

What is “Attendance”? Musings on a Core Unificationist Practice

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According to the Unification Principle, the Completed Testament era is the one in which human beings are to resurrect both spiritually and physically, justified by attendance. As one of the fundamental concepts of the practice of Unificationism taught by Reverend Moon, a clear understanding of “attendance” seems critical.

When looking at the question “What is attendance?”, one has to factor in Korean and, to a lesser extent, Far Eastern culture. On the other hand, Korean culture alone cannot provide a complete answer to this question because it has never yet risen to the level of a Completed Testament culture. The answer must bring together Completed Testament elements (as introduced through Father Moon, e.g., the supremacy of true love, purpose of creation, human responsibility) with the Korean context (Confucianism, Korean history, Korean character and environment).

In Korean, the word we use to signify attendance is 모심 — [moshim] (attendance, pronounced “moe + shim”) or 모심생활 [moshim saeng hwal] (attendance life/practice). Moshim derives from the verb 모시다 [moshida], which is related but not identical to the Japanese concept of [haberu] 侍る. The cultural interpretations of Korean and Japan are different when dealing with “attendance.”

Considering Korean culture, we should recognize that it comprises both “fallen” aspects, which we should avoid, and “original” (unfallen) elements we should learn to recognize and embrace. Unfortunately, just as is the case with Unificationists from other cultures, Korean Unificationists can also fall into cultural traps. A fallen expression of “attendance” in the Korean mode would be, for example, the expression of false loyalty, or the giving of reports designed to make Father (or the leader) “happy” but which, in fact, misrepresent how things actually are. This corrupted form of attendance is the semblance of loyalty at the cost of true inner service. It pays lip service with the primary goal of maintaining one’s position or perks, or avoiding difficulty.

On the other hand, the original (unfallen) expression of true attendance — moshim — that is expressed within the Korean context is something I think all Unificationists need to learn. In this context, moshim means, first and foremost, having a powerful longing and yearning in heart for the Beloved (님 [Nim]). Next, it means a longing to lift the Beloved up, to see the Beloved happy, fulfilled, peaceful. Moshim seeks expression by honoring and loving the sacred within the Beloved, by valuing the Beloved and being responsive to their desires, hopes and needs. Moshim means to rescue the Beloved if he is in distress, to ease her pain if she is in pain. Furthermore, moshim seeks to do this by serving or sacrificing oneself for the Beloved’s sake.

This heart of moshim is infused with an attitude of gratitude, which, at its root, is based on the idea of the benevolence and goodness of the Beloved. If the Beloved is a teacher, moshim means, for example, striving to be a great pupil who makes the teacher proud and fulfilled (the premise being that the teacher wants the pupil to learn, be successful and grow). If the Beloved is an authority, then moshim means to facilitate the goals and desires of the authority (the premise being that the authority wants what is best for those under her authority). If the Beloved is one’s parents, moshim means to be the best child one can be, to listen and pay attention to the parents’ lessons and desires, to make them happy (the premise being that

the parents want what is best for the child, and to see him or her happy and healthy). After the desires of the Beloved have been accomplished, moshim then seeks to make the Beloved comfortable, to see that she experiences the fruits of her efforts, investment and heart.

In this sense, moshim is the supreme virtue an object can express to her subject, and although this virtue is grounded in the idea of a subject that is benevolent, moshim also seeks to be constant and unchanging, even in the face of failure by the subject to be all he should be. This constancy in heart is expressed in the classic sijo poem written by Jeong Mong Ju in the 14th century and known to Unificationists as the holy song “Tan Shim Ga”:

Even if this body of mine dies and dies, even if it dies one hundred times,
Even if my bones are ground into dust, even if my very soul is gone,
My unchanging heart, my burning devotion to my Beloved, how could this ever change?*

The context for moshim exists where the beloved is someone who is higher or precedes in the scale of natural order, like a parent, a teacher, an ancestor or predecessor, or in the scale of responsibility, like a superior, or boss, founder or king. Thus, in a restoration context, it is appropriate for an older brother “to attend” his younger brother, or for a parent to attend her child when the child is responsible for much greater things. Dae Mo Nim [Grandmother Hong], for example, would want to attend her daughter, True Mother, but True Mother would also want to attend and comfort her mother, in the context of natural order. In Father’s view, the prime example or archetypical model of moshim is the attitude of the child towards her parent.



