

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 85

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An Open Letter to My Fellow Christians J. Scharfen, Esq.

Over this past year of COVID lockdown, we have witnessed the acceleration of many concerning trends in American law, culture, political life, and society. The great antagonist of Christianity, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin observed, "There are decades in which nothing happens; and there are weeks in which decades happen." Like much of what Lenin asserted, the statement possesses appreciable wit and a certain surface appeal but when closely examined, elides complex developments and misses the actual course of historical truth. Decades of spiritual decay broadly and systematically bore fruit in the pandemic hothouse of our current times, giving the appearance of an explosive immediacy. Despite appearances, all the strains of confusion and conflict can be traced back decades in our thought, law, morality, behavior, and culture. Most concerning has been the trend to marginalize, even demonize, the Christian ethical perspective in society, culture, and politics, as noted more than a quarter of a century ago by John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*. Just at the moment of Christianity's triumph over atheistic communism, the power of the Gospel message seemed to no longer hold broad purchase in the West. How could this happen?

I ask that my answer to this question--historical, biographical, and inescapably autobiographical--be read with an open heart and measured by prayer.

Writing in 1919 after the First World War, William Butler Yeats captured a profound sense of civilizational crisis in his poem, "The Second Coming." The Western nations had just completed a fratricidal war which extinguished a generation of young people and with them, confidence in their inherited traditions of religion, government, and economics. Revolution erupted in the East altering not just Russia, but the political life of the entire world for the next 70 years. As Yeats wrote,

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

While many sought refuge in pleasure and cast aside nagging moral restraints that inhibited their sense of abandon, the totalitarians emerged, "full of passionate intensity," and proceeded to immiserate entire populations while rationalizing state-sponsored genocide on a scale never before seen or even imagined in history. In a certain sense, Yeats' vision of the future properly contained no germ of hope. He rhetorically raises the possibility of Divine intervention, only to dash it against the rock of nihilism. As the great poet surveyed the horizon, as though with second sight, he slipped from bonds of conventional verse into the realm of disturbing prophecy:

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Humankind, left to its own destructive devices, unleashed an age of ideological and technological terror with seemingly no path to resolution, except the oldest, the one exercised by Cain at the beginning of history.

And yet, as Yeats surveyed the known and demoralized world of 1919 through the stygian gloom, he could not perceive the quiet, intentional, but imperceptible action of God, once again giving birth to hope in human history. While sword, plague, famine, and death ravaged the earth, another "rocking cradle" heralded not the "rough beast" of Yeats' nightmare vision, but instead, the promise of redemption and the rebirth of innocence. At the darkest moment, just when hopeful expectation and aspiration seemingly were extinguished, the providence of God unfolded in time. In Korea, a mountainous land as disdained as Nazareth, a place of seeming irrelevance and a cultural wasteland from the perspective of the imperial powers, Christ was born.

While we looked to the heavens for redemption, God upended history on the earth. The embattled land of Korea had been placed under the dominion of Imperial Japan at the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, and formally annexed by Japan in 1910. At the conclusion of World War I, with the promise of Wilsonian idealism and national self-determination, a nascent Korean independence movement emerged on March 1, 1919, only to be ruthlessly suppressed by the Japanese. From that time, the Japanese began the forceful process of cultural genocide fully in keeping with the tragedy of 20th Century totalitarianism. The Japanese military opened fire on demonstrators, burned schools and churches, and arrested the leaders of the independence movement. Thousands were killed and more than 45,000 Koreans were arrested. The oppression of the Korean people included the attempt to erase the unique cultural and spiritual attributes of the Korean people through the imposition of Shintoism and the Japanese language, an effort that included the replacing of Korean with Japanese names. In particular, Korean Christians were associated with the independence movement and subsequently attracted the full force of imperial rage and violent persecution.

In a small village in the northwest of this crucified land, Sun Myung Moon was born into a humble farm family on January 6, 1920, and raised with a keen sense of the violent injustice and humiliation inflicted on his country and people.

