

Foreign Missions 1975-1985 – The First Ten Years (Part 4)

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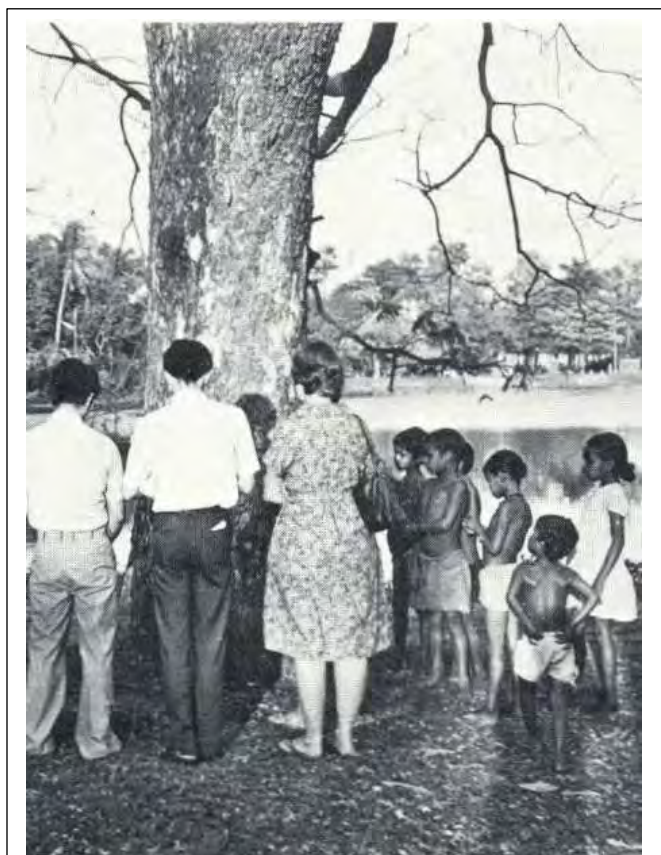


For all the hard work our missionaries expended in winning people, often the first native members had to pay extraordinary indemnity and were not always strong enough to withstand Satan's temptations and persecution. To lose a spiritual child was a crushing blow to the missionaries, since through these experiences they realized they may not have known how to love the person, or the people from their nation -- which sometimes expected too much of them, sometimes expected too little.

In many countries, the family structure is very close-knit and is an important unit of the society. As a result, new members often had a hard time separating from their families, or from what their parents wanted for them. The families of many of our new members still expected their sons or daughters to give them financial

support. One nation developed a very successful business, giving modest salaries to members so that they were still able to give some money to their families each month; the families became quite positive as the parents learned more about our church and often became involved in our work themselves. Some nations promoted a Unification Church Parents' Association which worked to bring parents and children closer to Principle, and closer together in heart. Consequently, these parents gave tremendous support to our work and their blessing upon their children's involvement. Some parents even made it a practice to come to our church center to pray before going to work in the morning.

In some situations, where the foreign missionaries had to be careful and witness underground, Satan's attack was strong; new members sometimes left and even betrayed the missionaries. This often resulted in a missionary being deported or jailed. On occasion, ex-members used voodoo and other such practices against our missionaries, who found the power of those evil forces very difficult to break.



3 missionaries unit in prayer at holy ground in India

Often because of the disunity between the foreign missionaries, members saw no harmony in the church and consequently left. They often did not have many other brothers and sisters in the faith to talk to. They had never seen True Parents and perhaps they didn't feel confident that the situation would improve. They may not have been able to see the Principle in action, or the hidden victories of restoration. Until unity was made it was nearly impossible for the foreign missionaries to give a single standard, a single tradition to new members and guests. And to strive for that standard, the missionaries had to abandon much of themselves.

When members left, the missionaries tried hard not to allow the situation to paralyze them and they always worked to find ways to reach the people. Because it was often dangerous to meet guests, some missionaries taught their students while driving or riding in a bus, or deep in the forest, or on the beach of a secluded island -- wherever it was possible to do so. The missionaries in one nation even traveled through the countryside teaching guerillas who were conducting a revolution.

A frustration often encountered by the foreign missionaries was that when they taught someone who responded well to the truth, the person still clung to the desire to live in a developed country because he or she had absolutely no desire to help his own nation, and no hope in its future.

Despite this, there were many prospective church leaders among the new members in different nations.

After some of them attended 40-day or 120-day training sessions, a great number of them wanted to return to their homelands and help to officially establish the Unification Church or the One World Crusade there.

Persecution

As our church was established in many nations, and especially as it became more well known, missionaries and members were often severely persecuted. Yet it seemed that for all the persecution, God was able to claim some great victories. One such case happened in Brazil.

