

Mother of Peace
And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes
A Memoir by Hak Ja Han Moon
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Text Only Version

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A tree with deep roots

When I gently closed my eyes and listened to the harsh winds blowing through the cornfield, it sounded like thousands of horses running in the wilderness. It captured the dynamic spirit of Goguryo knights galloping powerfully across the continent. At other times, if I listened quietly, I would hear another kind of sound, the affectionate "Hwoo! Hwoo!" of scops owls in the high branches of trees deep in the mountains.

I remember those summer nights when I fell asleep holding my mother's hand, with the sound of hooting owls echoing in my ears. More than 70 years have passed, but the beautiful scenery and soothing sounds of Anju remain in my heart. My hometown holds many beautiful memories for me, and I want to go back there. One day I will certainly return home.

* * *

When I was born, my father, Han Seung-un, had a dreamlike vision. He saw bright sunlight beaming into a thick grove of pine trees. The light fell on two cranes that were dancing together in harmonious affection. He decided to name me "Hak Ja," which means "crane child."

I am a member of the Han clan of Cheongju in North Chungcheong Province, the clan's historical birthplace. "Chungcheong" means "center of the heart that is pure and clear," and Cheongju means "clear village." When the water in a river or the sea is clear, one can see the fish swimming all the way to the bottom. Likewise, the hearts of my ancestors that lived in the town of Cheongju were pure and humble, through and through.

The Chinese character for my family name, "*Han*" (韓), has various meanings. It can mean "one," symbolizing God. It also can mean "big," as in large enough to embrace all created things in the universe, and "full," meaning overflowing abundance. The founding father of the Han clan, Han Lan, was honored as a loyal patriot of the Kingdom of Goryeo. The king of Korea would recognize persons of civic virtue and reward them with land and a perennial stipend. The court recorded their names in a book of honor, and there is an entry for Han Lan.

Han Lan's story is this: He built a bureau for agricultural administration in a district of Cheongju called Bangseo-dong and turned a large expanse of land into productive farmland. When a war between Korean rulers broke out, Wang Geon -- a nobleman and military general -- passed through Cheongju on his way to do battle with Gyeon Hweon, the king of Hu-baekje. Han Lan greeted Wang Geon, fed his army of 100,000 soldiers, and joined him on the battlefield. Once Wang Geon became king, he declared Han Lan a loyal patriot. Han Lan's reputation as a "founding contributor" to the kingdom has endured through the ages.

Thirty-three generations after Han Lan, I was born of his lineage. The numbers 3 and 33 are significant. Jesus asked three disciples to pray with him in Gethsemane. He prophesied that Peter would betray him three times before the cock crowed. Rejected of men, Jesus was crucified at the age of 33 -- yet he promised to return. He was one of three who were crucified on that day, to one of whom he said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." On the third day, Jesus rose from the grave. The number three signifies Heaven, Earth, and humankind. It signifies the perfect fulfillment of both heavenly law and natural law.

* * *

The Korean people are descended from the Dong-yi race, a wise people who studied the stars and were able to ascertain heavenly fortune. They developed a prosperous agriculture-based culture, worshiped God and loved peace from the time before Christ. The Dong-yi people established kingdoms based on the name "Han." Some people, including my husband, cite records that show that the Han people pre-date the Gojoseon era, which is considered to be the first Korean kingdom. Korea's founding legend, called the Dangun legend, says we were chosen as the descendants of Heaven according to the deep will of God.

Our people are also called the Baedal race. The Chinese characters for *bae* and *dal* signify brightness and brilliance. That attribution recognizes our reverence for God and love of peace and serenity. To this day, Korea is known as "the land of the morning calm."

Still, the Korean people's 5,000-year history is filled with deep sorrow. Foreign powers constantly marched through Korea, trampling us like wild grass and leaving us stripped like the bare branches of a tree in the coldest of winters. But we never lost our roots. We overcame foreign invasions with wisdom and patience and survived as a nation, and of this we are proud.

One cannot help but wonder why God allowed this people to suffer such great hardships. I believe it was to prepare a people to whom He could entrust a great mission. We learn from the Bible that God's chosen people always endure great adversity. On the foundation of Noah, Abraham, and other providential figures, God prepared the people of Israel as the ones to whom He could send the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Facing rejection, God had to allow Jesus to suffer great trials and hardship, and to finally offer his life on the cross.

