

July 2025 Golden Age Newsletter

Richard Buessing and Carol Pobanz
June 30, 2025



Golden Age Newsletter

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Hello Goldies, Welcome! We hope you enjoy!

This month features Words from Won Pil Kim, Richard Lewis' Counterproposal to Darwinism, Lloyd Howell's Memories of True Father's Net and the continuing constructive Korean History from Michael Downey.

This Month's Message



The Words of Won Pil Kim

Notes from Philadelphia's Visit with Mr. Won Pil Kin - June 1968

New Age Frontiers (Rewritten in 2025 for clarity by ChatGPT)

Think of a great historical figure—someone like George Washington or Abraham

Lincoln. Why do we honor them so deeply and even build statues in their memory? Reflect on this. We all have kind neighbors and good friends who help us in difficult times and show us sympathy. But we don't build statues for them; we simply think of them as good people. What sets famous people apart from good neighbors? Famous individuals think and act on a national or global scale, while good neighbors focus mainly on individual concerns. The ones who develop a broad, world-embracing consciousness are the ones who become significant and remembered through history.

Everyone who joins this movement commits to something beyond themselves—something for the world. That's why our movement is so important. But thinking of the world means taking on great responsibility. If someone only lives for themselves, they don't suffer much. But at the level we're living, we must struggle and be willing to suffer. Our Leader is striving to accomplish something incredibly great—greater than anything done before. That's why he is the greatest of men.

Let me tell you about our Leader after he came to South Korea in 1951. We built a small hut by the sea. There was an elderly woman from Pyongyang, in North Korea, who had served our Leader for many years and was desperately searching for him. Five years before they met, she had heard a voice from heaven saying, "In five years, you will meet the Messiah. You must prepare for him." She spent those years preparing food, clothing, blankets—everything. On the exact day, five years later, she met our Leader.

Then the war separated them. She constantly prayed and asked the heavenly Father for guidance on where he was. Her son eventually found Father in Pusan. But upon seeing our poor living conditions, he couldn't bear to tell her the truth. Instead, he told her, "He has a wonderful large house!" However, she heard God say, "No, he lives in a small, poor hut." She didn't know whom to believe. When she arrived in Pusan and saw the humble conditions, she knew Father was the one.

Whenever we strive to accomplish something great, the spiritual world will assist us—but it won't take over our responsibility.

In North Korea, our Leader had his own small room and lived apart from us. In Pusan, we shared a cramped hut. When we think of saints or great people, we often imagine them as distant or supernatural. But when you live closely with someone, that image can fade. I was afraid that knowing our Leader too well might make it harder to respect him. It's easy to revere Jesus 2,000 years after he lived—but even his own parents struggled to do that at the time. Yet, as I lived with our Leader in

those difficult conditions, I came to know him deeply. Time and again, I was surprised by new aspects of his character. Contrary to my fears, the more I got to know him, the more my respect and admiration grew.

We came to South Korea with nothing. While our Leader preached, prayed, and worked for the Kingdom of Heaven, I worked in a U.S. Army office during the day and painted oil paintings at night to earn money. I worked until 6 p.m., then painted until midnight. I slept from 12 to 4 a.m., when our Leader would wake me so we could sell the paintings. Yet, he always went to bed after I did and was up before me.

At first, he would just watch me paint. But as demand grew, I painted the difficult parts, and he painted the rest. At times, others came to hear him teach, but they'd fall asleep from exhaustion. Our Leader would wake them, asking, "How can you sleep while we're working? If you can't help physically, at least support spiritually."

In 1952 and 1953, our Leader wrote the Divine Principle. Each day, after I left for work, he sat on the floor and wrote all day. When I came home, he was reviewing his work—I never actually saw him write.

One night, we didn't have to paint, so I was sleeping. Suddenly, he woke me and asked me to get a pencil and paper. In the darkness, without electricity, I wrote down his words as he spoke—steadily, without pausing for breath. That's how the original Divine Principle was written—by our Leader alone, except for one chapter, "The Resurrection of Jesus," which he asked me to write. I still don't know why, but I believe God wanted a witness to the process. If our Leader had created the Principle from his own mind, he couldn't have spoken and written it so fluidly. God helped him. Without that experience, there would have been no witness to its origin.

We often say, "Can't you believe in the Divine Principle? Ask the heavenly Father—He'll answer you." Since God is true, and the Principle comes from Him, He will give a clear response.

Mr. Eu, a medical doctor, came from a devout Christian family but couldn't understand or believe in God. Spiritual friends brought him to us, and I taught him the basics. Wanting to know more, he studied the original Divine Principle manuscript—despite its confusing structure. Once, he asked me a question I couldn't clearly answer, so I told him, "Pray, and you'll receive the answer." He did, and the answer came in a vision. Mr. Eu was difficult to guide—always thinking,

questioning—but today, he is the president of our Association.

