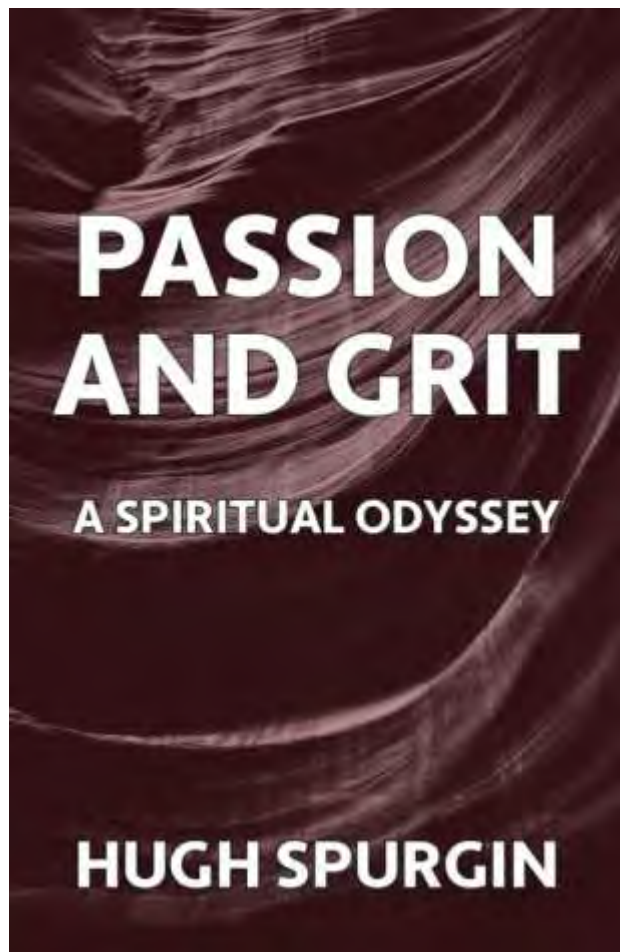


Passion and Grit: A Spiritual Odyssey - The autobiography of Hugh D. Spurgin

Gordon L. Anderson
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The autobiography of Hugh D. Spurgin, *Passion and Grit: A Spiritual Odyssey*, is the story of an early follower of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon in America. It reveals the impact of the power of a higher truth on a conscientious and idealistic person who seeks to live the most meaningful life possible.

In the 1960s and 1970s, material prosperity in the United States was high, but traditional religious doctrines had lost their power to explain the nature of reality and human happiness in a scientific world. The baby boomers were coming of age in a world of confused and conflicting values. Some accepted the establishment, others rebelled against it, but still others, like Hugh, sought constructive ways to move forward, discerning what was of value in our traditions, and what needed to change.

Rev. Moon's teachings put Hugh on a life journey, not only a spiritual path, but as a member of a new community in which he raised his family and became a leader of a worldwide movement that has now reached millions of people. This book is both a chronicle of Hugh's life and the development of the Unification Church, now the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), and how Americans worked to bring Rev. Moon's teachings of a higher culture and more peaceful

world.



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A Seeker of Truth

Hugh was born in Roswell, New Mexico, in 1945 and grew up in Terre Haute, Indiana. The family attended a Presbyterian Church and his dad was a chiropractor. Hugh liked sports and outdoor activities. After graduating from high school in 1963, he went to Indiana State University and excelled in social sciences, and went on for a master's degree in public administration at the Maxwell Graduate School in Syracuse, New York. This landed Hugh an internship, and later a full-time administration job with the U.S. Navy in Washington, DC. He had a top-secret clearance and secure employment in the federal government.

Hugh was not content to simply pursue this career. He was always seeking answers to historical and religious problems and ways to make the world better. While studying the Baha'i faith, he was invited to hear several lectures based on Rev. Moon's teachings at the Unified Family center in a Victorian mansion on Upshur Street. Hugh heard clear answers to some of his questions about evil, God, Jesus, and salvation. It was an eye-opening, comprehensive historical perspective on human history and civilization. It also presented principles about peacefully advancing human society. He decided to join this small group and help transform the world.