Two thousand years later, God chose the Korean people and entrusted to them His only begotten Son and only begotten Daughter, the ones who can receive God's first love. God needed a man and a woman who could endure suffering and rejection while continuing to forgive and love all people, thus revealing God's heart of parental love. So too, God needed a nation capable of enduring suffering for the sake of all nations. God prepared the Korean people for this. Many peoples have suffered and disappeared from history, but the Koreans endured. Thus God entrusted this people with a noble mission.

As a hen embraces her brood

When I was born, Earth was groaning with anguish as a battleground in which people shed each other's blood. People dwelled in extreme confusion and darkness and heartlessly exploited each other. As part of this wretched mosaic, the Korean Peninsula suffered indescribable torment under a Japanese occupation that lasted 40 years, from the 1905 Eul Sa Neung Yak, a protectorate treaty between Korea and Japan, until our liberation in 1945. I was born during that period of oppression.

I was born in 1943 in Anju, South Pyong-an Province of what is now North Korea, at 4:30 am on February 10 of the solar calendar and the sixth day of the first lunar month of that year. I remember clearly the address of my home, 26, Sineui-ri Anju-eup, which has been renamed Chilseong-dong, in what is now the city of Anju. My home was not far from the center of the village, and the surrounding neighborhood had a very warm and cozy feeling, as if we were chicks cuddled under a mother hen.

Unlike the thatched-roof houses nearby, my house had a tile roof and a big front porch. Behind it rose a small, verdant hill covered with chestnut and pine trees. Beautiful flowers bloomed and colorful leaves fell with the rhythm of the seasons, and I heard every kind of bird singing and chirping together. When spring warmed the earth, yellow forsythias smiled brightly between the fences, and azaleas bloomed red on the hill. A small stream flowed through our village, and, except when it froze solid in midwinter, I could always hear the laughing sound of the water. I grew up enjoying the happy sounds of the birds and the stream, as if they were a choir of nature. Even now, thinking of life in my hometown is like snuggling into a cozy and heartwarming mother's embrace. This memory brings tears to my eyes.

Between our house and the hill, we had a small cornfield. When the corn was ripe, the husks would crack and yellow kernels of corn would appear through the long, silky hair. My mother would boil the ripened corn, put a generous number of cobs in a bamboo basket and call our neighbors to come and eat. They would come into our house through the gate built from sticks, sit in a circle on our porch and eat cobs of corn with us. I remember wondering why their faces did not look very bright, even though they were gratefully eating a delicious meal. Thinking about it years later, I realized these people were impoverished due to the severe exploitation of the occupying government.

I would squeeze in between the grown-ups and try to eat the kernels off a small cob of corn, but, as a small child, I was never successful. Noticing me, my mother would smile gently, break off some yellow kernels from her cob and put them into my mouth. I remember the sweet corn kernels rolling around in my mouth as if it were yesterday.

The Dallae Bridge legend

"Mother, why is where we live called Pyong-an Province?" I was full of curiosity, and whenever I had a question about something, I ran to my mother and asked her for the answer. Every time my mother responded kindly. "Well, dear," she replied, "it is called that because the Pyong part is the first character of Pyongyang and the An part is the first character of Anju."

"Why do they take one character from each name?" I asked.

"It's because both of them are big districts," she said. Over time, Anju had grown into a large town. It was surrounded by expansive plains that were ideal for farming, and there was normally plenty to eat. My father, Han Seung-un, was born on January 20, 1909. He was the eldest of five children of Han Byeong-gon and Choi Gi-byeong of the Cheongju Han clan at Yongheung village, by the city of Anju. My father entered Mansong Public Primary School in 1919, when he was 10. He had to leave after finishing the fourth grade, but his desire to learn led him to enter a private school, Yukyong School, in 1923, from which he graduated in 1925 at age 16. He then became a teacher at his alma mater, Yukyong School, for ten years. During the chaotic period from Korea's liberation until 1946, he served as the vice principal of his other alma mater, Mansong Primary School.

I lived with my father for only a brief time, but his gentle nature and features are engraved in my mind. He was meticulous and thrifty, and he was very strong. One day he was out for a stroll on a local road when he saw some people struggling to clear a big rock from a rice field. He went over, lifted up the rock and moved it out of the way. He was a devout Christian and follower of Rev. Lee Yong-do, pastor of the New Jesus Church. Because of my father's work as a teacher and his active life of faith, he was rarely at home. He lived a life of service to God, even though the government tracked and persecuted Christians from independent churches such as his.

My mother, Hong Soon-ae, was born on March 18, 1914, in Chongju, North Pyong-an Province. That is the town where my husband, Father Moon, also was born. She and her younger brother (my uncle) were born to a devout Christian couple, Hong Yu-il and Jo Won-mo.