Many times, I was awakened by our Leader’s prayers in the night. Sometimes he took me to the mountain early in the morning to pray together.

Ten days after arriving in Pusan, our Leader met an old college roommate—now a leading architect. They hadn’t seen each other in seven years. His friend hugged him joyfully and invited him to visit. Back in Japan, our Leader had been quiet and withdrawn. No one knew he was Christian, but they sensed something mysterious about him.

That evening, during their reunion, our Leader spoke about the coming Kingdom. The friend later dreamed of a beautiful woman who said she was Jesus’s sister. She expressed sorrow for her brother, longing to be happy. She said three doors needed to open—two did, but the third remained closed. “Only one man can open it—you know him. His name is Mr. Moon.”

The next morning, the friend asked, “Does Jesus have a sister?” Our Leader answered yes. Hearing this, the man sat upright, no longer as a friend, but in reverence—ready to follow him. From that day on, the man, once tense and pressured by life, became peaceful and committed.

During the Korean War, refugees often walked 30 to 40 kilometers a day. One night, past midnight in freezing weather, we stopped at a deserted house. We needed firewood, but the town was stripped bare. I found an old grave and broke off two wooden sticks from the burial covering. I started a small fire to warm the floor where our Leader sat.

He called out, “Won Pil! Where did you get the wood?” When I told him, he replied, “You’d better choose something purer for me.” That moment taught me to consider even the smallest things I offer to our Leader—*Is it pure?* He can’t enjoy food that’s been hastily prepared, for example.

Our Leader teaches that the most important thing is heart. Not food, not money, not the number of members—but doing everything with a sincere and devoted heart. That is what truly matters.

Unification Thoughts



Educated Evolution: A Counterproposal to Darwinism

By Richard Lewis

Church parents work hard to raise children who are not only spiritually mature but also successful in the world—so successful, in fact, that they might one day be able to tithe and help fuel church development. Consider this: many of today's billionaires come from the science and technology sectors. Even a few tithing billionaires could transform the future of our movement....

[To read more, please click here!](#)

The Net

by Lloyd Howell



"Again, the kingdom of God is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind . . ."

Matthew 13:47

In 1976 I was 26 years old and a relatively new member in the Unification Movement, and I was beginning a two-year course of study at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York.

Our studies were highlighted by visits from Rev. Sun Myung Moon who frequently came to informally talk with the seminarians....



[To read more, please click here!](#)

History Bytes



A History of Korea: Part 3

By Michael Downey

When the first Korean kingdom, Old Joseon, fell to the Chinese Han Empire in 108 BCE, it looked like China would be able to exercise its hegemony for a long time to come. But a variety of native Koreans had something different to say about that....

To read more, please [click here!](#)

Bulletin Board

Dear Golden Age Members

After a devastating illness to her husband 2nd generation member, Yeol-Shim Francesca Bell-Miller has taken on the sole financial support of her couple. Please consider helping them by employing Yeol-Shim's service to help on your memoir, manuscript or other written materials. She has written to me:

