I shook my head. She took a closer look at me and continued smiling and extending the roses. "Well," she continued after a few minutes, "he must have heard about you. You are the one who met Rev. Moon in a taxi years ago. I was told that I would see you here tonight. Listen," she said in a low voice, "I was also told that you should come with our team tonight to Washington. It's just an hour's drive from here to Albuquerque. We'll fly from there. If you can't go, you should at least offer something. If you don't," she now spoke very distinctly, as if to add weight to every word, "your father will die."

I didn't know what to think. I was shocked and somehow impressed by this "Rev. Moon" whom I had met, as I remembered now, in the taxi years ago. How did he know I was living here right now? But then, all that pressure with having to either join some trip to Washington or giving money. It seemed so extreme, almost threatening. I only had some change in my pocket anyway, and the check. I needed it myself. On the other hand, it sounded exciting to travel across the country over the weekend and be part of an event that "could be your re-birthday."

"Since it is one hour to Albuquerque," I asked the girl "can I smoke in the van? See, I've got to smoke..." She told me that I could not. The sensitive balance of decision-making now visibly turned in favor of me not wanting to go.

I noticed a van approaching, and the Japanese girl told me, "You have to make up your mind right now." I explained my feelings to her, much to her disappointment. As the van drove off, I got lost in thoughts about her and some other "encounters" that I had had a few weeks earlier. One had been with a girl named Josephine in that same bar. She had told me she had studied some kind of principles with a church, and that she had been told by people in the church that there was someone of Irish descent living in New Mexico who had met the founder of their movement in a taxi in New York. What was so special about me, anyway? Why were people that I had never seen before so eager to have me join them?

During the beginning of the next week, I received a call from my sister. She told me that my father was in a coma. I went home immediately. After 21 days he passed away, on October 10. Now that I had lost both parents, feelings of deep grief and loneliness overcame me. Being back in my hometown, I went to church

again, to "Our Lady of Solace." I also started reading the Bible. These high-spirited activities were unfortunately overshadowed by my drinking and smoking habits. Bars in the evening, prayers during the day. I was torn inside. That ongoing contradiction within me made me crazy. During one especially intense afternoon, I remember reading a Bible verse that spoke of the devil crawling on his belly like a worm.

I went up to the rooftop of the apartment. Laying on my belly, I felt like a worm myself, crouching in the mud of guilt and shame. "Is Christ coming back?" I asked, as if talking to myself. In my mind, I heard the answer: "Christ is here -- Sun Myung Moon." Where can I find him, I further probed. "On 4 West 43rd Street," came the immediate answer. Having been a cab driver for many years, I knew almost exactly where that was. Suddenly I felt grace; grace flowing all over me. I stood up, looking toward Manhattan. Just then, the sun broke through the clouded sky, spreading a rake of sunbeams over the city. Again I heard the voice inside me, saying: "This is the city of my Kingdom!"

I went back down to my parents' apartment, where I took a shower. I wanted to cleanse myself, make a new beginning. After my father's death I had become more serious about life -- life here and life "over there." I felt that my father was suffering in the spiritual world and that I was the one who could help him in his pain.

I now was determined to quit smoking. One day I went to the East Bronx park where I used to play and sleigh ride in the snow as a child. There was a hollow tree trunk, into which I crept. We were both hollow inside, the tree trunk and I. I prayed to God, "Please help me to come back to I life." I left my last pack of cigarettes there. I also started fasting, from my mother's birthday on December 4 to the date of her death, January 12. It was exactly 40 days.

Through reading the Bible, the life of John the Baptist had made a strong impression on me. He had lived on locusts and honey for long periods of time. Reading a pamphlet about fasting, I decided to live on honey I and lemon juice only, and water of I course. I also went to the Botanical Garden frequently. In the hectic and often brutal jungle of the Bronx, here was an oasis of peace. I had discovered a gazebo, close to a small forest area. Twelve pillars supported a small roof. It looked like a little temple combining the Holy Trinity with Jesus' twelve disciples. I prayed often on the stony floor, feeling connected not only with John the Baptist but also with St. Francis of Assisi. Sometimes it would even snow a little bit, since winter was approaching. Nature was so pure, especially these clean and white snowflakes, each one a crystal creation of its own.