Under these oppressive conditions, the young Moon attended a traditional school in which he received a grounding in Confucianism, including reading and writing using hanja, or Chinese characters. Sometime in the time period of 1930-31, Moon's family converted to Christianity, becoming Presbyterians. The conversion had political as well as spiritual implications, as the Christians in Korea, including Moon's great-uncle, were deeply committed to resisting the Japanese occupation. Thus, the conversion carried with it great risk and required a most serious commitment on the part of the family. In the midst of these circumstances, the young Moon began to explore seriously in prayer, the meaning of his people's suffering and to seek an understanding of God's will for his own life. He writes in his autobiography, *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen*,

When I was ten our family converted to Christianity by the grace of Great-Uncle Yun Guk Moon, who was a minister and led a fervent life of faith. From then on, I attended church faithfully,

without ever missing a week. If I arrived at service even a little late, I would be so ashamed that I could not even raise my face. I don't know what I could have understood at such a young age to inspire me to be this way, but God was already a huge presence in my life. I was spending more and more time wrestling with questions dealing with life and death, and the suffering and sorrows of human existence. (Moon, 46-47)

Eventually, Moon went to the state-run elementary school, in which he learned Japanese language and ethics. In the summer, he attended a church school in his village. As he matured, he continued to deepen his life of prayer. In his own words,

My heart was filled with these serious and fundamental questions.... Whenever I laid out the anguishing problems in my heart to God, all my suffering and sorrow vanished and my heart felt at ease. I began spending more and more time in prayer, to the point that, eventually, I began praying through the night all the time. As a result, I had a rare and precious experience.... (Moon, 49)

The experience to which Moon refers is his prayer which began on the night of Holy Saturday, when he was 16 years old:

I was on Mount Myodu praying all night and begging God in tears for answers. Why had He created a world so filled with sorrow and despair? Why was the all-knowing and all-powerful God leaving the world in such pain? What should I do for my tragic homeland? I wept in tears as I asked these questions repeatedly. Early Easter morning, after I had spent the entire night in prayer, Jesus appeared before me. He appeared in an instant, like a gust of wind, and said to me, "God is in great sorrow, because of the pain of humankind. You must take on a special mission on earth having to do with Heaven's work." (Moon, 50)

The appearance of Jesus, in a moment not unlike the transfiguration, proved the turning point in the young Moon's life. His initial response was to decline the request of Jesus, however, after desperate and passionate appeals to God, he pledged to assume the mission asked of him. What followed were years of intense prayer, searching, service, and study in which the young Moon prepared for what would be a very public life. He writes in his autobiography:

My encounter with Jesus changed my life completely. His sorrowful expression was etched into my heart as if it had been branded there, and I could not think of anything else. From that day on, I immersed myself completely in the Word of God. At times, I was surrounded by endless darkness and filled with such pain that it was difficult to breathe. At other times, my heart was filled with joy, as though I were watching the morning sun rise above the horizon. I experienced a series of days like these that led me into a deeper and deeper world of prayer. I embraced new words of truth that Jesus was giving me directly and let myself be completely captivated by God. I began to live an entirely different life. I had many things to think about, and I gradually became a boy of few words. (Moon, 53)

Upon completing his secondary education in Korea, during the Second World War, Moon went to study electrical engineering. As a Christian student, Moon became active in the Korean independence movement which resisted the Japanese occupation. Over the course of the war, the Japanese police, suspecting his involvement in the underground resistance, arrested and tortured him at least twice while he was in Japan, and later after he had returned to Korea. About these times, Moon writes,

There was a police station beside Waseda University. The Japanese police got wind of my work and kept a sharp eye on me. The police always knew when I was about to return home to Korea during school vacation and would follow me to the dock to make sure I left. I cannot even remember the number of times I was taken into custody by the police, beaten, tortured, and locked in a cell. Even under the worst torture, however, I refused to give them the information they sought. The more they beat me, the bolder I became. (Moon, 68)

At the conclusion of the war, Moon's period of preparation drew to a close and he initiated his public mission.

Moon's public mission lasted from 1946 until his death in September of 2012. Korea had been divided by the allied powers at the end of WWII, and by 1948, the country's division had hardened into a frontline of the Cold War. Moon left behind his wife and young child to seek disciples in Pyongyang, North Korea, a city known by Christians as the "Jerusalem of the East." He soon became a controversial figure, preaching that Korea was the second Israel and that Jesus would return to Korea. The controversy surrounding his preaching, as well as the complaints of families and Christian ministers to the North Korean communist authorities, led to multiple arrests, torture and interrogation sessions, and eventually a trial, and imprisonment in a communist labor camp, essentially a death sentence.