My maternal grandmother, Jo Won-mo, was a direct descendant of Jo Han-jun, a wealthy scholar of the Joseon Dynasty. Jo Han-jun lived in a village of tiled roofed houses in Chongju, a community of people who held government positions. Not far from his home was a bridge across the Dallae River. It once was a sturdy bridge made of neatly piled, large stones, but over time it had deteriorated to the point that no one could cross it. No one had the time or resources to fix the bridge, and one day a flood swept it away and buried its stones in the riverbed.

As did everyone else, Jo Han-jun knew the prophecy that had been passed down for generations:

If a rock carved like a totem pole standing beside the Dallae River bridge is buried, then the nation of Korea will fall, but if that rock is clearly exposed to the people, then a new heaven and earth will unfold in Korea.

The Dallae River bridge was important for another reason as well. In order for Chinese envoys to make their annual trek to the seat of Korea's government in Seoul (then named Hanyang), they had to cross that bridge. Now it was gone, and the government did not have money to rebuild it. In desperation, officials posted a bulletin calling upon the citizens to rebuild the bridge. Grandfather Jo Han-jun accepted the call and rebuilt the bridge using his personal wealth. The sturdy new stone bridge was now high enough for boats to pass under.

Grandfather Jo Han-jun spent his entire fortune on this task, and when it was done, all he had left were three brass coins. These were just enough to pay for the new straw sandals that he needed in order to properly attend the bridge dedication ceremony the next day. That night, he had a dream of a grandfather in white clothes who came to him and said, "Han-jun, Han-jun! Your sincere devotion has moved Heaven. I was expecting to send a Son of Heaven to your family. However, because you bought the sandals, I will send to your family the Princess of Heaven."

Grandfather Jo Han-jun awoke from that dream and found that a stone statue of the Maitreya Buddha suddenly had appeared near the bridge. Over the years, this miracle created such an atmosphere that all those who passed that Buddha would get off their horses to offer a bow before proceeding on their way. The people of the village marveled at this sign from God and built a shelter over the statue so that it would not be exposed to rain or wind.

On this foundation of devotion and loyalty, generations later, in the family line of Jo Han-jun, God sent my maternal grandmother, Jo Won-mo. We three women -- Grandmother Jo Won-mo, her daughter (my mother), and I -- all had a very deep Christian faith. We were also the only daughters born into our families over three generations.

The providence to bring about the birth of God's only begotten Daughter on the Korean Peninsula was

based upon countless conditions of devotion that started long ago with my ancestors Han Lan and Jo Han-jun and continued through the generations to this time.

God is your Father

"My sweet child, shall we go to church?"

When I heard those words, I would run to my mother. She would take my hand in hers, and we would walk to church. I think the long walk with my mother was why I liked going to church. One Sunday, as we arrived back at our village after church, my mother stopped in her tracks. She plucked a wildflower blooming shyly on the roadside and tucked it into my hair, right behind the ear. She kissed my cheek and whispered to me with a delicate, loving voice, "How pretty you look, my one and only daughter of the Lord!"

Mother's eyes always looked the same. They were clear and deep, almost as if her irises were one with the blue sky. As I returned her gaze, I could glimpse traces of tears but, not knowing her deep heart, I was only excited and delighted by the words, "one and only daughter of the Lord." Mother often called me "precious daughter of the Lord" with emphasis, as if she were praying. Throughout her life, this was the term that she used when she prayed for me, her only daughter.

In this way, I grew up feeling honored that I was the daughter of God, the daughter of the Lord. My maternal grandmother, Jo Won-mo, also looked into my eyes and told me clearly, "God is your Father." Because of that, whenever I heard the word "father," my heart would burst in my chest. For me the word, "father" brought to mind not my own father, but our Heavenly Father. Because of such love in my home, I never worried about my life. Despite our poverty, and despite my father not being with us, I always was content. This was because I knew that God was my Father, that He was my reason for being alive, and that He was always right there by my side, taking care of me. I sensed that God was my real Parent from the moment of my birth.

I realize now that I had a sensitive spiritual intuition. My husband recognized this in me, and complimented me for my insight into things that were taking place. He did so sometimes during his talks to members.