It was two weeks later, on December 17. I had just arrived at Penn Station, wanting to get more copies of my parents' death certificates. Suddenly a young woman approached me. "Do you believe in God?" was her unexpected question to me. Of course I understood that this was meant to be the overture to some longer discussion, and so we both went into a coffee shop nearby. She introduced herself as Vina Lopez, saying that she belonged to a Christian church that was persecuted. I was amazed. What kind of church could possibly be persecuted these days?

She invited me to visit her where she was staying at a building on 4 West 43rd Street. I was impressed by the way members treated each other. The terminology "brothers and sisters" was truly filled with meaning. I could especially experience the spirit of togetherness during one of their "international nights," with lots of singing, testimonies and speeches. Meanwhile I studied what these people called "the Principle" It was supposed to help me understand the Bible better -- the main reason I had gone there with Vina. Then on Christmas Eve, Vina invited me to watch a film about the founder of her movement, Rev. Moon. It was, she said, the first presentation about the event at the Washington Monument on September 18. I was very impressed and decided to go to a 3-day workshop.

The workshop site at Barrytown was a beautiful, formerly Catholic seminary. It felt like returning to my spiritual roots, surrounded by stone saints and living saints as well: the "brothers and sisters." Outdoor walks in the beauty of nature, Principle lectures, prayer... the three days passed by quickly. I was still in the middle of fasting, which made some people wonder. When Vina drove back with me, she too wanted to know why. I explained to her that it was a condition to help my father in the spiritual world. "This is not the time to fast," she told me. Later she asked me to break my fast at 43rd Street, which I did at the end of the 40 days. Vina had convinced me to offer it up for a higher purpose other than just a member of my family.

After the workshop at the seminary I read the Divine Principle book all the way through. Vina invited me again, this time to hear Rev. Moon himself speak at Belvedere. The topic of the sermon was "To Whom Do I Belong?" I remember clearly how much I felt the truth of it all: being divided between God and Satan, and the suffering that comes from that internal struggle. Until then I had had a beard, but after the speech I shaved it off. I stopped smoking also and so made a new start in my life of faith, having gone beyond my own limitations and temptations.

Afterwards I went through a series of workshops. Originally starting with 7 days, it extended into a 21-

day workshop. On the first Sunday I heard Rev. Moon speak again. He talked about someone whom he had met in a taxi years ago, in Manhattan. I had been a taxi driver too, so I could relate well to that story. The Reverend concluded by saying, "I am happy to say that this young man is here with us today."



The crucial question still remained for me whether Rev. Moon was really the Messiah or not. During the second Sunday of the workshop, he publicly spoke about things I had done in the I past, my personal sins. He did not mention my name, but I knew everything he brought out was true -- and only I could have known those things.

He also talked about the John the Baptist figures and Elijahs of the providence, I saying that there had been someone who had lived in England, whose son was given a mission to bear witness to I him -- and that this person was here today. As he said that, he pointed in my direction. But I just could not imagine myself being this John-the-Baptist figure. It was too much to live with, and I had just I started my new life.

It took me some time to come to the conclusion that it was all true, from beginning to end: Rev. Moon was the Messiah, my father, and I had failed to recognize him from the beginning. I looked back at my life, from my childhood up to that time: how I had always missed those moments of true encounter, when God had, over and over again, given me a chance to be part of His providence. I could clearly see how he had worked in my ancestry to make a foundation for the coming of Christ; and how I, as the final fruit on the tree of that lineage, had not fully ripened.

I made the promise, in one of my prayers, that one day I would give the testimony of my life as a warning to those who are shaken by external circumstances, losing sight of their own path of faith and where it leads to.