A defining characteristic of Moon's prayer life is disclosed in his writings about being tortured during his pretrial detainment in North Korea:

In prison, the authorities beat me endlessly and demanded that I confess my crimes. I endured, though. Even as I was vomiting blood and seemed on the verge of death, I never let myself lose consciousness. Sometimes the pain would be so great I would bend over at the waist. Without thinking, I found myself praying, "God, save me." In the next moment, though, I caught myself and prayed with confidence, "God, don't worry about me. Sun Myung Moon is not dead yet. I won't let myself die in such a miserable way as this." I was right. It was not yet time for me to die. There was a mountain of tasks before me that I had to accomplish. I had a mission. I was not someone so weak as to be beaten into submission by something as trivial as torture. (Moon, 92)

Thus, even in these most extreme circumstances, rather than complain about his suffering, Moon sought to reassure and comfort God that the public mission he had undertaken would be completed.

During his trial, Moon writes that "[m]any of the most famous ministers in North Korea came to the courtroom and accused me of all manner of crimes" (Moon, 92). After two years and eight months and his liberation from the Hungnam labor camp by the Americans in October of 1950, Moon made his way to South Korea with two disciples, along with tens of thousands of other refugees. The Korean War had begun on June 25, 1950 when the North suddenly invaded the South and would last three years, ending in stalemate and a truce. The troubled relationship that Moon had with the Christian churches in the North, would follow him to the South where he continued his ministry.

The church, now known as the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, (or the "Unification Church") would grow from a mud and cardboard hut in Pusan, to an international organization that includes schools, universities, a seminary, hospitals, businesses, manufacturing, newspapers, and publishing enterprises, as well as churches in nearly every country on earth. Moon sent the first Unificationist missionaries to the United States in the late 1950s. Miss Young Oon Kim arrived in Eugene, Oregon on January 4, 1959, and David S.C. Kim arrived in Portland, Oregon on September 18, 1959. During the 1960s and early 70s, the early missionaries and their growing membership established Unification Church Centers in all 50 states and began a series of evangelical speaking tours throughout the country. It was near the end of the "32 City Speaking Tour" carried out under the theme of "The New Future of Christianity," that I met the Unification Church in Annandale, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C.

During the turmoil and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations of May 1972, I burned my draft card, was arrested and went to jail for a few days. My older sister, Kristine, bailed me out after raising the required \$50. Fortunately, I was simply charged with a misdemeanor trespassing on federal property and not a felony. I spent three days in Lorton Federal Penitentiary with Father Groppi and one of the Chicago Seven, David Dellinger. I came to the determination that, if I was going to continue to act in a political fashion while making moral claims, I had better get my own life in order. This determination brought me to a Cistercian Trappist monastery.

While I had begun a disciplined life of prayer prior to going to Holy Cross Abbey, the discipline and wisdom of the monks inspired me and their balanced life invigorated me. I grew under the close supervision of my spiritual director. I began to have experiences of "heart to heart" union with Jesus. These experiences for me were not infrequent. I came to know and recognize the spirit of Jesus. When I read scripture, I began to savor and explore the heart of God. Most importantly, my conscience and intuition became sensitive to God's will and desire. However, I had one experience in the monastery which confused and intimidated me. I possessed no paradigm to digest or understand it. I received a very clear and strong revelation that I was called to serve like John the Baptist. I feared for my sanity. I prayed about it. Again, the revelation came to me that God would lead me in this way. I begged God to spare me from this, each time I prayed. My image of John the Baptist was of a wild man dressed in animal skins, living in the desert. God never backed down or relented. Months later, I began to understand that like John, I was called to be a mediator between the old and the new, and how God, in fact, was answering my prayers.

While I was grateful, I did not truly know what a gift I had received or how unworthy I was to receive it. I left the monastery after a year to reflect on whether that life was my calling. I went to the Casa Maria, the Catholic Worker in Milwaukee; I allowed my spiritual discipline to slip and soon found my life in turmoil. The negative experiences that followed, taught me once again the beauty of the spiritual life well led. I began to struggle back and to pray in desperation to know God's will for my life. Should I be a priest? A monk? Should I marry? No matter the course of life I took, I determined that it would be consistent with God's will, according to my conscience. I worked in a Catholic bookstore near the campus and walked from there to the Catholic Worker. Each day I would pass a home with bikes on the porch that flew a white flag with a red design that looked like a ship's wheel with four spokes. I felt drawn to the home but I pushed the thoughts aside and walked on. Then one day, a young student from the home approached me and very directly asked me about how Christ would return. I told her, "on the clouds," as I

believed at the time. She explained that the problem of sin could not be untangled in such a manner and that to resolve human ignorance and suffering, Christ had to return as a man, in the flesh. I told her she had to be careful of the Antichrist--as I was reading all sorts of wild books about Revelations at the time. Figuring I was too stubborn to listen, she moved on. As did I. This was my first encounter with the Unification Church.

