

The Providence to Engage Christianity – Part 3

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At an early ICC in Korea, Kevin McCarthy teaches Christian ministers the Divine Principle.

The Interdenominational Conferences for Clergy (ICC) 1985-1988

I had just completed the first Divine Principle lecture given at the first Interdenominational Conference for Clergy (ICC), in Seoul, Korea. I gathered my notes and reference books and quietly made my way back to my seat on the stage, giving acknowledgment to the participants' polite applause. We had around three hundred and fifty participants from a wide array of Christian denominations in attendance. To accommodate the question and answer sessions that were to follow each presentation, in the aisle closest to center stage and two flanking aisles, microphones had been set up.

Even before the conference facilitator could make his way to the podium to announce the beginning of our Q and A session and to explain the ground rules, scores of clergymen were rising, notebooks and Bibles in hand, and were making their way to the microphones. It looked as if there had been an announcement that free ice cream was being handed out at the microphone stands. I counted twenty to thirty deep at each location and still more ministers were coming. No one was smiling.

Was it something I said? I thought to myself. I had just given part one of the Principle of Creation. I had dutifully explained how we can know God by observing the creation, just as an artist's nature can be known by his artwork. I gave them my Vincent Van Gogh example, which forty-day workshop trainees always loved. I waxed eloquently about God being composed of the dual characteristics of sung sang and hyung sang. I had my protons and electrons spinning, my yin and yang whirling, my four-position foundation, Universal Prime Force and give and take action all rolling off my tongue. I was flying and on fire!

Midway through my lecture, however, I had started to get a sensation that is known to all lecturers and has been experienced often. It is a sensation that comes when nothing you say is being heard. It was as if a huge brick wall had appeared between me and the clergymen, like the deflector shields on the Starship Enterprise. All give and take dynamics suddenly ended, the life and spirit drained out of the room. I was speaking loudly, but I was not being heard. Unfortunately, this great spiritual divide lingered until the final moment of this first presentation. It was going to be a long conference, I thought to myself, as I returned to my seat on the stage.



Sitting there and waiting for the Q and A to begin, I attempted to gauge the mood of the participants. There was no mistaking the decidedly agitated state of those audience members now gathering at each microphone stand.

Our facilitator called me back to the podium, and I called on the first clergyman-inquisitor who moved

closer to the microphone and asked the first question, and in doing so began a process of engagement and questioning that would continue over the course of the next three years and thirty-nine more conferences, involving seven thousand members of the clergy. This first question was a memorable one, though it didn't pertain to the lecture at all. "Reverend McCarthy, I would like to ask: Are there any clergymen here that would like to join me over in the far corner, after we finish this session, to pray for the lost souls of these Moonies?"

This was the very first question! I was right; the lecture hadn't gone over very well. This was 1985, exactly forty years from the time Father was supposed to have been welcomed by the Christian world, beginning in Korea. After that dispensational objective could not be realized, and after his arduous course of hardships in what is now North Korea, Father began the long journey toward the re-creation of an era when a generation of Christian leaders would again encounter the call of the providence. Standing at the podium, facing the lines of rancorous, agitated clergymen, the sense of providential reengagement was palpable. How inappropriate it would have been for me to expect that this historic, broken relationship, from which emerged a path of blood and tears, could be mended without some elements of that thorny path having rematerialized in our midst.

I was also mindful of an even more distant history with which we now resonated. Today, a new Israel, a new Jerusalem was to unbind the first Israel's failure to recognize and embrace her king. Now the Divine Principle lecture had leapt off of the blackboard and was embodied in us. Now this new chapter would be written by what we would do in this, our moment of the providence.

"Okay, thanks Reverend Smith; all right, for those who feel they would like to pray, see Rev. Smith after we break up. Are there any questions pertaining to the lecture material?" I attempted to get us back on track. "Yes... Reverend. Go ahead."

"Rev. McCarthy, I listened to you explain how we can know God through observing nature and science and... What were those words? Sing song and hug sun? (All the ministers start to laugh.) Well... What I would like you to explain is why you say we need to try to find God in nature and science and you don't even mention, not even once, what is revealed in the first chapter of Hebrews?" The pastor turned to his Bible and read out the verse:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.



Ministers would challenge what they were hearing

As he closed his Bible, nearly all three hundred and fifty ministers stood and applauded.

"Now, Rev. McCarthy, if Jesus is the exact representation of His being... Why in the world would I want to waste my time trying to learn about God by looking at a rock?" The ministers once again rose to their feet with shouts of Amen, preach it, brother!