* * *

My grandmother and mother taught me the duties of heavenly love, and not to obsess over what I was going through personally. They set the example for me, obeying God absolutely and wholeheartedly. For Him, they did not mind carrying out exhausting endeavors that seemed to melt their very bone marrow. They offered their devotions of prayer most earnestly and carefully, almost as if they were building a tall stone tower. They also made other extraordinary conditions that I didn't fully understand. They would bow before Jesus hundreds and even thousands of times in a day. They cooked meals for Jesus and sewed clothes for him, as if he were living in our house with us, and then they did the same for the Lord whom they expected to return to Korea. They shared their faith with everyone they met and their meager food and resources with anyone who needed it. Their generous and happy spirits moved me and shaped my character as I grew up.

Several times a day, I would stand at the edge of our front porch and look up at the clear sky. It was astonishing how often I saw three or four beautiful cranes in flight. I would continue my gaze at the sky even after the cranes were out of sight, my arms wrapped tightly around my chest to contain my heart, which I felt was about to burst out of me and join the cranes in the heavens.

* * *

One day, out of the blue, my mother asked me, "Do you know how you cried when you were born?"

"I was a little baby," I replied, "so I must have cried, 'Waah.'"

"No, you didn't," she said. "You cried, 'La-la-la-la-la' as if you were singing! Your grandmother said, 'Perhaps this child is going to grow up to become a musician.'" I engraved her words in my heart, for I thought they might symbolize my future. However, my mother was not done telling me about my infancy.

She said that after she ate her first bowl of seaweed soup, the traditional meal for a mother after childbirth, she cradled me in her arms and fell asleep. As she dreamed, she saw Satan, a monstrous demon, appear before her. He shouted so loudly that even the mountains and streams rang with his fearsome voice. "If I let this baby be, the world will be in danger," he yelled. "I must do away with her right now." Suddenly he made as if to strike me. My mother held me closely and cast upon him all her energy to declare his defeat.

"Satan, be gone at once!" she said fiercely. "How dare you try to hurt her, when she is the most precious child to Heaven! I cast you out in the name of the Lord! Get out of my presence! You have no right to be here! Heaven has claimed this child and your days of power have come to an end!"

Mother was shouting so loudly that my grandmother rushed into the room and shook her. She collected herself, looked deeply into my face and searched her heart for the reason Satan was trying to strike me. She took this experience as a sign that I was destined to strike the head of the serpent. And this was the answer to her and my grandmother's prayers. "I must raise this child with complete devotion," my mother vowed to herself. "I will raise her to become a pure and beautiful girl for the Lord, and protect her from the pollution of the secular world."

About a month later, she had another dream. This time, a heavenly angel dressed in shimmering white came to her on a sunlit cloud. "Soon-ae," the angel spoke; "I am sure you must feel incapable to prepare this baby for the service that our Heavenly Father has in mind, but don't be. This baby is the daughter of the Lord and you are her nanny. Please devote all your energies to raising her with absolute faith, love, and obedience."

Satan, however, did not give up. Until we left North Korea, he would appear in mother's dreams, looking hideous and voicing threats both dramatic and subtle. Mother fought hard to protect me over a number of years. When I heard about these dreams from my mother, I became very serious: "Why was Satan trying to hurt me? And why did he keep stalking me?" I wondered.

My father played an essential role

"Alright, from now on, you should wear these when you go out," my maternal grandfather told me. I looked at the strange footwear and asked, "What are these?" "They are called high heels," he said.

During the Japanese colonial rule in Korea, Western fashions such as high heels were almost never seen in rural areas. My grandfather, Hong Yu-il, however, was an enlightened gentleman who welcomed modern things. He personally had gone into the city and bought high heels for all the women in his family. He was tall, friendly, and handsome, and everyone highly respected his progressive thinking. Even though he had grown up in a household of strict Confucian tradition, he was ahead of his time. Interestingly, when I met Father Moon for the first time, I thought in my heart that he resembled my grandfather. That was one reason I could feel at ease with Father Moon when I first met him, even though I was only 13. He was not a stranger to me.

My maternal grandmother, Jo Won-mo, was a petite woman with beautiful features. In addition to being a devout Christian, she was industrious and active. She made a living by running a small business, called the Pyong-an Store, selling and repairing sewing machines. At the time, sewing machines were expensive, and they were considered the most important part of a bride's trousseau. Townspeople admired my grandmother for giving big discounts to the families of new brides and for setting up payment plans, something unheard of back then. Grandmother used to go from village to village to collect the monthly payments, carrying me on her back. I first experienced the wider world on those excursions.