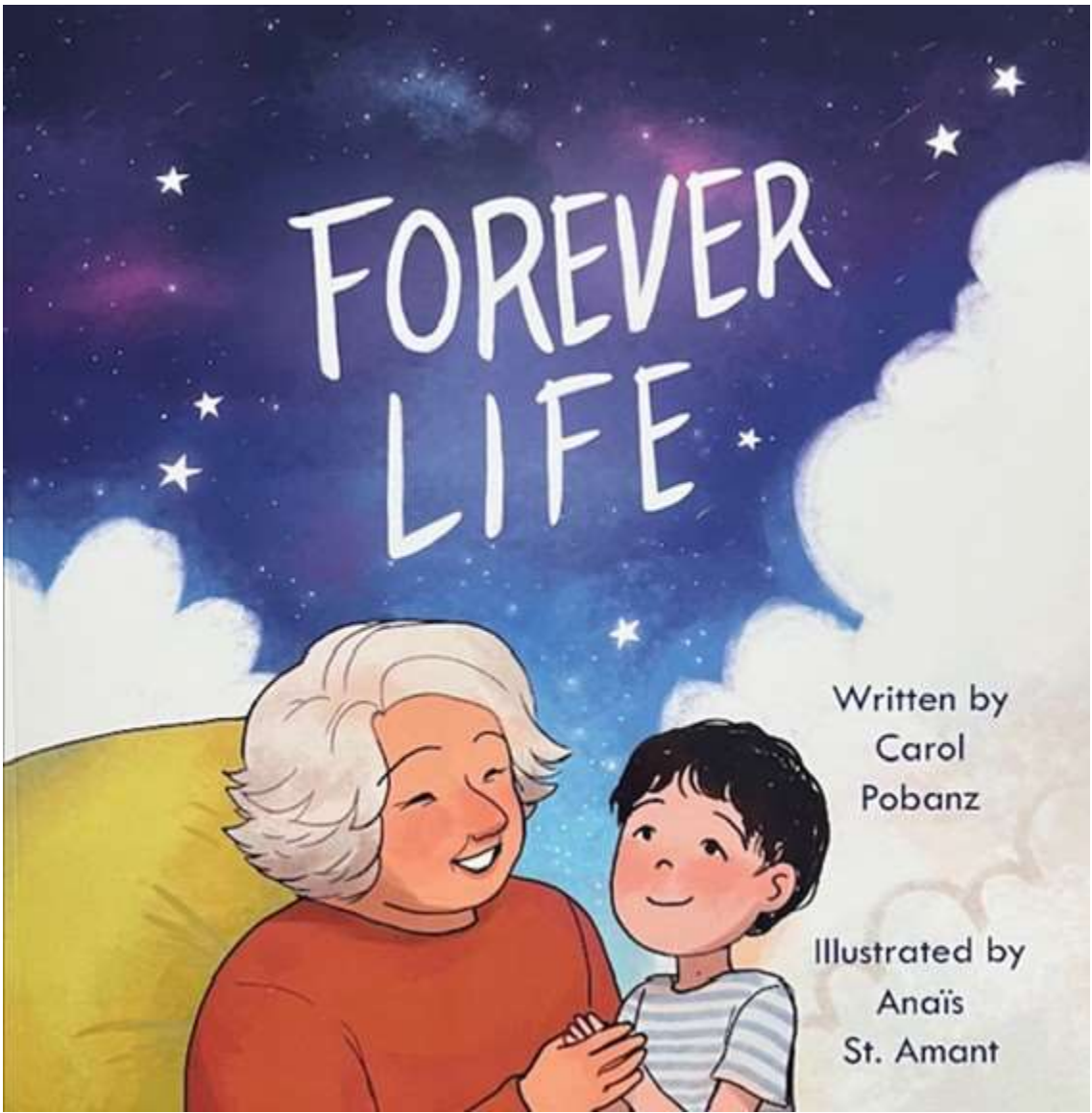
"I've been posting about my current situation on my Facebook and the Love & Support for Sunhyun Miller Facebook page. I have mentioned my recent circumstances and subsequent shift to becoming the sole income earner of my and my husband's household. I ask for just a few minutes of your time to help me support Sunhyun and myself. Please post this ad:"

Thank you so much,
Francesca Bell-Miller

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FOREVER LIFE

Written by
Carol
Pobanz

Illustrated by
Anaïs
St. Amant

While many Golden Age members are working on their memoirs, I've recently completed a children's book titled *Forever Life*. This book is dedicated to my beloved daughter-in-law, Victoria Pobanz, who recently passed away. Her life touched me deeply, and she blessed me with my first two grandchildren. Vicky fought a courageous five-year battle with breast cancer.

This book isn't just for children—it's meant to comfort anyone who is grieving a loss or seeking a deeper understanding of our purpose on earth. I hope it will be cherished by many.

FOREVER LIFE can be purchased at: foreverlifebook.com
It is not available on Amazon at this time.