I continued to pray insistently to know God's will for my life. I had some intense spiritual experiences at the Catholic Worker. I will share one, highly unusual experience. As I look back on it, I question it. However, I can only describe it as I experienced and interpreted it at that time. There was a heroin addict that would come to the Casa Maria. He once pulled a gun on me and I disarmed him. Several weeks later, he returned to the house and asked for my assistance. He said he was troubled by spirits and asked if I could come and pray in his house. Being an overly confident 21 year old, I agreed. I went to his home and began to pray, at which time a scene unfolded that was straight out of the Exorcist. His features twisted and took on a demonic appearance as a spirit possessed him. His voice changed and the spirit addressed me directly. I exorcised the spirit "In the Name of Jesus Christ..." and the spirit left but another immediately replaced the first one. This happened seven times. Each spirit spoke to me and described itself. Each time, the host body and face would contort and change appearance. It was quite dramatic. Finally, I prayed until I sweat and cried and all the spirits left. I asked the addict about it and he told me that when a spirit possessed his body, his own spirit left and floated away and that he felt quite undisturbed. He asked me to stay the night at the house and I agreed. It was a little before midnight and I retired to a back bedroom to sleep. I drifted into a semi-conscious state when I felt a spirit descend and press on me and try to possess me. In the monastery, I trained myself in the discipline of the Jesus prayer and it was (and is) always in my mind and heart. I could feel the spirit press on me and the Jesus prayer repel it. This lasted all night. Literally, I could not move. I felt like Jacob wrestling the angel. Suddenly, at 6:00 in the morning, God left me and the spirit entered my body. The sensation was like being thrown into an unlit dank basement flooded with raw sewage. It took all of my physical and spiritual effort to muster a prayer, the "Our Father." The spirit fled. When I stumbled out of the room, the addict was laughing. A verse from the gospel came to mind, "Shake the dust from your feet..." and I left immediately. To this day, I cannot watch movies like the Exorcist. The reality of spiritual evil is too present to me.

This experience and others like it, spurred me to intensify my search for God's will in my life. Soon after, I returned to my family home on Rose Lane, in Annandale, Virginia. I felt strongly led by God, though I still did not know where I was being led. When I came home, I began to pray in my room every day and wrestle with whether I was being called by God to return to the monastery. I wanted to leave, return to the Abbey right away, and commit myself to the discipline of monasticism. Yet, whenever I felt ready to go to Berryville, I quite strongly intuited a direction from God to wait, to be patient because it was not the time.

So I began a prayer vigil. Then, spiritually, something began to move. I experienced the sensation of being called by God, like Abraham, to leave my home and venture forth in faith, never to return. When I sensed this, I would obediently stand up. Literally compelled, I would walk outside but then, the sense of being called evaporated, leaving me standing bewildered in front of my house. I had the same experience two days in a row. On the third day, I felt God's command, I stood up and walked outside and looked down Rose Lane. There, walking up the street was a young woman carrying a bucket of flowers. At that moment, I knew God had prepared me to meet this person, so I determined to intercept her and witness to her about Jesus. I approached the young woman and asked, "Have you been thinking about Jesus today?" She responded "Praise the Lord! All day long!" So we stood and talked a bit and she invited me to a workshop over the weekend. Swept by a spiritual rush, I knew immediately that God had answered my prayer. It was Thursday, November 8, 1973. I had met Felice Walton Hart (she would later become a Unificationist missionary in Thailand). We arranged for me to be picked up early on Saturday morning, November 10, the Marine Corps Birthday.

Another testing and trial awaited me, however, before I could go to the workshop. On Friday evening, after a day of joyful prayer (I felt an unaccountable sense of spiritual excitement and anticipation--the spiritual world knew what was waiting for me, even though I did not) I went to bed and soon found myself "wrestling with a spirit" similar to the experience I had while at the Catholic Worker. The night culminated when I felt gripped by this spirit and shaken, while a chorus of a violent, loud "NO! NO! NO!" pounded in my head. Dawn came and the spirit left. The experience convinced me that this demonic spirit really did not want me to go to the workshop. He didn't want me to hear this. Then I determined, "I absolutely must go!" My resolve was unshakeable. My excitement returned.