Persecution was a byword for many missions. Over thirty foreign missionaries spent some time in jail for various lengths of time. Countless others were brought to security police offices and questioned for hours or even days. Each foreign missionary who was imprisoned has a unique story. One, slightly reminiscent of the story told in the movie *Midnight Express*, told by a missionary jailed in a Middle Eastern nation, follows:

"The official asked me who had sent me to the country and what was my purpose here.... He motioned to the policeman holding me. They immediately sat me on the floor and lifted up my legs. Tying them up, they proceeded to strike the bottoms of my feet with a very hard stick somewhat larger than a broom handle. It all happened so fast; I was taken completely by surprise, never expecting such treatment for teaching people to love God. They hit me about 20 times and then walked me up and down the hall for ten minutes so my leg muscles wouldn't react.

... They brought me again to the official and for a time I could not speak, my mouth was so dry and my jawbone was shaking up and down. It was strange, I still felt happy and peaceful and held no ill feelings toward this man. He was just doing his job.

Then I humbly said that Reverend Sun Myung Moon sent me to this country to see about the possibility of helping Islam and Christianity unite. As soon as I spoke these words, this official motioned for my captors to take me away and put me into solitary confinement. I assumed that since under torture I had said I was a religious person, he believed I was no spy.

... The reality of still being in prison with no freedom to teach the Principle hit me hard and I repented to God for my situation. I can honestly write that I never prayed for my own safety or feared the future; I really felt that I was completely in God's hands. But I did pray extensively for the safety of my spiritual children. I spent the next three days in solitary confinement, without any idea of what would happen to me. Only at mealtimes would another human have contact with me, when the guard stuck some rice and perhaps a small piece of mutton through the tiny opening in my door.

I prayed deeply; finally, it came to me that I would probably be released on the third day, just as Jesus was resurrected on the third day. Sure enough, just after I finished fasting for the three days, the guard came and took me out of the cell to be photographed. Then I was taken away in a police car. They informed me that we were on our way to the deportation prison. This was a prison where they put everyone who was waiting to be deported- hardened criminals, murderers, and innocent foreigners who did not want to work anymore.

Two hundred men were inside. There was a courtyard with very high walls and barbed wire covering the top. The door itself was the scariest part, for it seemed just like the small metal opening of a baker's oven. You nearly had to crawl through it. I surely went from one extreme to another. I had just been in solitary confinement for three days; I had been in a small bathroom-sized room with central air conditioning that was so cold I was forced to remain constantly wrapped up in the one blanket they gave me. Now I was placed in an open courtyard, so congested that during the nights we could only lay blankets on the cement floor and sleep side by side. By day we had to sit with legs crossed against the side wall, to avoid the direct sun.

Three completely overflowing holes in the ground served as toilets. The first time I tried to use one of them there was so much human waste along the standing area _and so many flies covering it, that I vowed not to eat so that I would not have to use the toilet.

Finally, I was taken back to the solitary confinement prison of the secret police. Here they left me for two weeks. During this time I could do nothing except eat, sleep, pray, and develop inner discipline. I would easily have sacrificed two days of food in exchange for a rag and some soap to clean my cell. Slowly my teeth and gums began to swell and bleed from lack of fruit and a lack of something to clean them with. Once they gave me steel wool to clean my plastic dish and I used it on my teeth. This was a terrible mistake, for steel wool immediately starts to rust when it contacts water. My health deteriorated; however, I had decided from the beginning that this was my personal blessing, for I was being given an opportunity to experience the suffering of Jesus and our True Father. They also were tortured merely for teaching people to love God."



Indian village near Antigua, Guatemala. Rev. Chan Kyun Kim (second from right).

Resolving Resentments of the Past

We have followed the many Christian missionaries who went out to serve the world. Father often talked about the sacrifices of the Christian missionaries, but stressed that our foreign missionaries should not to make the same mistakes they did. One sister in Africa explained:

"There are resentments against the foreign businessmen in this African nation, but even against Christian missionaries there is a lot of resentment. There are people here who say the Christian missionaries came and taught them to pray with their eyes closed, so that they could not see how the missionaries took away their natural resources. The missionaries often came with the idea that their own religion and culture was much better than those of the Africans. Africans have a strong belief in spirits, but the Christian missionaries often rejected these beliefs as superstition.

However, I especially admire the first missionaries' courage and readiness to sacrifice themselves. Most of them died from malaria. In spite of this fact, new missionaries always came. They were ready to give their lives in order to spread the gospel about the coming of Christ. Formerly West Africa was called the 'white man's grave.'"

At one time, our missionaries in a Far East nation felt a desire to train their members and show the native people the tradition of service in the Unification Church. They decided to do a unique street-cleaning condition. The side of one particular Christian church in one of the major cities was avoided by all regular street cleaners as it was the place that many people would use as an outdoor public toilet. The stench was almost unbearable, but our foreign missionaries and members cleaned this area once a week. The Christian minister was amazed and touched by this service to his church community. He had met no one else who had ever become so involved or who had devoted themselves in such a way.