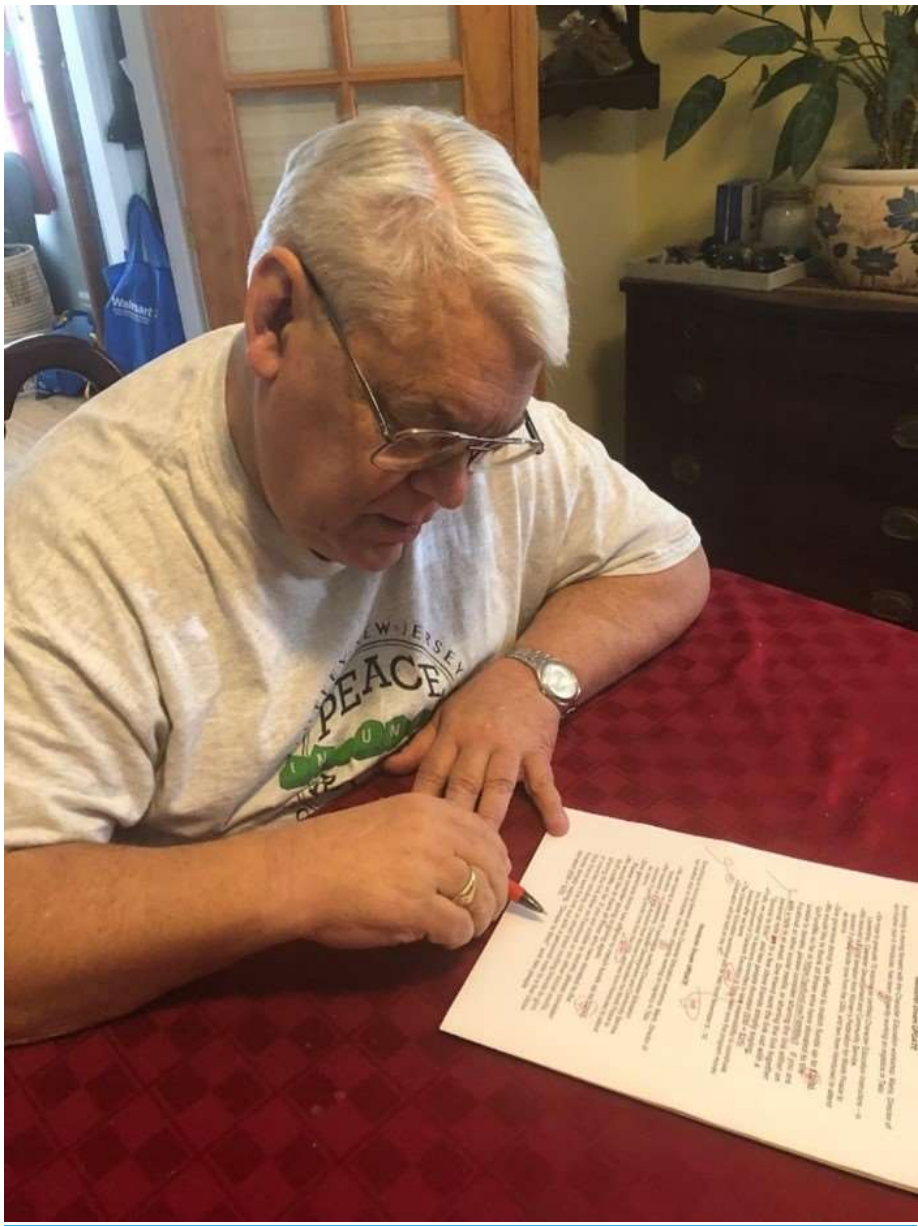


Photo credit: Carol Pobanz

The Golden Age Newsletter began as a small Clifton Senior newsletter about 3 years ago.

ARTICLE GUIDELINES

Purpose: The Golden Age newsletter has been created as a means to keep our elder community connected to one another. Articles are not in any way meant to

proselytize or push a point of view.

It is a place to share God's Love – what is positive in our life as a result of finding our Heavenly Parent and True Parents.

Motto: "This is the Dawning of our New Age" – We are always in the process of redefining ourselves as we grow older and as we add experiences to our lives. Therefore, we must consider how God can use us even when we may be decreasing in our physical capabilities.

The e-newsletter is broken down into eight sections:

1. A Featured Message of Inspiration – Helping others to feel hope and inspiration for the establishment of CIG.
2. "Unification Thoughts" – any educational article on the "Fifth Realm of Heart" – Grandparents' heart
3. History Byte – A short article on a positive memory, a funny or affectionate story about experiences in the church with True Parents or with brothers and sisters or an article about the development/experience of helping to develop one of True Parents' providential projects or events.
4. Arts and Culture – A sharing about one's talents, hobbies or interests and how this relates to sharing God's love (to family, community, nation or world).
5. Tributes and Testimonies- a personal testimony of one or more life learning experiences or a Tribute to a spouse, friend, or leader
6. Health – An article that relates to health (physical or mental), possibly providing a link to an article you think might be interesting or important to other seniors.
7. I Love being a Grandparent – stories about grandparenting or about things to do with grandchildren
8. Recipe – Preferably a healthy recipe along with 2-3 paragraphs about what makes it a good or memorable recipe.
9. Book Review – report on a book that inspires thoughts toward a world of peace
10. Bulletin board – reports on personal activities, or request help on a project

*Did someone forward this to you? Subscribe to the Golden Age
Newsletter [here!](#)*



Educated Evolution: A Counterproposal to Darwinism

By Richard Lewis



photo credit: Richard Lewis

Church parents work hard to raise children who are not only spiritually mature but also successful in the world—so successful, in fact, that they might one day be able to tithe and help fuel church development. Consider this: many of today's billionaires come from the science and technology sectors. Even a few tithing billionaires could transform the future of our movement.