My grandfather's family moved from Chongju, which is my husband's hometown, and crossed the Cheongcheon River to the town of Anju -- to be precise, Shineui, a village in the town of Anju. My mother inherited Grandmother Jo Won-mo's devout faith; they attended a local Presbyterian Church in Anju until she was age 19. The pastor of that church actually gave my mother her name, Hong Soon-ae. My mother studied at Anju Grade School and, in 1936, graduated from a Christian mission school called Pyongyang Saints Academy.

* * *

My parents were married in the New Jesus Church on March 5, 1934, and I, their first and only child, was born in 1943, nine years later. That unusually long interval elapsed not because my parents were infertile but because they were living separately, each engrossed in their lives of faith and, for my father, his career as an educator. He taught in Yeon-baek County, Hwanghae Province, which was some distance from my maternal home, and my mother did not want to move there. My mother's intense devotion to Jesus led her to focus all her time and attention on her church work. There was another reason as well. My maternal grandparents, the Hong, wished to make my father, Han Seung-un, their heir, but he did not accept it. As the eldest son of the Han family, his parents did not allow him to put his roots down in his wife's home. So she would not move in with him, nor him with her. But God wanted me to be born, and so I arrived in my grandparents' home in Shineui-ri, Anju. I grew up there, and came to accept God quite naturally.

* * *

In 1945, when Korea regained its independence, the great powers divided our peninsula at the 38th

parallel, and soon the joy of having our country back turned into despair. The Russians put the Korean communist party in charge, and it implemented policies backed by brutal oppression. I was four years old when my father suddenly appeared at our home to announce, "Conditions are not going to improve here. I cannot have my family live in North Korea. Let us go south."

My mother could not help but think hard about my father's unexpected request. While she had been living with the sole purpose of meeting the Lord at the Second Advent, she actually did not know what she would do when she met him. Her husband's request tore her in two: "Would it be better to stay here and walk the unknown path of God's will? Or should I elect to live as an ordinary housewife?" She pondered these things and then made up her mind. "I will not succumb to the communist persecution," she said. "I will stay here and continue to walk the path of faith to receive the Lord." My father was dumbfounded, but he left as he had determined to do.

My mother was not the only person to remain in the North out of faith that Jesus was going to appear there. Pyongyang was called the "Jerusalem of the East," and Christianity was in full bloom there. It was a holy place where churches were making preparations to receive the Messiah at the Second Coming. Though mainstream Christians said he would come on the clouds, the spirit-led groups in Pyongyang believed he would come in the flesh. My mother along with my grandmother believed that completely. They were now attending the New Jesus Church, one of the most fervent churches in the city. My mother resolved to remain in Pyongyang and continue her mission as a member of the faithful household of the Messiah.

Though my father did his best to fulfill his duties as husband and father, God's providence broke up our family in the end. Watching him as he left through the gate, I thought, "This will not be the last time I see my father." However, I was wrong. That was the last time I saw him.

* * *

Except for when I was very young, I lived my life without my father, Han Seung-un. Sometimes I would wonder where he was and what he was doing, but I never set out to find him. This was because of the words I had heard from my grandmother and my mother from the time I was a little girl, "Your Father is God." I grew up knowing those words to be the unchanging truth. Since I was born as God's daughter, I firmly believed He is my true Father. That is why I did not harbor any hurt over my father's departure.

I was molded from my conception to be the True Mother who would devote her life to God's purposes. I see everything from that perspective -- the Japanese colonial rule and Korean War, my childhood full of hardships, my family consisting of my maternal grandmother and mother, the Christian love that enveloped us day and night. I treasure it as a growing period designed by Heaven. When all is said and done, my father played an essential role.

I later learned that my father dedicated his life to education in South Korea, teaching in more than 16 schools over a period of 40 years and retiring as a principal. He was peacefully taken into God's embrace in the spring of 1978. A long time later, when our Unification movement was building its international headquarters on Chung Pyung Lake, I learned that my father had taught at the Miwon Elementary School in the village of Seorak, a few kilometers from our complex. As I live at this location now, I take it that God's plan was to unite my father and me together in the end.

God calls those whom He chooses

On the foundation of 6,000 turbulent years of God's providential history, the only begotten Daughter came to this earth. Innumerable people waited impatiently, ignorant of what it was they were waiting for, having no concept of the only begotten Daughter from the teachings of the world's religions.

It was my husband who discovered that for God to bring forth His only begotten Daughter, He needed to find a nation that had endured injustice for over 5,000 years and was now filled with devout Christians. That nation is Korea. From ancient times, Koreans loved peace and wore white clothing out of reverence for God and their forebears.

