

The Third Great Awakening

Hugh Spurgin
August 1, 2016

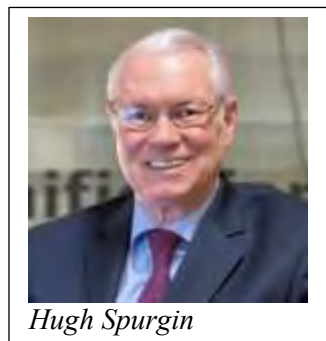


This article is adapted from a sermon delivered May 15, 2016, in the UTS Chapel to a FFWPU New York regional congregation.

We are living in a special time in history due to the role and mission of the co-founders of the Unification movement, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. The time of Jesus was a period of transition from an old world to a new one when a new religion was born. It took nearly 400 years for that religion, Christianity, to gain acceptance by the Roman

Empire. It will not take centuries for the Unification movement to be accepted because events are happening much more quickly in our lifetime. It will take decades, not centuries.

Jesus proclaimed good news based on a new revelation that established a new religion. Externally at that time, the power of the Roman army created stability in the Mediterranean world, establishing the Pax Romana that allowed Christianity to spread widely. At the same time, new mystery religions internally caused uncertainty and insecurity for people; even Christianity had many different sects.



Hugh Spurgin

Out of that confusion, an entirely new world, not just a new religion, emerged.

There is a parallel between the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago and America after World War II. The power of the American military and economy provided for a time of relative peace and stability called the Pax Americana. Yet in the 1970s, when Rev. and Mrs. Moon arrived in the U.S., America was in a chaotic state. Many people were confused and could not understand what was happening. From my perspective, America was in a state of decline. There was a danger that the United States would fall in the same way that Rome did when Christianity emerged.

During that time, Father and Mother Moon played a major role in helping to revive America, even though most people still do not know their historical role. Nor did people know who Jesus was, since very few people heard about him.

The Unification Church movement has spread rapidly around the world, but during the 1970s people did not know what to think about it. There were many new religions; most of them are now gone. The one that is still alive and active is the Unification Church movement, which is based on a series of revelations from God.

Forty years ago, in his speech at Yankee Stadium honoring America's bicentennial, Father Moon talked about two great awakenings and also about a third spiritual revolution in the 20th century that was centered on the Unification movement. Many historians have written about the first two great awakenings.

The First Great Awakening

The First Great Awakening occurred prior to the American Revolution. It was a religious revival that brought about unity among people from different nationalities, religions, faiths, and states. At that time, there was division between the Old and the New Lights. In the midst of that revival, a new nation was born.

At Yankee Stadium, Father Moon talked about America achieving sovereignty over its own land as a result of the First Great Awakening. Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and others brought about a revival in America before the American Revolution. John Adams declared that the ideas of the American Revolution were already in the hearts and minds of the people several decades before the first shots were fired, due to the work of ministers and revivalists of the First Great Awakening. Hence, that Awakening led directly to the American Revolution and to a new nation led by George Washington as President.

Unfortunately, America's Founding Fathers failed to abolish slavery due to the fear of many Southern planters that they would lose their human "property" and of merchants in New England who profited from

the slave trade.

The Second Great Awakening

A group of revivalists, including Charles Finney, led what historians call the Second Great Awakening.

That Awakening resulted in the rise of several major social reform movements. Most important was abolitionism that sought to abolish slavery. The contention of the evangelists was God does not want anyone to be enslaved.

As Rev. Moon said in his Yankee Stadium message, “God raised a new leader, Abraham Lincoln.”

At the time of his nomination to be the candidate of the Republican Party in the presidential election, Lincoln was unknown to most people. He opposed the expansion of slavery to the territories newly acquired by America. After Lincoln was elected, the Civil War occurred in which churches split and society divided between the North and the South. Lincoln’s priority was to save the Union. Initially, he did not intend to free the slaves, but in 1863 issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

What Father Moon declared was that the First Great Awakening provided the land (i.e., sovereignty), and the Second Great Awakening furnished people who were free to inhabit that land. In that way, Lincoln re-founded the American nation. The internal or religious dimension influenced external political events and economic consequences.

The Third Great Awakening

Upon arriving in America, Reverend and Mrs. Moon brought a spiritual revolution, which was a Third Great Awakening. Some historians maintain there were more than three Great Awakenings, but my contention is that the religious crusade of our Founders of the Unification movement was a major event in American history. Father Moon said that he brought a new worldview that was God-centered, in order to awaken the American people to the dangers of communism.