But here's the challenge: science, as it's currently taught in schools, is often deeply atheistic. Your children are good students with good teachers. Then one day, they come home from biology class and say, "Our teacher said God didn't create life. It happened by random chance, followed by natural selection. There was no Adam and Eve—just apes slowly becoming humans."

Now the questions start:

"Why does our church say God created life?"

"Are we anti-science?"

"Is the rest of science fake too?"

Or even worse—your child doesn't say anything out loud, but slowly begins to pull away from faith.

Unfortunately, scripture alone doesn't answer modern scientific questions. And while Unification scientists haven't fully explained these questions yet, an outline is starting to emerge. I call it **Educated Evolution**.

This view of evolution starts with a different idea of education itself. Think: classrooms, teachers, and students. In this model, *Natural Law*—what Divine Principle calls the *Logos*—is the teacher. The "students" are the molecules and primitive life forms that are gradually being guided and educated by natural processes, which are themselves infused with purpose.

Take the origin of life. In mainstream science, life emerged when molecules randomly combined to form useful complexes with new properties. According to this view, it should've taken billions of years for life to appear. Surprisingly, it only took millions. Why?

Because in quantum science—not classical Newtonian science—things get more interesting. Quantum science aligns more closely with Divine Principle. It recognizes both internal and external aspects of reality. The internal aspect of matter—electrons and nucleons—is called the *wavefunction*, which represents possibility, purpose, and direction. It is shaped by natural law—the *Logos*. The wavefunction doesn't dictate exact outcomes, but it *guides* them toward higher

probability outcomes. Just like in DP, there's always a degree of free will.

This Logos makes the emergence of life *probable*, not just possible. The “students” in this case are amino acids and sugars learning to cooperate. The “classroom” was a hydrothermal vent called a White Smoker—a structure formed by lava interacting with ocean water. Unlike our civilization, which is powered by electron currents, White Smokers ran on proton (acid) flows. Over a few million years—brief by evolutionary standards—life began to emerge. Two types of primitive bacteria formed: the visible kind (eubacteria) and the hidden kind (archaea). They had different abilities and together began reshaping Earth’s environment.



Over the next billion years, these bacteria created ore deposits, and —most remarkably—began photosynthesis, which introduced oxygen to the atmosphere. They experimented with genetic possibilities, setting the stage for more complex life.

Eventually, a new “classroom” appeared: the stromatolite – a multi-layered structure built by cooperation between these two bacteria. This was where complex cells (called eukaryotes) emerged—a fusion of archaeal housing and bacterial energy production. This fusion gave rise to all plants, animals, fungi, and amoeba-like life.



White Smokers

Another important teacher entered the picture: epigenetics—the ability to “write” learned information onto DNA in a way that gets passed down. These inherited adaptations explain what we call *microevolution*, like the variations among Darwin’s finches as they adapted to different environments.

Stromalite

Both White Smokers and stromatolites still exist today. They can be studied and tested, which is how science works—through observation and experiment.

Finally, once enough epigenetic knowledge is gathered, it can lead to *macroevolution*—major changes like reptiles developing mammalian features, or primates giving rise to humans. All within a lawful, Logos-guided process.

But macroevolution—that’s a topic for another essay.

Frequently Asked Questions

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Find the answer

Find the answer

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The Net

by Lloyd Howell, U.T.S. class of '78



"Again, the kingdom of God is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind . . ."

Matthew 13:47



photo credit: Lloyd Howell

In 1976 I was 26 years old and a relatively new member in the Unification Movement, and I was beginning a two-year course of study at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York.

Our studies were highlighted by visits from Rev. Sun Myung Moon who frequently came to informally talk with the seminarians. We listened eagerly for hours, sitting on the lawn or on the banks of the Hudson, as he touched our hearts and imaginations, taking our education upon his own shoulders not only by starting the seminary for us but by regularly searching for ways to teach and strengthen us for the challenging path ahead. Naive and unjaded by the world, we listened with little comprehension and appreciation of the gravity of the things said – much as my children would do decades later when I would try to convey to them my life's lessons. Such, it seems, is the relation of teacher to student and parent to child.

So, one day Father showed up at the crack of dawn and unloaded boxes filled with small lead weights, crates of cork, spools of nylon twine and rope from his car. It was not at first apparent where this was all heading, but years later, in retrospect, it became clear that he had come upon an idea of how to convey the essence of all that he could teach in one week's long, unforgettable experience.

Speaking in Japanese, he directed some of the elder Japanese seminarians to take positions assisting him, whereupon he set about his chosen task with urgent intensity. Using a plastic guide, roughly the length and size of a finger, that functioned like a needle, the nylon twine became alive in Father's hands as he skillfully proceeded to attach the lead weights to the nylon rope. This went on for a considerable time, as we who gathered tried to understand the mystery that was transpiring. Few, if any of us, had a clue. Yet we all became engrossed in the scene before us and convinced of its importance, as we witnessed Father's absolute absorption in his task.

