

## The Providence to Engage Christianity – Part 1

Kevin McCarthy  
June 4, 2017



*The author lecturing Divine Principle to Christian ministers in the 1980s*

### A divide to be bridged

It was a peaceful morning and the sky was Carolina blue. Such mornings are always breathtaking. We were in our main center, where five other members and I lived, in Raleigh, the state capital. It was 1973, and I was the new state leader, fresh from a special forty-day leaders' training course at Belvedere.

We had finished our morning prayers and were gathering around the breakfast table, the bright morning sun blazing in through the windows making our hodgepodge of breakfast dishes, bowls and glasses sparkle like jewels. The

center was located near the North Carolina State University campus in a quiet, peaceful area of tree-lined streets, parks and genteel southern-style manors. The only sounds that morning were the chirping of birds, the low tones of light conversation and the occasional clinking of spoons plunging into cereal bowls; that is, until this perfectly serene morning scene underwent a sudden and unexpected transformation.

“Mooonieees!” The sound exploded from the street in front of the center. Mooonieees. . . ! You are going to burn in hey-ya-all!” (The word “hell,” spoken with a North Carolina accent, is a three-syllable word, hey-ya-all.)

While the human brain focuses on facilitating all the necessary processes to open the mouth, insert a spoonful of cereal it is quite a challenge to shift focus to the unexpected theological imagery of yourself burning in hell.

“Moonies, you are going to burn in hell!” the voice bellowed again. My newly acquired, fine-tuned leadership skills led me to an astute observation: we had a situation. I could tell from how the members' unblinking stares had locked on me that they expected their new state leader to do something about it.

“I guess I had better go see what this is all about,” I said, getting up and moving toward the front door, which led out onto a porch. Nearing the door, I was able to see through the window into the street.

We were not just dealing with one person but with a vast multitude! I hesitated for a moment and considered whether I should review my notes from the forty-day leadership training. Possibly, there was material related to how to handle this situation; but alas, there was no time to check. Tensions were boiling over in the street outside.

A large mass of people, a church group, was crowded in front of the center, blocking the entire street. There were close to two hundred people, many with signs protesting our presence in the community and predicting our future relocation to a warmer climate (hell). They were led by a young minister (I called him Rev. Burnem, as in “Burn them!”). He had long hair and a beard. In fact, if you could imagine Jesus having a maniacal, hyperactive younger brother, that was Rev. Burnem.

“Don't take another step, son of Satan!” he loudly commanded, pointing menacingly at me as I emerged onto the porch and headed down the steps to the sidewalk. I looked right back at him with a quizzical smile and said, “Me?. . . Do you mean me? I'm the son of Satan?” I assured him I was nowhere near that important.

We proceeded to engage in a very intense “discussion” as his members surrounded us shouting various chants that emphasized Rev. Burnem's overall theme of my impending doom in the fires of hell. Soon the melee included city policemen and various “Action News” camera crews all wondering what great calamity had befallen their city. What a scene! It was a spontaneous street fair of theological jousting.

Neighbors were standing on their porches and front lawns in bathrobes, slippers and other garb, clutching coffee cups and morning papers, shaking their heads and scowling. I could virtually read on their lips the soon-to-be oft-uttered phrase, “It's the Moonies. . .again.”



*For 2,000 years, no one knew God's purpose for sending Jesus. We received from Father the understanding that Jesus' primary mission was not accomplished. Knowing this, we may err in not communicating to non-members an accurate appreciation of the immense value of what Jesus did achieve through his sacrifice on the cross.*

### **A mutual lack of understanding**

This was my first real experience confronting the wide chasm that existed between our movement and much of Christianity. I was twenty-one years old and had joined the movement a few months before. Back then, many of our first members had joined, as I had, in the San Francisco area. We didn't join a "church." We joined a movement, a family, the Unified Family, the International Reeducation Foundation, the International Ideal City Ranch -- whatever. But the one thing we were sure we were not was a namby-pamby Christian church group. Not at all!

We sang songs with lyrics such as "Because all men are brothers, wherever they may be, one union shall unite them, forever proud and free!" Or another old favorite, "Here is a land full of power and glory, beauty that words cannot recall.... Oh her power shall rest on the strength of her freedom; her glory shall rest on us all."

In 1973, the Christian message and persona were turn-offs for us. We weren't waiting for Jesus to come on the clouds and take us out. We were living on earth with the Messiah; building the ideal world now! Our mentality toward Christians was "lead us, follow us, or get out of the way."

In other words, we were typical, idealistic, self-righteous, young whippersnappers.

No wonder Rev. Burnem was so convinced we were headed to Hades and old Beelzebub. Such conflicts continued throughout most of the 1970s. In fact, a common backdrop to virtually every event on the Day of Hope speaking tours, 1973–1976, was the vehement, often disorderly, protest of two prominent groups -- the communists, on the Left, and the Christians on the Right. How odd and incongruent were these strange bedfellows. I remember at the 1976 Yankee Stadium event, pointing this out to one very ardent Christian protester. I asked him, "How does it feel to have to hold hands with Marxists in order to stand against Rev. Moon? How do you explain that in your theology?" It actually shook him up for a moment.