The heat was intense. I desperately sent an emergency prayer to God: Need help quick! God immediately responded and popped the

perfect comeback into my head:

"Why Reverend, I'm surprised at you." I said, "Surely, you know that 1 Corinthians 10.4 says, 'and that rock was Christ!'" The ministers jumped to their feet again and now the "Amen's" were coming my way! One thing I learned quickly was that ministers love a good joke. Everyone was laughing, and the spirit in the room became bright and warm. Even the minister who was going to pray for our lost souls had to crack a smile.

Throughout the ICC era, one of the most important elements of building trust with the clergymen was the manner in which we were able to handle their hottest flaming arrows. I can testify that all our members who presented lectures or spoke to members of the clergy -- Rev. Levi Daugherty, Rev. David Hose, Dr. Kathy Winings, Dr. Michael Jenkins and so many others -- always did so with an amiable, patient and loving spirit. Ministers can best see what you are all about when the heat is on you. In this regard, all our brothers and sisters passed the baptism of fire with complete success. In our group meetings and discussions and in every other activity, our members, from a variety of countries, embraced the ministers in gracious love and kindness. It was irresistible.

Second chances

In fact, though, this minister's question regarding Jesus as the "exact representation of God" was an excellent one. It honed-in on one of the essential barriers that blocked clergymen from understanding the

Divine Principle message. The minister was entirely correct, certainly, the son of God was a much clearer expression of God's glory and nature. In fact, of course, the Divine Principle affirms this as well.



ICC conferences included time for religious observance.

So, what appeared, on the surface, to be a severe conflict was a position of strong agreement. The problem was our mode of expression. It was not informed by an understanding of the historical context surrounding the clergy. We were attempting to teach without a full appreciation of the bases of their beliefs.

This was 90 percent on-the-job training. I'm sure we could have prepared better, but in fairness to all I think there was no way to predict how those in the Christian clergy would react. We learned by doing.

After Father's suffering course in northern Korea and eventual escape south, the providence experienced a new beginning in a mud hut on a hillside in Busan, South Korea, in the early 1950s. At that time, it seemed almost

certain that Christians had closed the door on our movement. As a result, rather than seeking people of traditional biblical faith, the providence had turned toward those prone to a more rational idealism. The Exposition of the Divine Principle book reflected this (the following is taken from various points in the introduction):

In step with the progress of science, the human intellect has become highly sophisticated, requiring a scientific approach to understanding reality. The traditional doctrines of religions, on the other hand, are largely devoid of scientific explanations....

Today, however, people will not accept what is not demonstrable by the logic of science. Accordingly, since religions are now unable to guide people even to the level of understanding, much less to belief, they are unable to fulfill their purpose. Even internal truth demands logical and convincing explanations. Indeed, throughout the long course of history, religions have been moving toward the point when their teachings could be elucidated scientifically.... Educated people are not fully satisfied with the simple assertion that Jesus is the son of God and the Savior of humanity.

Our task in 1985 was to decide if Christian ministers, too, were within the circle of people who would "not accept what is not demonstrable by the logic of science." In fact, trying to convince Christians from the perspective of the Divine Principle as "a highly sophisticated scientific approach to understanding reality" was not effective and very problematic.

These people could never be described as "not fully satisfied with the simple assertion that Jesus is the son of God and the Savior of humanity." Undeniably, we were returning from a forty-year wilderness course and had come back to God's preferred, his chosen ones. Thus, we would need an approach consonant with that reality. The Bible, rather than science was the key for members of the clergy to understand and embrace the Divine Principle.

Finding middle ground

A very poignant illustration of our circumstance took place later at the third or fourth ICC conference. It had been decided that the clergymen should sign a proclamation at the conclusion of the conference. This proclamation would include a list of various affirmations related to their new understanding gained through the ICC conference. At the top of the affirmation list was the declaration that the Divine Principle was a "scientific" explanation of God and the truth of the universe. A very intense discussion ensued amongst the conference organizers to try to understand this wording. Was this a translation issue? Could the word "scientific" perhaps be replaced with a word more palatable to Christian clergymen?

Through the intensity of the discussion and the stolid, grave expressions of those involved in this deliberation, I was made aware of the significance of this one word. It was decided by the organizers of the conference that it could not be changed.

After many years of counseling couples, I had come to discover an immutable truth: in the work to achieve reconciliation, both sides must give a little and bend toward each other. And so it was with our efforts to reconcile with this original Bride of Christ, the Christian world; over time the visiting religious figures played a larger role in the shaping of such proclamations

In developing such an approach, I must give credit to Rev. Ahn Chang-seong, who gave me wonderful and effective guidance over the three years that I worked under him. Rev. Ahn, who was blessed among the thirty-six couple blessing group, was a renowned, deeply respected Divine Principle lecturer who had

many years of experience trying to share the Divine Principle with Korean Christians. His first-hand experience with the major issues of contention and misunderstanding included many that resulted from our approaching Christians with a methodology better suited to people “not fully satisfied with the simple assertion that Jesus is the son of God and the Savior of humanity.”