As the hours went by, it became apparent to me that a wordless sermon was being preached. A many-faceted revelation into the life of the True Father was unfolding – being received by each student on the frequency to which his faith was attuned. And as I watched, it became apparent that all the commotion was about, of all things, a net! “A net! What for?” I asked myself.

Hours swept by and I noticed that Father never took a break; neither eating, drinking nor even relieving himself. But then again, my attendance was on and off. And what started out as hours soon became days. Yes, “days,” for the net being made was no ordinary net. It was a massive work of living art unfolding yard after yard through a multitude of minuscule but painstaking stitches one after another. In fact, each stitch required several loops and turns of the stitching tool, after which the twine would be pulled tight, leaving a knot fixed in place. This tedious process went on knot after seemingly endless knot as the uniform structure of a net took shape.

And the hours turned into days – but regretfully, lacking the historical sense of a scribe, I failed to take note of just how many days had transpired. Regardless, one thing was apparent: few seminarians could keep pace with the master weaver. Our intensity wavered. We came and we went, each according to his or her various constitutions, connection to what was taking place, and class schedule. However, Father’s dedication was as steady as a rock. He even worked late into the night, for which spotlights were brought outside so the work could continue. However, each night, one by one, most of the seminarians faded away to their beds as the hours wore on. Those who stayed were the ones, usually elder members, who could truly intuit the importance of this Korean man and his mysterious activities.

Years later, when pondering that period of time, I felt a great sense of shame at my lack of understanding and wavering attendance. But I, like many others, could only superficially perceive what was happening there in the early Spring of 1977. Now I dread to think what realization may come to me when Father’s life is over. Will I one day wake up to realize the awful magnitude of all that I failed to fully grasp – much as the disciples of Jesus later did?

As things turned out, only a few knew just when True Father went to rest after each day’s toil. But there he would be again early next morning, and another day would unfold, with beads of sweat forming on his face as he weaved on, unifying corks, weights, and rope into one harmonious creation.

Finally, the day arrived when the net making came to completion. Spiritually speaking, it seemed to have taken a long time. To my poetic soul, the net had an invisible dimension stretching into eternity, but in reality, it must have been about one to two hundred feet long and about four feet in height.

Certainly, some of the students and faculty thought, “Now that the net mania is over, perhaps things will be returning to normal.” But that was hardly to be the case.

The River

Soon thereafter, we were invited to go carp fishing in the lagoon – a small body of water just below the seminary property, connected to the Hudson River by a narrow inlet over which a railroad trestle passed. It was then that many of us realized that this type of net was not the sort to be pulled by a boat but one that was to be held at chest height while wading through water – much as they do in Asia! It was incredible to think that soon we would all be in the Hudson’s wintry water, moving in unison, attempting to herd unseen fish into the confines of the closing net!

Although it was April, the river had yet to break free from winter’s icy essence. This being the case, a judgment day was fast approaching as the call came for us minister trainees to muster and descend into what would turn out to be bone-chilling water.

Intuiting that such might be the case, we zealots quickly wondered how to stave off the cold. On one hand, it seemed as if we were in the grip of some hysteria. As mad as lemmings gathering to dash off a cliff into the sea, we feverishly donned layers of shirts, sweatshirts, coats, pants and even sneakers, all the time gathering our determination to make the unthinkable happen! Vainly, we hoped to insulate ourselves from the experience. It was a sight to behold. Certainly, we candidate “messiahs” knew some bizarre adventure awaited us, but not even in our wildest dreams did we imagine the upcoming reality of our imminent baptism. Fishing in and of itself sounded somewhat romantic, but many were now not so sure that this was the sort of fishing they really wanted to do. Some began to ask themselves why they were there at the Seminary in the first

place; some admitted that they didn't even like the smell or slimy nature of fish to begin with. Still many others never entertained such questions and were ready to follow Father anywhere, even believing, as he promised, that there were beautiful golden carp lurking where none could be seen.

Finally at the lagoon's edge, we 100 or so students of the first and second Seminary classes, as well as some visiting church leaders, positioned ourselves along the net and proceeded into the water as Father watched from a commanding rowboat.

Deathly Immersion and Rescue

Unless one has been in early post-winter water, it is hard to imagine just how cold that water was. But suffice it to say that even before I was deeply immersed, I could barely breathe, for that water was such a shock to my system. Still, I thought, "I will adjust. It's just a matter of time." The thought that this was a good condition to unite with Father pushed me on.

