

## My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 93

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September 28, 2021



### The Bride of Christ

*"Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem!"-- John Henry Newman*

"From shadows and symbols into the truth!" These words of Newman perfectly capture my journey from Roman Catholicism to the Divine Principle and True Parents. And not only my initial transition from the New Testament Age to the Completed Testament Age, but they continue to capture my growing awareness as a Unificationist maturing in my understanding of God and the very nature of being. What I conceptualized symbolically and conditionally, has gradually come into the ever growing light of our new day, as the merit of the age increases like an ever rising sun, revealing the contours of our real existence as the sons and daughters of God. Truly, we live at "High Noon." Even this morning, as Dr. Yong proclaimed that the Original Sin came through a couple and only a couple can resolve and restore that sin--the True Parents, the Blessing and my wife, came alive in the Light with new meaning and filled me with deeper resolve. It's not as though I didn't "know" these things, but somehow, when the Word is proclaimed, the Light increases. And so it goes.

Similarly, while recently attending Mass with two other couples, I marveled at how the ritual and prayers of this ancient rite delineated and expressed so much of God's Providence and the promise of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Holy Blessing of our True Parents. All the while, my heart rested in intimate union with Jesus. If only one had eyes to see and ears to hear! The lament of Jesus resonates through the centuries to this very moment.

At the Last Supper, when Jesus took bread and wine, the elements of the Jewish ritual seder, and transformed them into the very symbol of his Body and Blood (my Catholic brethren insist "substance of his Body and Blood") his actions commemorated a moment of breathtaking sorrow and pain while simultaneously providing a way of remembrance and a path of hope for his disciples. Is there any way we can even begin to comprehend the broken heart of God as Jesus, with unrequited longing and the utmost sincerity, invested his entire being into the single remaining evening of his physical life? From the washing of his disciples' feet to the breaking of bread, Jesus distilled his message into ritual, metaphor, and symbol, creating a sacramental expression of his teaching that would illuminate and define the next two thousand years of God's Providence. Moreover, this new sacrament contained the seed for the completion of God's Providence, to be cultivated and harvested at the time of the Second Coming.

That same night, in terror and anguish, the disciples scattered. The disbelief, shock, cowardice, and disloyalty of Jesus' spiritual children became inescapably entwined in this sacramental moment. Their subsequent, profound repentance added a tragic requiem to the emerging tradition of the Lord, and would be forever recounted in scripture, prayer, and song.



As the decades and then centuries passed, the ritualized memorial acknowledging the transformative reality of Jesus' Body and Blood, nurtured generations of his followers as they struggled to embody his message in their lives. A sacrament is the outward expression of an inward grace, and individual souls came to know Jesus in their heart of hearts, as they celebrated his memory, longed for his return, and placed their hope in the final realization of God's Providence. Ironically, however, the transcendent reality and power of the sacrament began to obscure the original mission of Jesus--a process which began from the initial efforts of Jesus to gather and comfort his frightened and scattered followers (and it is questionable how much or how deeply they understood at all). From the Road to Emmaus to the Upper Room, as Jesus began to rebuild the confidence and renew the determination of the disciples to enable them to undertake the spiritual course of restoration that had become the mission of Christianity, they came to believe and preach in the necessity of the crucifixion as the will of Heaven. Who could proclaim what it in fact was: a cosmic tragedy caused by humanity's failure to receive the Son of God, prepare the Lord's Bride, then encircle and protect their family? Instead, drawing on the ancient traditions of Abraham's

faith, the economy of salvation appeared to be a transactional one: a blood offering had to be made on behalf of humanity to open their way to salvation. Jesus and the ritual he established as a memorial remained, but the heartbreaking sorrow and the original mission of the Messiah became a distant memory, hidden in the darkness of long ago.

Thus, truth became symbolic and the substantial, mystical, a reverse metamorphosis born of historical necessity. The power and the glory of God were everywhere proclaimed and the Cross became the ironic expression of Christian victory, as the rhetorical brilliance of Paul took hold of the Christian imagination. The staying power of these ideas becomes evident whenever we directly question the necessity of the Cross as the path to salvation, as many of us have experienced.

And yet, as we know from the Divine Principle, the typography exists. The Image of God is both male and female, from Adam and Eve came the Fall, and Jesus came as the Second Adam. Where is the Second Eve? And why in the Christian era is there no Bride of Christ? In the writings of the Cistercian Fathers, especially in the beautifully crafted sermons of Bernard of Clairvaux, constant reference is made to the most romantic writing in scripture, the "Song of Songs," as allegory referring to the soul of the individual Christian in love with God. These celibate monks channeled their passionate love towards Heaven. They had no choice, no other way. Yet, the imagery of the poem drawn upon by Bernard is unmistakably sexual, celebrating the physical union between the lord and his lover. Rather than read Solomon's song and lament that Jesus had no physical bride, Bernard's spiritual imagination could only conceive of the "kisses" exchanged as graces received by the soul in union with God. How else could a man under the vow of celibacy--his path to salvation--read these words?

Could any more perfect a set of circumstances capture the truth of Plato's cave than these? Like prisoners chained to Plato's allegorical wall, over the past two millennia, Christians viewed the shadows on the wall cast by the fire in the cave (the doctrinal assumptions of their theology) as reality. Yet, through our True Parents and their Holy Wedding Ceremony, we have stepped into the full sunlight outside of the cave and have come to know the unreality of shadows and the truth of symbols: Jesus did not come to die; the individual alone cannot be saved; the fundamental institution of God is the Family; and our salvation can only be achieved as a Blessed Couple.

After Mass, I returned to the task at hand and the patient work of encouraging my friends to step outside the cave.