Christians didn't understand us; but also, we didn't understand them. It would be more accurate to say, we didn't understand Father and the way of God's providence for the Christian world. As a result, we made mistakes in those early years and some of them were colossal. A typical example of how we behaved comes from one brother's lecture on a college campus, a Baptist college campus:

"You Christians. . . going around and saying, 'I'm saved; I'm saved! . . .' Well, let me tell you something. You're not saved. You're not saved at all -- not one little bit!" We had people running out of the lecture rooms as if their hair were on fire.

The providence of God, unfortunately for God, is also the providence of humans. As humans often strive for noble ideals and fall short, the providence of God, as a result, is not always able to hold to the desired timetable. We know the history of God's modern providence and that Christianity was prepared so that at the end of World War II its recognition of True Parents would consummate its ultimate destiny. No doubt, this breakdown in God's original timetable was a major contributing factor in our own lack of identification with Christians as the ultimate and most essential aim of God's dispensation.

### **True Father is "Reverend"**

For Father, however, it was always clear. The fundamental lesson of the Divine Principle is that once a moment of providence passed by unfulfilled, God re-creates a similar opportunity at a later time. Since that initial breakdown from so many years before, Father has had a laser-light focus on the eventual return of the significant moment of the reconciliation of the Christian world with its greatest destiny. No doubt, Father's arrival in America in 1972 was also to get us aligned with the vision expressed in the name, the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity.

I recall a very poignant moment at a state leaders' meeting called by Father in the summer of 1973 to announce the twelve-city Day of Hope Tour, beginning in New York City at Carnegie Hall. "Father

would like to know the opinion of the state leaders regarding one matter,” Mr. David Kim interpreted. “During this tour, should Father be introduced as ‘Mr. Sun Myung Moon’ or ‘Reverend Sun Myung Moon’?”

Years later, I came to realize that whenever Father asks for your opinion, he is actually checking to see how attuned you are to what God has already directed him to do. We all looked at one another to see which brave soul would be the first to express an opinion. First one state leader, then a couple more, spoke out. Eventually everyone was freely expressing a unanimous view -- Father should be Mr. Sun Myung Moon. “Reverend” sounded, to us, just too Christian.



*Father's Madison Square Garden speech on September 18, 1974, drew a capacity crowd -- plus opposition from Christian groups and others with political axes to grind.*

“Father will be Reverend Sun Myung Moon,” David Kim announced. We had flunked the test. Clearly, we were in dire need of a vertical re-alignment. And by the end of that leader's conference, that the Unification Church was not only Christian but was the church God could depend on to receive the Christ and lead all Christians toward the “new future of Christianity” was indisputable.

What was that future? The Divine Principle book tells us that a trend has the East Asian, Hindu, Islamic and Christian cultural spheres -- those that have survived to this day -- forming one sphere based on the Christian ethos. This shows that Christianity, ultimately, is to fulfill the goal that all religions have had and that these spheres have been developing over time toward one cultural sphere based on one religion.

Notice the Divine Principle emphasis on the forming of one global cultural sphere based not on Christian theology but rather on the Christian ethos. Notice also, that this ethos would be one to embrace and “accomplish the goals of all religions.” What, then, is that ethos? Father explains it in “America in God's Providence”:

Among the world religions, therefore, Christianity is the one central to God's purpose because Jesus Christ gave himself as a sacrifice for others. More than that, he even prayed for his enemies to be blessed by God. The spirit of Jesus was to be an offering for others. Following his pattern, many Christians have been martyred for God's cause. Families have been sacrificed, and tribes and nations were given up for the sake of God. So for the providence of God to come to the worldwide level, God is demanding that one nation come forth and sacrifice herself for the blessing of all mankind. God needs such a nation to represent the world.

Thus, Christianity is the central religion because of this ethos. It is contained in the story of Jesus within the declaration that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son.” God sacrificed his own son for those who, for all intents and purposes, stood in the position of His enemy. In view of this, no one could stand apart and say that only “my people” were the people of God. Jesus' sacrifice was the most dramatic declaration that all people subjects under God's parental love. Thus, we were all brothers and sisters; we were all one family.

This is why the cross of Jesus stands as the compelling narrative of Christian faith and the central focus of the Divine Principle lecture on the Mission of the Messiah. It is because it is at the cross with the sacrifice of Jesus that the essential Christian ethos is manifested.