In the 1970s, America was in trouble. Rev. and Mrs. Moon focused on turning the situation around. Father Moon contended there was an ideological battle going on worldwide between the free world and the communist world. He said America should take the lead to end atheistic communism and work to bring about the fall of Soviet Union. At that time, no one else thought that was possible. The contention of Rev. Moon was that the people who lived under communism were enslaved. He awoke America to the danger and worked to bring about the fall of the USSR.

According to Rev. Moon, the Third Great Awakening was based on a new ideological, religious worldview. At that time, America was in turmoil, and Father Moon worked to reverse that decline. He sought to bring about an awakening based on a revival of the spirit of the founding fathers. President Ronald Reagan described America as a “city on the hill” for everyone to see. On the foundation of that revival, a change occurred which created an upswing in the 1980s and beyond.



An overview of the Washington Monument rally on September 18, 1976.

beginnings even now.

The Current Situation

What about today? Again America is in decline, and confusion reigns. There are many parallels between 2016 and 1976. As the cliché says, history repeats itself.

Ultimately, God is in charge, yet the false precedes the true. The old world must disappear before a new world can emerge. The new world cannot be built upon the unstable foundation of a world that is impure and corrupt. How will the old world collapse and a new world emerge? The new world begins in a small way and grows over time. We can see its

The old world currently is governed by elites who are concerned primarily with preserving their own money, power and exalted positions. Eventually that corrupt world will collapse.

Worldwide there are many challenges to the established political and economic world order, hence to the elite leaders who rule those institutions. Religious, political, and economic establishments are being challenged everywhere, including in America. Every major religious, political and economic institution in America is under fire: Congress, the Presidency, the Supreme Court, the press, organized religion, and

the two major political parties. Those institutions are destined to change.

During the presidency of George Washington, America developed a two-party system. The modern Democratic Party originated over 200 years ago, but the Federalist Party was replaced by the Whig Party and then by the Republican Party, which elected Abraham Lincoln president in 1860. Now we see divisions in American society on every level from that of the individual, family and nation. American institutions are divided, including the two major political parties.

It would be good if evangelists stepped forward. A small group can have a dramatic impact on the trajectory of history. Look at that motley group whom we call the Christian saints. Most were simple people who were not very impressive. Paul had an education, but most of the others did not. Yet when Emperor Constantine converted, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. Likewise, Lenin was able to conquer Russia with a small cadre of people.

From the Old to the New

Today we are in the process of moving from an old to a new world, as prophesied in the Book of Revelation. As we approach the year 2020, the 100th anniversary of the birth of Rev. Moon, we can see the emergence of a significant new religion. Jesus said the kingdom of heaven was like a mustard seed that is small, but grows to be a big tree.

Many people worry about the abundance of problems in our contemporary world. It would be easy to give up, do nothing, and watch the world fall apart. Unificationists are everywhere working to make this world a better place to live. They are in every aspect of human society. People may not be aware of what they are doing, yet they are providing leadership to a troubled world.

When George Washington was camped at Valley Forge, he could have returned home to Mount Vernon and lived a comfortable life. But he did not. He persevered. The spiritual battle fought at Valley Forge was a major factor in America winning the war for independence. To succeed we also must have faith, love, charity, and grit or determination.

Many people do not realize that the Third Great Awakening brought by our Founders has occurred and I predict its implications will be even greater than that of the first two revivals. We are the ones to tell that story.

God seemingly acts at the very last moment. Why? God allows things to take their path and then our Heavenly Parent acts. If God acted in the beginning, then something could destroy it.

We are moving toward the end of the old world order and the beginning of a new heaven and new earth. God can talk directly to each of us during this Third Awakening. I believe that soon we will see the emergence of the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven. Let us move toward that goal.

Our goal is to bridge religious and cultural divides. We seek to break down the walls that separate all people. The Unification movement is not limited to a particular race, ethnic group or nation. The Unification Church is seeking to break down barriers between black, white and yellow; between this group and that group, between this nation and that nation, this religion and another faith.

The Pilgrim Fathers arrived at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Now 400 years later, we are looking toward dramatic changes occurring from 2020. Let's do our best to move toward the emergence of a new world centered on the vision of the founders of our Unification movement.

Dr. Hugh Spurgin is President of Unification Theological Seminary. Previously, he was President of Bridgeport International Academy, a college preparatory high school. He has served as Vice President of the Unification Church of America, Executive Director of the Professors World Peace Academy International, and Executive Director of the International Cultural Foundation. He holds a Ph.D. in American and European history from Columbia University, an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary, and an MPA from Syracuse University. Dr. Spurgin and his wife, Nora, are the parents of four adult children, who are married and have professional careers.

Painting at top: Detail from "George Whitefield Preaching" by John Collet (1725-80).