The spirit of filial piety, loyalty and chastity, which are the fundamental virtues of human life, lives and breathes in the history of Korea. Moreover, historically speaking, Korea is a place where the world's religions have borne fruit. Even though its history of Christianity is not long, God chose it as the nation and people to whom He would send His only begotten Daughter. Father Moon realized that God would work through a family in which the hearts of three generations of only daughters were connected in sacrificial faith. The Holy Spirit guided Father Moon to discover this in the Bible -- no one else saw it. As these conditions were fulfilled, only then could the Mother of peace, destined to bring about a peaceful world, be received on this earth.

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Every one of us needs to feel deeply grateful for being born. There is not one person whose birth is meaningless. Moreover, no person's life is his or hers alone. Heaven, earth, and all things in the universe interconnect through lines of latitude and longitude. Peace means that all the energies in the entire world, and in the entire universe, are in harmony. Therefore, no one should belittle his or her life. We should deeply realize that everyone is a precious being, born through the sacred workings of the universe.

As for me, I was born in the midst of a world consumed by chaos, in which no light of hope was to be seen. The Second World War, set in motion in the autumn of 1939, was growing ever more intense. German fascism and Japanese imperialism were staining Europe and Asia with blood. With the exception of Britain, most nations in Europe had been trampled by Hitler. And even Britain was suffering constant air raids from Nazi Germany.

The plight of Korea, a Japanese colony, was just as wretched. My warm childhood experiences notwithstanding, Koreans endured a tremendous struggle just to survive and find food to eat and clothes to wear. As the end of the war approached, Japanese soldiers raided Korean homes and confiscated everything metal, even the brassware used in ancestral rites, to create weapons. All rice went to feed Japanese soldiers, with the Korean people left to starve. Farmers who harvested rice with their own hands did not get to eat even a morsel of that rice.

Japan went as far as to ban the use of Hangeul, the Korean alphabet that encompasses the spirit of its people, and to force us to renounce our Korean names and adopt Japanese names. All young Korean men were drafted, either to fight on battlefields far from home or to work long hours in coal mines and factories.

Even in the midst of such hardships, our people set forth to reclaim our nation. In 1940, Koreans set up offices of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Chongqing, China, and established the Independence Army. These patriots believed that the expropriation of Korea was only temporary, and had a firm resolve to liberate their fatherland.

While the war raged on, in April 1941, Korean independence movement organizations abroad came together at the Christian Academy in Kalihi in Honolulu, Hawaii. At a Rally for the Korean People, representatives from nine organizations, including the Korean National Association in North America, the Korean National Association in Hawaii, and the Korean National Independence League, pledged with one heart to fight the Japanese military for the liberation of their homeland.

On January 1, 1942, one year before I was born, representatives of 26 allied nations gathered in Washington, D.C. They signed a declaration pledging to end the war and then work together toward peace. This created the opportunity for Korea, which had been invaded and colonized by Japan, to regain its independence. From the viewpoint of God's hand that rules history, this was His preparation to insure that the only begotten Daughter would grow to maturity in a nation with its own sovereignty.

Decades earlier, in March 1919, Grandmother Jo Won-mo took to the streets carrying my mother, Hong Soon-ae, then five years old, and desperately cried out for independence. She did so knowing only by faith that she was making preparations for the birth of the only begotten Daughter. The world and its people endured great suffering in the year 1942 for the same purpose. In a late spring week that year, my father and mother finally spent some time together, and I was conceived.

Christianity and the only begotten Daughter

From the moment of the Fall, God worked His providence to send His beloved only begotten Son and Daughter to humankind. After many foundations were laid -- some bearing fruit, others claimed by Satan -- His plan developed dramatically in Korea. From the early 1900s, spiritual fires flared up among Pentecostal Korean Christians who received guidance about God's providence. Many groups believed that the returning Lord would appear in Pyongyang. Exemplary among these was a particular lineal succession of churches: the New Jesus Church, led by Rev. Lee Yong-do; the Holy Lord Church, led by Rev. Kim Seong-do; and the Inside-the-Womb Church, so named to emphasize that the returning Lord would be born of a woman, led by Rev. Heo Ho-bin. All three overcame oppression, on one side from the non-Christian government and, on the other, from the mainstream denominations. Amid such pressures, these churches completed the Christian foundation to receive the only begotten Son and only begotten Daughter.

