

This week in history, December 25-31:

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December 27, 2016

December 26, 1981 The First God Conference



The first God Conference, entitled “God: The Contemporary Discussion,” was held from December 22 to 31, 1981 on the island of Maui, Hawaii. Dr. Frederick Sontag, distinguished professor of philosophy at the University of Pomona and author of *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church* (Abingdon, 1977), suggested the conference as an “internal” equivalent of the annual International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS). The conference attracted 170 participants from 33 countries and all major religious traditions. Seventy-five papers were presented, 22 of which were selected for inclusion in a resulting book, *God: The Contemporary Discussion* (1982).

The Youth Seminar on World Religions (YSWR) emerged out of the first God Conference. From 1982 to 1984 it sponsored annual seven-week around-the-world pilgrimages to sites associated with the religious traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Unificationism for 150 students and professors. This expanded the movement’s ecumenical and inter-religious network and involved religious scholars of the highest rank, including Huston Smith, author of *The World’s Religions* and one of the country’s foremost authorities on world faiths, who with his wife co-chaired the first two Youth Seminars and served as chair of the fourth God Conference.

December 27, 1973 Little Angels Benefit Performance at the United Nations



True Father conceived the idea of forming a Korean children’s dance troupe “as a means of promoting world peace and sharing the Korean culture throughout the world.” He asked Dr. Bo Hi Pak to take responsibility for assembling the group. Dr. Pak agreed, and he traveled back and forth between the United States and Korea in developing the “Little Angels” from 1962 to 1964. The Little Angels’ inaugural tour of the United States in 1965 was difficult, and in many cases “the performers outnumbered the audience.” However, their tours were increasingly successful, and by 1971 they had performed on national television, at the 1968 Summer Olympic Games at Mexico City, and before numerous heads of state including U.S. President Richard Nixon and President Park Chung-hee of the Republic of Korea, as well as at a Royal Command Performance before Queen Elizabeth II, who broke with protocol by receiving the performers and greeting each of them, escorted by Dr. Pak. On December 27, 1973, the United Nations opened its General Assembly Hall for the first time for a cultural performance, a gala

benefit for UNICEF by the Little Angels. The New York Times reviewer wrote, “Judging from the standing ovation the children received, their performance of sometimes exotic national dance to music played on replicas of ancient Korean instruments has a universal appeal.” True Parents also received a standing ovation when they were introduced as The Little Angels’ founders.

December 28, 2001
Letter from God



True Father understood Cheon Il Guk to be the nation of cosmic peace and unity. As such, it encompassed not only the visible world but the totality of creation, both physical and spiritual. As he expressed it, “The world has entered an age in which the spirit world and physical world can become one and communicate freely with each other.” Communication with the spirit world was nothing new to the Unification movement. In fact, since 1935 when he encountered and experienced a divine call from Jesus, True Father had carried on a ministry to spirit world in parallel with his ministry on earth. For most of that time this was not a matter of public knowledge. With the proclamation

of Cheon Il Guk this changed. True Father insisted that messages from the spirit world be disseminated as widely as possible.

The most prominent of these was “The Cloud of Witnesses,” a collection of messages which derived from “seminars” in the spirit world, initially for four religious founders (Jesus, Buddha, Confucius and Muhammad) and subsequently for leaders in their traditions as well as for famous communists. The “Cloud of Witnesses” messages culminated in a “Letter from God,” addressed to “My beloved True Parent” and dated December 28, 2001. If True Father’s lifelong goal was “to melt the block of ice frozen in the heart of God,” the letter indicated that he had succeeded.

God, who self-identified as “Jehovah, the God of all humankind,” stated: “My gratitude and appreciation for you is beyond words. The word ‘love’ is inadequate to express My feelings. ... I want to embrace you in My bosom and never let you go! I would carry you on My back and never let your feet touch the ground! I would hold you, and we would talk together all night long.” Apart from this, God validated True Father’s position, stating, “You have been victorious on every level and have restored to its proper position everything that had fallen. ... Hence, Jehovah, the God of all humankind, hereby bestows upon His beloved True Parent the title King of all kings.” The Unification Church subsequently published “The Cloud of Witnesses” and “Letter from God” in space purchased from leading newspapers in all fifty states.

December 29, 2005
International Cross-Cultural (Gyocha) Marriage Blessing Ceremony



True Parents conducted a Gyocha, “cross-cultural” Marriage Blessing between all cultures, races and religions on December 29, 2005. True Father also opened the gate for all who were blessed but lost their spouse due to divorce to be re-blessed. Grace was opened for all. True Father matched second-generation Unificationist couples and first-generation Unificationist couples and gave the responsibility to all continental directors of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) to heal the families through matching of previously blessed couples with one another and allowing them to be blessed. The Gyocha Blessing of 1,147 Couples was conducted at Cheongpyeong Heaven and Earth Training Center.

December 31, 1964
Holy Ground Providence Begins



True Father pursued the Holy Ground providence between December 31, 1964, and January 4, 1966. He said that the establishment of the Holy Grounds had to involve three different years and that the re-creation of the substance of the word and the beginning of the standard of heart could be achieved centering on them.

Another purpose was to connect Korea to the world through the exchange of earth and stones. True Father took earth and stones from seven Holy Grounds in Korea on December 31, 1964, and January 1, 1965, and prepared to travel overseas. He proceeded to establish 120 Holy Grounds in 40 nations, including 55 in the United States.

December 31, 1976
The News World Begins Publication



Creation of a media network was not originally part of True Father’s thinking or planning for the American mission. However, the print and electronic media increasingly vilified his work. This created a climate of extreme hostility and frustrated the Unification Church’s witnessing efforts. True Father, in turn, recognized the “awesome power” of the media “to create or to destroy.”

Therefore, in October 1976, he assembled a dozen or so Unificationists with journalism degrees and “set the deadline” for producing the first issue of a

new daily newspaper in New York City on December 31, the last day of the United States’ bicentennial year. The vision of ushering in the United States’ third century “with a new era of modern journalism” was compelling. Nevertheless, according to one account, “It seemed impossible to start a daily newspaper literally from scratch, using inexperienced people, in dilapidated offices, in less than three months.” Still, “second-hand desks and typewriters were purchased,” and in November “the few who had journalism degrees ... gave the first staff of about sixty a crash course in journalism.” On December 31, the presses rolled early in the morning and the first issue of The News World hit the streets of New York.

Replete with a color photograph featured each morning on the front page and a motto that described it as “New York’s oldest daily color newspaper,” The News World was a twenty-four-page general-interest daily with a staff of 200, the bulk of whom were Unificationists. It was eventually housed in the former Tiffany Building on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, which Unificationists purchased. The News World was the only paper to publish during the New York City power blackout of 1977 and during a later three-month newspaper strike, when its circulation soared to 400,000 daily. The paper’s boldest move was to predict a “[Ronald] Reagan Landslide” in a banner headline on Election Day, November 4, 1980, followed by an equally large banner headline the following day which read, “Thank God! We Were Right!” The News World gave birth to several other New York papers, including Noticias Del Mundo, a Korean-language daily, a Harlem weekly, and a press service, Free Press International. It later changed its name to New York City Tribune and eventually gave way to the media network’s flagship newspaper, The Washington Times.