Soon I was shoulder-deep in the water. It helped to know that Father was there watching. My fellow seminarians tried to imagine just what the temperature was, as if some process of rationality might make the situation more bearable, but it was a comfortless task. We net holders moved slowly forward, sweeping it along the lagoon's bottom. It was an awkward process as we trudged through the deep mud. Progress seemed awfully slow; perhaps an hour-plus had transpired. But after a while, time itself also froze and I could no longer determine just how long I had been in the water – was it minutes or an hour?

I don't know exactly when but, at some point, I ceased to notice anyone else, so violently was I shivering. My bones began to sound like dice shaking in a cup. My jaw was chattering like some sort of machine gun. I was taken aback to find myself powerless to stop the incessant sound of my own teeth clacking together.

Nonetheless, I found it hard to entertain the thought of leaving the water, especially knowing Father was watching. "Wouldn't it bring some sort of sadness to Father to see everyone leave?" I remembered the story of when Father was in Hungnam prison, his bones rattling in the frigid air of North Korea's winter as the prison guards called everyone out in their thin garments for morning roll call. "Father could not leave the prison," I thought. That recollection gave me the tenacity to persevere through this my own Calgary; I must not abandon him as the disciples did Jesus! I do not remember much after that, for then my very thoughts also grew slow and numb.

I was literally and unknowingly crossing over the borderline between life and death. I no longer possessed the faculty of rational thought. I had heard of "hypothermia" before, but had no idea of how it subtly saps a person's life force, fogging the brain and lulling the mind into a deceptive sleep before death. I certainly did not imagine that I was progressing through its classic symptoms. I only knew I was cold, very cold – the coldest I had ever been – but I did not know that my core body temperature was dropping below the level necessary for survival. It was only a matter of time before my situation would become irreversible.

... To make a long story short, at one point I was jolted briefly awake as I was pulled out of the water (by Gerhard Peemoeller, Father's hulking bodyguard) into a boat, sometime thereafter, finding myself in the seminary kitchen on a blanket on the floor next to the open doors of the ovens! I passed out again. Then later, I briefly came back to consciousness in the seminary infirmary, my body shaking convulsively like a runaway locomotive speeding uncontrollably downhill over a broken railroad bed. Eventually I came to my full senses and emerged from that terrible gauntlet ...

Conclusion

Now, years later, as I reflect on that whole experience – the net, the river, and our unforgettable baptism – the memory, like vintage wine, brings warmth to my heart. I savor the great meaning of Father's incredible love: the love that had sought to painstakingly raise us seminarians into those who might make a difference in this world. A father's love, I can now understand, is tough love, disciplined love, a love that can mold a soul into something bigger, something whole much like how a sword is taken from the fire and plunged into water to temper it. A love that calls for us to rise above ourselves.

Now as I reflect upon that time, it seems to me to be a metaphor for the mission of the True Father: his burning heart's tireless and little-understood efforts to raise up small messiahs, educated in mind and spirit, who could survive the ups and downs of the harsh path of restoration/salvation. The net became for me a metaphor for True

Father's life's work, woven from his very soul. Through that experience I came to see that Father's whole life had been dedicated to making a net. Every day was a sacrifice to fashion a way to "catch" the world's people and move them higher. Each length of twine symbolized one of Father's heart strings. Each knot symbolized a meeting, a rally, a speech, a tour – a thankless, seemingly never-ending task undertaken without complaint – the science conferences, the businesses, the Blessings, the foundations and federations, the publications, the performing arts enterprises, and so on.

Hands hurting, back aching, mouth parched, and yet smiling and still encouraging others – this is the True Father I will always remember. Yet who could see into that heart? Who knew the story behind the beaming smile; the tearful path behind the man? He never talked of his worn, tired body. He never talked of his prison time or of those who had tortured and mistreated him. Only those who had or would in the future walk a similar path would or could know. Only those who had held the net, in its broadest sense, and walked with it into the deepest and coldest waters would have some connection with Father. Because of this and many other experiences, I and so many others can never forget True Father, our great anointing now being how to pass on Father's legacy as embodied in that net-making event and use to relatives, friends, descendants and the world beyond.

(Written in 2000, approximately 24 years after the event.)

Frequently Asked Questions

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A History of Korea – Part 3

By *Michael Downey*



When the first Korean kingdom, Old Joseon, fell to the Chinese Han Empire in 108 BCE, it looked like China would be able to exercise its hegemony for a long time to come. But a variety of native Koreans had something different to say about that.

By the end of the BCE era, tribal confederations were forming from north to south on the peninsula. For me, it was kind of like the Old West—no sheriff or marshal to take your troubles to. It was every man, village, and tribe for themselves. The strongest would survive and expand, and usually, in a vicious fight, having someone at your back was a major advantage. Out of this basic need, confederations began to form, break up, and reform.