At the former headquarters church in Cheongpa-dong

Rev. Ahn, who would never recommend altering, softening or amending the content of the Divine Principle, made a simple, yet profound recommendation. He suggested we only rearrange the order of the presentations so that the fundamental elements of the Divine Principle were delivered in concert with the biblical time line. Thus, of course, the Creation is first, the Fall is next, but rather than going on to the Consummation of Human History and then the Mission of Jesus, after the Fall presentation we would go immediately into the Principle of Restoration through Indemnity. Why? Because that's what took place immediately after the Fall. God's work of restoration was His immediate response to the Fall.

Although God did not intervene in the fallen action, God did intervene immediately after the Fall via restoration through indemnity. A common misunderstanding arises because we end the Fall lecture with God's not intervening and then don't take up restoration until part two. Sometimes it creates the impression that God is indifferent to the Fall. Christians, especially need to be awakened to God's urgent providential suffering heart. Thus, the Fall was a natural segue into the Principle of Restoration through Indemnity.

In this way, the ministers could see the operation of the Principle in the work of restoration from Adam's Family to Abraham's family and then on through the providence of Moses and the history of Israel leading up to the arrival of Christ. It was so important for them to observe and document the absolute solid biblical base for the startling new things they were hearing. Not only were they excited and amazed but also an important foundation was being laid that would be instrumental in helping the ministers to understand the Mission of Jesus presentation. In other words, by the time the providential train rolled into Jesus Station, it was all but certain that Israel's primary mission was to unite with their coming king.

After teaching the Mission of Jesus, we would teach (if time permitted) Resurrection, Christology, the Parallels of History and the "big one," the Second Coming of Christ.

Those forty ICC conferences (1985–1988) represent the era of Christian leaders confronting and struggling with the Divine Principle message. Whereas they could not quite accept the message, neither could they easily discount the awesome content of Divine Principle. I should stress that this was a distinct advancement from the 1970s, when Christians could not accept anything about our message and were easily able to disregard it.

One case illustrates that era perfectly. On occasion, in between conferences, the ICC staff, Jim Stephens, Rev. Levi Daugherty and I would journey back from Korea to the United States to visit various ICC alumni. We would especially visit those participants of the earlier ICC conferences whom we had not seen in a while. I was visiting clergymen in the southern part of America and had arrived in Columbus, Georgia to visit a minister I had not seen in about two years. I called him on the phone and his immediate response was, "Rev. McCarthy, are you in Columbus?... Where?" I told him where I was staying, to which he responded, "I'll be right over." Sure enough, about twenty minutes later, I saw his large car zooming up the driveway. I started to make my way to the front door as the doorbell rang. I opened the

door and the minister was standing in front of me with the most distraught and confounded expression on his face. I thought he looked somewhat ill. The first words out of his mouth were these: “McCarthy, how..? How..? How can you say that John the Baptist failed his mission? How?” These were his first words, after two whole years.

He couldn't accept it, but even two years later, he couldn't reject it. The Principle that he had heard two years before was still upon him, troubling, pestering, disturbing him. (It must be true. No! How can it be?) It was haunting him, and he couldn't reject it because he would continually see the Divine Principle revealed within the pages of his own Bible. The switch had been turned on, and he couldn't turn it off.



A broad spectrum of Christian leaders attended ICC in Korea.

Why they came

I should explain the ministers' mind-set and expectation toward their journey to Japan and Korea. For the first ministers to respond to the invitation to ICC, being confronted with an awesome, earth-shattering biblically grounded revelation was the last thing they were expecting. They mostly assumed they would be touring sites in Japan and Korea, squeezing in some shopping and then, occasionally, having to listen to some sort of eastern, mystical content. You can see how my opening “science on parade” style lecture just confirmed their worst expectations. Christian ministers are all well-trained on how to marginalize and disregard any teaching other than their own authorized doctrine under which their ministry was sanctioned. If confronted with “New Truth,” they would just flip to Galatians 1:8:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

It was carved in stone. In their view, this was a personal sanction from St. Paul, himself, authorizing their particular church doctrine (even though they all had different doctrines). It had been used throughout history to safeguard the pure faith—and to denigrate other biblical views. Galatians 1:8 was shot out of the clergy-cannon and tattooed on my forehead over and over. In fact, you can understand why that first question offered by the minister was about praying for my “lost soul.” From his perspective, I was accursed.

The ministers were very confident they would have a marvelous time in Japan and Korea, but they certainly were not going to be biblically challenged by anyone from the Moon cult -- no sir! Well, they were in for a big surprise, an even bigger surprise than the first time they tasted kimchi.