When the van showed up to take me to Military Road in Northwest Washington D.C., I recall saying goodbye to my mother and father as they ate breakfast, and not knowing how to relate my sense of anticipation and joy. As we drove to the workshop, I shared my faith story and felt that Felice could quickly grasp everything I told her, more than anyone else before. She understood my sense of God's call, my experiences with the spiritual world and most surprisingly, remained unsurprised by it all.

I will never forget walking through the front door of the Unification Church center on Military Road, in Northwest Washington, D.C. I had become quite spiritually open from hours of daily meditation and prayer. As I entered the house, it was as though I had walked into the Kingdom of Heaven. Immersed in an atmosphere of love, I sensed the presence of Jesus in my heart. I wanted to sing and dance but I restrained myself. Once I settled down, I noticed that the spirit surrounding me had a distinctly Asian characteristic--almost as though I was experiencing an Asian Jesus. Having only a limited range of knowledge by which to categorize it, I thought it similar to the Zen Catholicism I had come to embrace. Michael Beard was the Center Director and lecturer. From the moment he started to lecture, I began having a mystical experience, a heart to heart union with Jesus. It was both sweet and painful. Every word of the "Principle of Creation" resonated in my heart. I would lose myself in the experience and then feel afraid I would make a fool of myself by crying, so I controlled my emotions. When I heard the "Fall of Man" lecture and understood how sin had destroyed God's ideal, I did cry, I could not hold myself back. Then I heard the "Mission of Jesus" lecture. My internal experience of Jesus became so intense, it was as though Jesus himself gave me the lecture. I cried shamelessly. Amazingly, everyone understood. That was probably the most intense experience of my first day. Each lecture that Saturday was a revelation to me.

Before dinner, we sang and prayed together; I already knew I wanted to stay. After an evening lecture, I went upstairs to go to sleep. I laid myself down and proceeded to have the most intense experience of Jesus yet in my life of faith. I don't think I ever slept. But neither was I aware of the passing of time. The following morning, I heard everyone getting up for a 5:00 morning prayer known as "Pledge Service." I tried to get up and go down the stairs to join the prayer but a brother was sitting on the stairs, midway and sent me back to bed, encouraging me to sleep so I could stay awake in the lectures. I returned to my room and prayed.

The Sunday lectures were devoted to the History of God's Providence or Restoration History and the Second Coming. As Michael Beard spoke about Adam's Family and the formula for God's work of restoration, I felt that he had provided me with the missing logic necessary to piece the puzzle of biblical history together. I have always loved history, making these lectures quite meaningful to me. My spiritual experience with Jesus continued unabated as the lectures proceeded. The historical parallels between the different ages of restoration (between the Old and New Testament periods) left me in awe. I had been reading Thomas Merton, Jacques Maritain, Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Danielou and Henri de Lubac but nothing had spoken to me like this. Then came the lecture on the Second Advent of the Lord. As Michael Beard lectured, I felt an intense concern from Jesus in my heart of hearts. Jesus himself was witnessing to me. He wanted me to hear, to know, and to commit.

Which I did. I worked as a lay missionary with the Unification Church from 1973 until I returned to school at UC Berkeley in 1985. I worked closely, for many years, with the principal characters of the organization, including Takeru Kamiyama and Neil Salonen, as well as Moon Sun Myung himself. There is very little in the movement with which I do not have at least some familiarity. Thus, selecting essential spiritual practices or characteristics of Moon Sun Myung is in one sense, daunting. Since I have written about Moon's prison experiences, I will begin there. In his sermon, "God's Preparation for Our Church, and It's Early Days," Moon speaks of an experience of imprisonment in South Korea:

I have tasted prison life, not only under the communist regime but also in free Korea. I can never forget one former member who came up to me when I was being taken to the West Gate prison in Seoul. He looked at me and laughed scornfully, "You fool! Are you still doing this stupid thing?" I can never forget that man. At that moment I did not say anything to him, but in my heart I prayed, "God, give me a chance to testify to how righteous You are, and how I was obedient to You." This is just one instance of personal betrayal; there are too many to count. When I close my eyes and start to pray, tears always come forth. I have experienced so much agony and pain and heartbreak that I know God, and I am in a position to comfort Him.