When Rev. and Mrs. Moon came to Washington, DC in 1969, they moved into Upshur House for 40 days, spending quality and personal time with Hugh and the other members who lived or gathered there. Hugh was amazed by Moon's interracial and intercultural approach to marriage, breaking down traditional religious and ethnic boundaries with the goal of creating one world family under God.

Military service interrupted Hugh's time with his new-found community. He had joined the National Guard in Washington, and had to leave for six weeks for basic training, and later, as a soldier, had to protect the White House from protestors while on leave from his job with the federal government.

Husband and Church Leader

The biggest change for Hugh was engagement and marriage to Nora Martin, who had lived at Upshur Street and then moved to Kansas City to start a center there. Hugh and Nora were blessed in marriage in Korea and then began their family life together as pioneer missionaries in Kansas City, Philadelphia and Minneapolis. They were leading witnessing teams, taught, and organized speaking events for Rev. Moon, who in 1972, moved to America to launch his One World Crusade. They no longer worked in regular jobs but became leaders in an expanding movement that was supported by fundraisers selling flowers, candles, candy, and other items on the street wherever their campaigns took them.



Dr. Hugh Spurgin

From 1973-75, Hugh and Nora were raising two children and based at the headquarters of the movement in the Midwest in Minneapolis and a school that served as a workshop site in Greenville, Iowa. He was travelling nationally and had major responsibilities in organizing Rev. Moon's "Forgive, Love and Unite" Watergate rallies in Washington, and his speech at Madison Square Garden on September 18, 1974.

Seminary and a Ph.D. in History

After the whirlwind tours that introduced Rev. Moon and his teaching to America, the movement had grown into a new religion and the Unification Church established Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York, to formally educate church leaders. In September 1975, Hugh joined the first class of 56 graduate students.

While he immersed himself in the study of theology, philosophy and history during the academic year, he was a church leader involved in organizing Rev. Moon's Yankee Stadium and Washington Monument rallies in the summer of 1976.

After graduating from the seminary in Barrytown, Hugh received a scholarship from Rev. Moon to pursue a master's degree in church history at Union Theological Seminary in New York and a Ph.D. in history at Columbia University. This seven-year period of advanced study in religion and history, combined with the master's degree in public administration he earned earlier, gave Hugh the knowledge and skills to oversee the development of the church and several of its cultural and educational activities for the remainder of his career.



Nora Spurgin and Dr. Hugh Spurgin at their home in Clermont, FL.

Building a Worldwide Movement

As early blessed members of the Unification Church, Hugh and Nora took leadership roles, working with Rev. Chung Hwan Kwak, an early Korean disciple, in the historic blessing of 2,075 couples in marriage at Madison Square Garden in 1982. Most of these couples were American and European members who had

joined as a result of the mission work of early members and worked on Rev. Moon's speaking tours. Nora had become head of the Blessed Family Department. Hugh became Secretary General of the International Cultural Foundation, which supported the International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA), and other projects. They purchased a home in New Jersey where they could raise their children and work with Rev. and Mrs. Moon on their global crusade headquartered in America.

ICUS and PWPA were international forums for scientists and scholars to discuss the world's most pressing issues like the problems of war, communism, the environment, and to develop social systems in which all people could become successful, happy, and perfect their love for others. After a major ICUS meeting of 800 scholars in 1981, Rev. Moon asked Rev. Kwak and Hugh to establish national chapters of PWPA in 72 countries. They travelled to Peru, Thailand, the Philippines, Turkey, the Ivory Coast, and Kenya holding seminars for scholars in the area that had been recommended by missionaries in those countries. In December 1983, the Presidents of PWPA chapters from 72 countries travelled to Korea for the founding of PWPA International. Each signed a declaration and pledge to work with Rev. Moon to create a God-centered world that embraced all nations and religions and the highest standards of scholarship and morality.