These included remnants of older peoples traversing the territory known as Manchuria. The Yemaek people seemed to be made up of the Ye—tiger people—and the Maek—bear people. Later, they were said to constitute the people of Old Joseon. When Old Joseon fell, the survivors were widely scattered and were incorporated into Buyeo. The Buyeo, in turn, were considered to be the ancestors of Goguryeo and Baekje, two of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. The Goguryeo, Baekje, Buyeo, and Gaya are all believed to have originated from the Yemaek tribes. The Yemaek culture is seen as ancestral to modern Korean culture.

Far to the north, the horsemen of the Goguryeo tribe, based on their military prowess, began to reunite the remnants of Old Joseon. Blending Yemaek people with Buyeo leadership and strongly influenced by the Chinese commanderies, Goguryeo developed into a kingdom. As aggressive mounted warriors, they expanded control over territory in northeast China, northern and southern Korea, and as far north as Russia. China claims Goguryeo as a minority nation of Greater China. Koreans, of course, know that Goguryeo was one of the foundational Three Kingdoms of Korea.

Meanwhile, in the southernmost extents of the peninsula, other confederations began to form with connections to Goguryeo. Samhan was the confederation of three Han tribes: Byeonhan, Jinhan, and Mahan. The Samhan, a loose confederation of walled-town states, each appeared to have a ruling elite whose power mixed politics and shamanism. Although each state had its own ruler, there's no evidence of systematic succession. The name of the poorly understood Jin state continued to be used in the name of the Jinhan confederacy and in "Byeonjin," an alternate term for

Byeonhan. In addition, for some time, the leader of Mahan continued to call himself the King of Jin, asserting nominal overlordship over all the Samhan confederations.

Mahan Confederacy

Mahan was a loose confederacy of chiefdoms that existed from around the first century BCE to the third century CE in the southern Korean peninsula, mainly in the Chungcheong Province. Arising out of the confluence of Gojoseon/Old Joseon migration and the Jin federation, Mahan was one of the Samhan (or "Three Hans"), along with Byeonhan and Jinhan. Baekje began as a member statelet but later overtook all of Mahan and became one of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. The people who migrated from the fallen Gojoseon were Ye-Maek—related by blood and language to the Goguryeo people. Migration from Gojoseon greatly influenced this region and the Samhan confederations. Known as the Proto-Three Kingdoms, they played a large part in forming the people and nations of the Three Kingdoms period.

All three future kingdoms began in similar circumstances and followed similar paths. They started as warlike tribes that secured their places on the peninsula and expanded through conquest and primitive diplomacy. Founding dates are difficult to pin down, but their rise to nationhood began after the fall of Old Joseon in 108 BCE. Goguryeo is said to have been founded sometime between 200 BCE and 37 BCE by Jumong (also known as Chumo or King Dongmyeong), a leader of one of the Buyeo tribes. Originating in northern Manchuria, Buyeo was associated with the Yemaek people, who were instrumental in founding Old Joseon, Goguryeo, and Baekje. The founding of Goguryeo is shrouded in overlapping and conflicting myths. At best, the TV drama proclaims Jumong to be the legendary founder of Goguryeo. His father was Hae Mosu, a divine being said to have descended from heaven, and his mother was Lady Yuhwa, a mortal woman who fell in love with him. Jumong was raised by King Geumwa of Buyeo after his mother sought refuge there.

What we can say for sure is that Goguryeo warriors rode and fought hard. They expanded their kingdom into what is now Russia, most of Manchuria in China, North Korea, and much of Korea down to and below the Han River. They valiantly contested control of the Korean peninsula until their defeat by the Tang dynasty of China, allied with Silla, in 668 CE.

Out of royal family politics arose another of the Three Kingdoms: Baekje. Jumong, the founder of Goguryeo, had three sons. The eldest he left in Buyeo when he departed to found the new kingdom. In Goguryeo, he sired two more sons with a second wife, Soseono. When he brought his eldest son down from Buyeo and declared him heir, Soseono decided to flee with her two sons and start a new nation. Onjo, the second son of Jumong, established the new nation and ruled as its first king. Initially called "Tens of Counties" or "Vassals," it was later changed to "Baekje"—"Hundreds of Counties" or "Vassals." He located the capital in the Han River basin at Wiryeseong, or present-day Hanam, just southeast of Seoul. He built a fortress called Wiryeseongsan and worshipped on a nearby mountain, setting up an altar and calling it Kamdansan (감단산).

I've climbed that mountain many times and looked out over the Han River and the city of Seoul. The ruins of Wiryeseongsan were also a place for picnicking and hiking. I enjoyed living in a place where I could walk among history.



All Photos credit: Michael Downey

With the mayor of Hanam, South Korea

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