Reverend Moon prayed for the mission, he prayed for others, but he did not pray for himself. His sense of God is one of a suffering parent, longing for lost children. In another sermon, "Why We Have to Go through Hardships,"

Accordingly, a true parent child relationship, a true husband wife relationship, and a true brotherly relationship cannot be established unless we relate with sacrificial love. The genuineness of those relationships depends upon that standard.

Children know that their parents truly love them when they truly sacrifice themselves for them. Although the sacrificial position is a sorrowful one, if the children perfectly appreciate it and return love to the parents, then the parents can feel more joy.

Likewise if a true couple sacrifices for each other, then love can constantly be restored in addition to the power of sacrifice. Therefore, husband and wife can become one eternally if they share their suffering with each other. True friends are those who sacrifice themselves for each other. The position of love can be established when one sacrifices oneself and gives himself for others. Thus sacrifice accompanies love.

....

If someone truly desires love, he should stand in the same position as God and give everything until the perfection of his object of love, as God does. Parents give everything until their children grow up and get married. They have to sacrifice everything and give everything until their children understand the sphere of parental heart. If the children appreciate it and give filial piety to their parents, then the parents feel joy, forgetting all of their sacrifice. This is the way of love.

....

The fall destroyed God's ideal by centering love upon oneself. God's ideal is love. Therefore, where one's love is self-centered, the way of restoration can never be born.

Thus, according to Sun Myung Moon, to go the "way of restoration," one must necessarily persevere along the course of sacrificial love, precisely because this is the manner in which God, manifesting a parental heart, has loved us.

And for how long must we persevere along the way of restoration? In his "Sermon for God's Day, 1973," Reverend Moon answers, until each person has returned to the bosom of God's love:

Our position requires us to carry out our mission of restoring the world back to God. It is the one great cause, even for God. And even if we are unable to carry out our mission in our lifetime, we must come back through returning resurrection and, by helping the people on the earthly plane, become elevated from one level to the next until we reach perfection.

A good number of my years in the Unification Church, during the 1970s, were spent serving on a Mobile Fundraising Team ("MFT") in the deep South. Our teams were multiracial, with members drawn from every imaginable religious background, as well as the entire spectrum of class and social status. On a daily basis, as we worked in small southern towns, we crossed and challenged racial boundaries. We were often harassed, arrested, spat on, and sometimes, physically assaulted. Moon often took note of this in his sermons, guiding us to grow relationally and to seek a deeper understanding of Jesus and God through our experiences. In his sermon, "God's Preparation for Our Church and Its Early Days," he advised us:

When fundraising have you ever been kicked, hit, or spit upon by others? When you taste these experiences then you must think, "This is the path that was walked by all the saints and men of God in history." Being spit at or hit is not that painful to bear, but being spit at or hit by someone who was previously a member and who has now betrayed God is very painful. It is heartbreaking and you have to taste even that. You will finally know Jesus when you experience these things. Jesus had not only external enemies - the people who physically nailed him down on the cross - but he had internal enemies who betrayed him.

Finally, from Sun Myung Moon's perspective, there is no relationship which does not require the restoration of our love, whether it is the parent-child, the familial, among friends, and of course, between classes, races, genders, cultures, and nations, especially where historical resentment exists. In October 1996, while visiting Montevideo, Uruguay, I had the good fortune to converse all night with Reverend Moon. When the translator fell asleep, Reverend Moon made great effort to speak with me in his roughly accented English. At that time, he emphasized to me that "we must love even the enemy of love." Moon himself set this example in 1991, by seeking out Kim Il Sung to meet with him as an act of personal forgiveness for the torture, imprisonment, and years of suffering he endured under Kim's regime. Moreover, when Reverend Moon went to North Korea, he did so at great personal risk. As he would often say, and of which he reminded me during that long night in Montevideo, "restoration requires us to go the reverse way."

Over the years, I have read nearly everything written about Moon Sun Myung and the Unification Church in the New York Times and Washington Post - and more. I have listened to the interviews given by former members (some of them my close friends) and read the Congressional testimony about the activities of the Unification Church, Colonel Bo Hi Pak, and Reverend Moon. I understand and I am sympathetic to the skepticism that confronted Reverend Moon's ministry (and continues to confront his followers and legacy). However, the hysteria and fear, the accusations of brainwashing, the sensational reporting, the unjust and highly political prosecution for "tax evasion," I can only attribute to a combination of theological narrowness, ecclesial jealousy, political animosity, and racial bigotry. Despite the waves of negativity that have washed over me year after year, I could never disregard the intensely spiritual experiences that brought me into communion with Reverend Moon and Unificationism. Nor can I deny the personal growth that has flowed from his words and guidance over these last 50 years. I have no doubt that I am closer to God and Jesus because of Moon Sun Myung's presence in my life. For me, that is the essence of "Good News."