The expanding activities of Rev. Moon, which included a seafood business and the founding of the *Washington Times* newspaper, were perceived as a threat to some established churches and government leaders. A backlash developed that included kidnapping and attempts to "deprogram" members, and a conviction and imprisonment of Rev. Moon on charges of tax evasion. Hugh and Nora were caught in the middle of this activity, organizing a defense of Rev. Moon and counselling members. The persecution had the effect of bringing major religious and political leaders to Rev. Moon's defense and creating long-lasting relationships with others pursuing peace, justice and interracial harmony.

In late 1985, Hugh received a new assignment as a church leader, first as a regional director headquartered in Philadelphia, and then, in 1988, as a Vice President of the Unification Church of America. In this position, he was able to travel with Rev. Moon's family on many private excursions and travel throughout the United States visiting church centers and speaking on university campuses.

In April 1990, Rev. Moon and Mrs. Moon travelled to Moscow and met with Soviet President Gorbachev, opening the door for church members to operate openly in Eastern Europe. Hugh was asked to go to Bulgaria in October-November and doors were opened for him to meet with many Bulgarian professors, media and political leaders. He was able to give lectures on Rev. Moon's teaching at high schools and universities, witnessing the spread of religious and political reforms in the former communist country.



In 1998, Rev. Sun Myung Moon patted Dr. Spurgin (left) on the head and said, "Good job."

Bridgeport International Academy

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of churches throughout the world ended the global

expansion phase of Rev. Moon's activities. It was time for members all over the world to return to their hometowns, put down roots, get jobs or create businesses, raise families, and work on a new culture of peace. Hugh and Nora both lost their jobs at church headquarters and experienced great upheaval in their lives.

They sold their house and moved to Pennsylvania, looking for new jobs. The two oldest children were in college and the younger two uprooted from their public schools. Hugh initially worked several part-time jobs. In 1992, Mrs. Moon asked Nora to become the American President of the newly-formed Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP). Then, from 1994-96 Hugh was hired by the *Washington Times* to be the production manager for *Washington Golf Monthly*. This was another upheaval for the younger children when the family moved to Virginia.

In December 1996, on the recommendation of officials from the University of Bridgeport, Rev. Moon asked Hugh to start a senior high school on the university's campus in Connecticut. The international church donated money to start the school, and after six months, Hugh had laid the groundwork. By this time, his youngest child had graduated from high school in Virginia, and the move to Bridgeport did not interrupt the family.

Originally called the New Eden Academy, the school became a boarding school for teenagers, requiring numerous permits from the Connecticut Board of Education. In 2003, Father and Mother Moon visited the school. In 2004, the school received accreditation with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and changed its name to Bridgeport International Academy (BIA). Pleased with progress at the school, in 2005, Father Moon asked Nora to become the principal, giving her specific ideas, and asked the church to donate \$2 million for a new facility adjacent to the University of Bridgeport campus.

Hugh served as President of BIA until 2015, when he was asked to become President of Unification Theological Seminary (UTS). BIA continues today on the solid foundation it received from Hugh. UTS had run into management and accreditation problems that needed to be solved. Hugh methodically worked through the issues, developed a fully accredited online degree program, and moved the main campus to Manhattan.

Satisfied that he had avoided a financial crisis at UTS and had introduced changes that made the school more accessible and competitive, Hugh resigned and retired in 2019 at age 74 and purchased a home for retirement in Florida near their son, High.

This autobiography is historically important for those who want to study the development of the Family Federation of World Peace and Unification founded by Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon. Hugh Spurgin was involved in leadership of the movement through its transformation into a global cultural movement with churches, schools, newspapers, and businesses. In this review, I have chosen to focus on an overview of Dr. Spurgin's involvement in this development. There are many more details about this in the book, particularly about Hugh and Nora's family life, child-raising in the movement and the teachings of Rev. Moon.

This book is highly recommended to both those interested in an autobiography of Dr. Spurgin and those who want to learn about the historical development of the Unification Movement in America.

Passion and Grit: A Spiritual Odyssey will be published August 1 by Circles of Angels Publications. It will be available in paperback and as an e-book on Amazon.com and on the FFWPU-USA website for \$15.95.

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