“Jeong Mong Ju” (정몽주) painted by Yi Han-cheol (1880).

Thus, moshim is a path of dedication to the Beloved through love. It is “living for the sake of the other” (the Beloved), such that the Beloved achieves or fulfills her desires and then arrives at that place of contentment, joy and happiness. This is what Father wants us to be towards God. It is also how Father himself lived towards God.

Although many Korean Unificationists will have certain views on what correct moshim is, moshim in the Unificationist sense transcends Korean culture. While Father and Mother are the model of moshim in their relationship towards God, each is also a unique person with a unique character and personality. Accordingly, in building our relationship with God and True Parents, each of us must necessarily find an expression of moshim that brings together the universal elements mentioned above (heart and attitude) as well as our uniquely individual nature. How you interpret or accomplish moshim, in relation to your Beloved, will naturally differ depending on who you are

and what choices you make.

For example, one Unificationist’s view of attendance may be “doing as True Parents have asked me to do in terms of mission.” Another’s may be “taking care of my local community.” Such views don’t discount anyone else’s approach to moshim, neither do they mean that they are the one and only standard. Moshim needs to be an expression of you and your relationship with your Beloved (i.e., Heavenly Parent and True Parents) encompassing both universal and uniquely individual elements.

Above all, one point needs to be understood and recognized: moshim is a particular attitude and heart, expressed in some way, rather than some externally regulated cultural practice or dogma that everyone must follow. How it finds expression will inherently rely on the uniqueness of one’s individuality, through personality, cultural background, character, circumstances, and the quality of your relationship. How moshim best finds expression depends on the individual, family or community that practices it. We cannot substitute external formality for true inner devotion and responsibility.

While studying both ancient and modern Korean literature, I discovered a certain sweetness, a closeness, and a profound dedication of love that defines the (original) Korean experience of moshim. Combine that sweetness and love with the Unificationist understanding of God and God’s life and path, and you start to get the answer to the question “what is attendance” from Reverend Moon’s viewpoint. Father’s view and practice of moshim is the model for each of us as Unificationists (that is, the attitude and heart, not necessarily the form, which inherently requires the expression of one’s unique individual character).

We might conceive of the heart of moshim as having a similar quality as the heart of the newborn mom or dad towards their son or daughter, but directed towards those that precede us or take responsibility for us, in some way, on a greater level. For example, Father had this level of devotion to Jesus as his elder brother:

"Why then is it that we have faith and hope in Jesus? It is to become a true son or daughter of God, and thus become a true family member of Jesus, who can live attending him. ...In your family, living in the attendance of Jesus as your own elder brother, you should possess a heart that can take his sorrow as yours, his pain as yours, his concern as yours. Thus, you can comfort him."**

Thus, we practice moshim to Jesus by understanding what Jesus desired to accomplish, what his deep intent was, and then honoring and pursuing it to fulfillment, such that Jesus could stand back and sigh, and say, "now it is finally done. I am at peace. Thank you."

If there is something our Korean brethren must recognize and learn to share with us, it is this "original" Korean experience of moshim. Of course, this is easier said than done. The Korean experience of moshim must find its purest expression, and then be elevated through Father and Mother's spirit. Only then can it be a source of guidance for the rest of the world. A corrupted or external form of moshim cannot provide the elements we need to understand this most essential aspect of Father's life practice. Father discovered his path in the Korean context, so like it or not, the communication of important lessons from the Korean experience to the worldwide UC community is a critical aspect of the global Unificationist path. Unfortunately, to date, this providential requirement has not been that successfully met. I leave it to the reader to ruminate on why this might be.

Notes:

* Author's translation

** From "Let Us Become a True Member of Jesus' Family," Seoul, Oct. 18, 1957:
<http://www.tparents.org/Moon-Talks/SunMyungMoon57/SunMyungMoon-571018.htm>

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