The eastern Korean Peninsula, upon which the sun first rises, is a region of mountains, and the western peninsula, where the sun sets, is a region of valleys. Following the principles of geomancy, spiritual works led by men unfolded in the mountains of the east, at Wonsan in Hamgyong Province, and spiritual works led by women unfolded in the valleys of the west, at Cholsan in Pyong-an Province. Representative among such women were Kim Seong-do of the Holy Lord Church and Heo Ho-bin of the Inside-the-Womb Church. Representative among the men who ignited spiritual works were Evangelist Hwang

Gook-ju, Rev. Baek Nam-ju and Rev. Lee Yong-do of the New Jesus Church.

My mother grew up in the mainstream Presbyterian Church, but my grandmother connected to various Spirit-led groups and, when the time was right, introduced her spiritual life to my mother. Long before Korea's liberation in 1945, my grandmother and mother both offered fervent devotions, lived a life of self-sacrifice, and served others with perseverance, with their sole focus being on receiving the Lord at his Second Advent.

In those days, Hwang Gook-ju, with some 50 followers, set out from Jindao, northeast China, on a pilgrimage across the Korean Peninsula. They witnessed to their faith, ate nothing but flour mixed with water, and performed miracles at revival meetings. The Holy Spirit often came to the evangelist's sister, Hwang Eun-ja. She, as well as Rev. Lee Yong-do, a local pastor whom she had met at one of their revivals, deeply impressed my mother, who joined their pilgrimage. Mother walked with them on their witnessing journey, from Anju all the way to Shineuiju near the border with China. They preached God's word as they went. Politically speaking, it was a fearful age, for anyone who so much as alluded to the existence of the "Korean people" could be arrested by the Japanese police. But the group's services were so powerful that even police detectives sent to spy on the meetings would be deeply moved.

The witnessing journey was not a pleasure trip; it was a course filled with hardships. They had nothing but the clothes on their backs, and the residents of the villages were just as destitute. Nonetheless, these believers walked as many as 40 kilometers every day and night, and lit the fire of the Holy Spirit in every village they visited. My mother made the journey through Shineuiju, and on to Ganggye, arriving there on the 100th day of their pilgrimage. At that point the witnessing team sought to cross the border with China into Manchuria, but this proved to be impossible and they returned home.

By the time they returned to Anju, Rev. Lee Yong-do had established a congregation called the New Jesus Church. My mother decided to join that church and invest in her revitalized life of faith. Rev. Lee Yong-do, formerly of the Methodist Church, was not a healthy man. He sometimes would vomit blood and collapse during revival meetings. He created the founding council of the New Jesus Church in Pyongyang, but before he could do more, he passed away at the young age of 33, in Wonsan. After his funeral, the New Jesus Church began again under the leadership of Rev. Lee Ho-bin.

For three years, beginning in 1933, my grandmother and mother practiced their life of faith at the New Jesus Church in Anju. With the belief that she needed to be pure to receive the returning Lord, my mother repented tearfully every day. Then one day, she received a revelation from Heaven: "Rejoice! If your baby is a boy, he will become the king of the universe, and if a girl, she will become the queen of the universe." She was sitting under a moonlit sky, early in the spring of 1934, just 21 years of age. Although it was a revelation from Heaven, her actual circumstances were not such that she could easily embrace such words. Nonetheless, she calmed her heart and accepted it serenely. "Whether You give me a son or a daughter," she replied to God, "I will consider the child to be as great as the universe, and will raise the child with care as Heaven's prince or princess. I will completely dedicate my life for Your will." A few days later, Rev. Lee Ho-bin matched my mother to another member of his church, Han Seung-un, a young man of 26. On March 5, Rev. Lee officiated their marriage. After the marriage, Han Seung-un continued to work as a teacher, and my mother kept house while working hard for the church.

* * *

My mother kept God's revelation about the child she was to bear in the forefront of her mind. She came to realize that even though the baby would be born into the world through her body, he or she was God's child more than it was hers. She believed that, just as a child was given unto Mother Mary, a child would be born unto her to govern the universe as God's begotten Son or Daughter. My mother read the Gospels from that viewpoint, and determined that, unlike Mary, she would support her child's heavenly mission with body and soul.

My grandmother and my mother believed that something great would take place in their church before long, but three years passed, and nothing changed. At that time, my grandmother journeyed to Cholsan in North Pyong-an Province and participated in a gathering held by a women's spiritual sisterhood led by Mrs. Kim Seong-do. There she received much grace. She also learned that Kim Seong-do was ministering even though her husband beat her every time she went to church. Mrs. Kim's followers, who were holding meetings in their homes, received the name the Holy Lord Church. Around 1936, my mother joined my grandmother on her journey to Cholsan for the first time. As she met Kim Seong-do, she knew that God was opening the next chapter in her life of faith.