### **He didn't come *just* to die**

The Divine Principle also issues a challenge to Christianity. It challenges the very core of the Christian narrative of the cross: Jesus did not come to die. When expressed in this manner, it will always produce an immediate reaction, which is reasonable because when rendered in this manner, people's minds automatically turn to scripture that appear to declare differently. For example, Jesus himself, said in Luke 24:25–27 “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”

Jesus didn't come to die, you say? The answer resides in understanding the full Divine Principle view of Jesus' mission. It is more accurate to say, "Jesus didn't just come to die," rather than simply saying "Jesus didn't come to die." In other words, the Divine Principle affirms the atoning work of Christ on Calvary's cross and the institution of the Christian ethos through the sacrifice of the son. The Divine Principle fully affirms this as the rightful root of Christian faith. But that's not all it affirms; it affirms much more, which is why we proclaim the Divine Principle as the "completed testament."



*Outreach to Christians at seminars like this one held almost thirty years ago in Seoul, Korea, was an extension of efforts by members like Mrs. Hyun-shil Kang, whom Father sent out as early as 1957 to meet leaders of other religions and those who had received revelations.*

It affirms that when Jesus turned toward the cross in the last year of his ministry, he simultaneously had to turn away from a greater mission, a mission other than the way of the cross. In fact, the Divine Principle declares that this greater mission was Jesus' original mission, his primary mission and the primary focus of the first two years of his three-year ministry. Thus, when the Divine Principle discusses the ethos manifested at the cross, it is presenting an expanded, or completed, expression, one that also reveals, for the first time in history, the circumstances that produced the profound grief expressed by Jesus as the cross became inevitable.

In other words, the sacrifice made at the cross was not just the sacrifice of a single man, as in the traditional narrative. In view of the Principle, Jesus had a primary mission other than the way of the cross and the substance of that mission was to be the fulfillment of the three blessings, the purpose of creation. In knowing this, we can then recognize that something much more was sacrificed at the cross of Jesus. Rather than merely saying, "Jesus, didn't come to die," saying "Jesus sacrificed more on the cross," gives Christians more room to mull over a new truth whereas previously it would have been rejected out of hand. As they mull over that truth, they also will discover the indisputable fact that True Father, and no one else, knew all that Jesus had sacrificed. It would further stand to reason that this same man would then be the first individual to recognize and express the true nature of Jesus' "sorrow unto death," something more than any theology has ever revealed. I believe with all my heart that the Christian journey into the era of the Second Coming of Christ proceeds through that very door.

The sacrifice of Jesus, according to the view of the Principle, was not just the sacrifice of a single man. It was the sacrifice of a bridegroom and bride, the sacrifice of Father, Mother, parents and most importantly the sacrifice of God's own unblemished lineage.

God's own dream is to be a parent presiding in love over an everlastingly expanding line of direct descendants. All of this was laid upon the cross of Jesus. All of this was set aside so that we, His prodigal children, could be embraced even before He could embrace his very own son; though only the son was worthy, we were not. It could even be argued that God's love for humanity is a type of injustice for God.

And there is more, a deeper dimension, hidden until this age, within the "new" ethos of Christ, though it was expressed in Gethsemane. Father spoke of this on January 25, 1959, in "The Sorrowful Heart of Jesus as He Went to the Mount":

Thus, the prayer at the garden of Gethsemane will never end. Throughout endless ages and centuries, this heartbreaking and blood-stained voice of the final plea should always stay alive in the human heart. God is working hard, hoping for a day when your heart will resonate with the heart of Jesus, who cried out, "My God."

Jesus could have set the entire universe in motion to breathe a deep sigh of despair with him. But he understood that his position was not to sigh in despair. Instead, he even went so far as to feel apologetic toward Heaven for having been rejected.

In this way, Father reveals Jesus' true inner heart in Gethsemane. Jesus, as a devoted son, came to offer God his one dream, a lineage of his own. Jesus' grieved not because of the suffering he was about to encounter, as most Christian theology asserts, but rather because he would be unable, at that time, to liberate God from His suffering. Jesus knew that God was never meant to suffer; a God of grief was never meant to be. This historical reality of a suffering God was unacceptable to a devoted son such as Jesus. His quest was to liberate his Father so that God could stand in his true position as God and Father over an uncontested pure lineage of his own. This is the Completed Testament Christian ethos. Having "taken up the cross" for two thousand years, the time has come to take up the original mission of Jesus, the mission of True Parents and the bringing of the holy blessing to the world. To understand this, embrace it and fulfill it was the essence of "the New Future of Christianity" that Father proclaimed throughout America. Centering on Christianity and Christian leaders, America was the nation to carry that providence forward to embrace and fulfill all goals of all religions that were pursuing goodness:

*The United States of America, transcending race and nationality, is already a model of the unified world. She must realize that the abundant blessings which God has been pouring upon this land are not just for America, but are for the children of God throughout the world. Upon the foundation of world Christianity, America must exercise her responsibility as a world leader and the chosen nation of God.*

-- "God Bless America Festival," September 18, 1976, in Washington, DC