To return to the opening question at the outset of this letter: Just at the moment of Christianity's triumph over atheistic communism, the power of the Gospel message seemed to no longer hold broad purchase in the West. How could this happen?

The historical purpose of Christianity has been to lay the foundation for the Second Coming of Christ. Over the last century, critical opportunities have arisen and have been missed for Christians to receive the Messiah and unite with his mission to restore God's Kingdom. Beginning in Korea at the end of WWII, many prepared persons and churches failed to accept Sun Myung Moon as the one sent to them by God to initiate the final providence. The consequence of this initial failure was the sentencing of Reverend Moon to a North Korean communist death camp in Hungnam. Only an act of God, the miraculous intervention of United Nations troops, saved him from execution. In South Korea, the established Christian churches had many opportunities to witness the teaching and works of Reverend Moon, but chose instead to persecute and jail him, once again. Even his wedding in 1960, which Unificationists believe to be the "Marriage of the Lamb" prophesied in the Book of Revelation (19:7-9), was attended by severe persecution and threat of disruption from the surrounding churches and society. Each step of the way, Christian churches blocked, harassed, attacked, and maligned Sun Myung Moon and his growing numbers of disciples.

When the mission of the Unification Church extended to Japan and the United States, the false accusations, malignant characterizations, and unrelenting persecution followed closely behind. As noted above, these resulted in vicious attacks by the American press, state and federal government investigations, and finally an unprecedented and unjust tax prosecution, which again placed Reverend Moon and his close disciple, Takeru Kamiyama, in jail. Nonetheless, Reverend Moon persevered in his ministry to America and the world, tirelessly preaching, teaching, and building a substantial foundation to evangelize every nation on earth.

It is commonly accepted among Christians that the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the dispersion of the people of Israel was the direct consequence of the priestly rejection of the Messiah, Jesus. When looking at the precipitous decline of Christianity, an informed Unificationist will arrive at the same conclusion. Those key figures, the equivalent of John the Baptist at the time of Jesus, failed at critical junctures to acknowledge the providence of God and to receive the Messiah.

Recounting this history, I cannot do so without reflecting on the countless souls seeking God's love and truth in the Last Days, who were misled by the very Christian leaders most prepared to receive the returning Lord, but instead, rejected and persecuted him, blocking the way for their congregations. The tragic lament of Jesus, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37), resonates in the hearts of those of us who have attended the Messiah, and surely wounds the Heart of God today--as prepared people turn away, social circumstances rapidly deteriorate, and providential opportunities are foreclosed.

Clearly, the Christian foundation is under spiritual assault and cannot withstand its judgment. Are these not the "great and terrible days"?

And yet, with God, hope remains.

Reverend Moon ascended to the spiritual world on September 3, 2012. In the aftermath of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended and Pentecost came: we are now in the midst of a similar time with a powerful accompanying grace. The Bride of Christ, the Only Begotten Daughter of God, Hak Ja Han Moon, has assumed her role as the Mother of Peace. As the wife of Reverend Moon, she has walked each step of the path of restoration together with him. His achievements are her achievements. Now, embodying the Maternal Heart of God, she has carried on the providence of restoration inherited from Father Moon and pledged to accomplish God's Will in our age.

Father Moon... we have come to know Reverend and Mrs. Moon as our "True Parents," the originators of a new lineage, free from the original sin, and capable of giving humanity a fully liberating rebirth. This eternal foundation, which has been achieved by the True Parents in the face of relentless opposition and persecution, lies open to each of us through the Holy Wine Ceremony and Marriage Blessing. We can share in the great grace of redemption and join together in the work of restoration, if only we turn our hearts to God, our Heavenly Parent, and receive the great gift of love which He has extended to us.

We live at a moment of great crisis and great hope. Please, seek God's direction with determined prayer! Study the words of New Truth! If we fully acknowledge and accept our responsibility, we can succeed where others have failed in the past--we can realize the eternal unfulfilled longing of God's Heart, the veritable Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.