* * *

At this point I will introduce my maternal uncle, Hong Soon-jeong. He was not a part of my life in North Korea, but he later played a major role in determining my family's fortunes. He was my mother's younger brother, and was very studious and attended Pyongyang Teachers' Academy. Every year, he would travel

a long distance to visit our family during the holidays. He took the Gyeongui Line train to Charyeongwan Station, from which he had to walk for half a day. My mother was always overjoyed to meet her brother, who had come such a long way to see her. However, she was unable to enjoy much time chatting with him because of her witnessing work.

* * *

Thanks to the active witnessing of its followers, the Holy Lord Church expanded from Cholsan to Chongju, Pyongyang, Haeju, Wonsan and even Seoul, opening more than 20 churches. In 1943, the Japanese police imprisoned Kim Seong-do and ten or so of her followers. They were released three months later, but Kim Seong-do passed away in 1944 at the age of 61.

My mother and grandmother, who had been attending her church in Cholsan for eight years, believing that they were about to restore the Garden of Eden, were at a loss. Together with all of the church members, they asked God, "Whom should we follow now?" This question weighed on everyone's hearts. Responding to the prayers of this flock seeking a shepherd, the Holy Spirit chose one among them, Mrs. Heo Ho-bin.

Mrs. Heo had devotedly attended Kim Seong-do and was well respected by the entire Holy Lord Church. God guided her to found a new church, which came to be known as the Inside-the-Womb Church, and gather followers. God taught her how to purify herself and also how to raise children after the Lord comes. Just as God had prepared for Jesus before he was born in the land of Israel, Heo Ho-bin made thorough preparations for the Lord of the Second Advent, who she firmly believed would be born in the land of Korea.

In pursuit of this mission, one year later Heo Ho-bin summoned my mother. "We need to make sets of clothes for the Lord of the Second Advent, so that he will not be embarrassed when he appears in front of us. You should finish making a set of clothes before the end of each day."

Every day, mother sewed for dear life, for she was making the Lord's clothes. While doing so, she thought to herself, "I will have no regrets in my life if I can meet the Lord at his Second Advent before I die, even if only in a dream." As she sewed one day, she quietly dozed off. In her dream, she saw a robust man in the room, sitting to the east of her with a small table in front of him, a headband around his head. He had been studying, but he turned to look at her. "I am studying this hard just to find you." Those words moved her to tears of gratitude and appreciation.

She awoke from the dream and realized that this man was the returning Lord. In this way, long before she could meet him in the flesh, my mother had had profound, spiritual communication with Father Moon, who came as the Lord at the Second Advent. That dream gave her confidence to persevere through the long and precipitous path of faith that separated the dream from the reality.

During that interim, my grandmother and mother were focused with yearning and impatience for the Lord, the only begotten Son. They, along with the entire Christian world, were unaware of the providential plan for the advent of the only begotten Daughter. Father Moon himself was the only one who understood this. As this illustrates, God unfolds the providence step by step, not disclosing the providence of restoration except to those who need to understand and who have set the conditions to do so.

* * *

As was expected to happen sooner or later, World War II finally came to an end with Japan's defeat. Korea enjoyed the liberation its people had long desired, but the North soon fell under communist rule. The communist oppression of religion knew no bounds. There are always people who betray others -- even Jesus had a treacherous disciple. The Inside-the-Womb Church was not spared. One of its members accused the group of amassing wealth, and the communist police took Heo Ho-bin and many of her followers to Daedong Police Station in Pyongyang. Security agents interrogated Heo Ho-bin harshly and mocked her. "When is this 'Jesus' who is inside your womb going to come out?" Heo Ho-bin boldly answered, "He will come out in a few days!"

Though white-clad members of the church offered prayers every day in front of the prison gates, even after a year the prisoners had not been released. That was the time that Father Moon, who had been living in Seoul, journeyed to Pyongyang. It was in August of 1946 that he opened a meeting room in the Gyeongchang-ri district of the city and began witnessing. The police accused Father Moon of being a spy for South Korean President Syngman Rhee, and imprisoned him in the jail in which Heo Ho-bin and her followers were being held.

The sad fact is that the imprisoned members of the Inside-the-Womb Church failed to recognize that Father Moon was the returning Lord. During his imprisonment of a hundred days, he contacted Heo Ho-

bin several times, but she refused to listen to him. Father Moon was eventually thrown out on the brink of death due to severe torture. Most members of the Inside-the-Womb Church died under the same torture. Those who survived scattered when the Korean War broke out in 1950, some remaining in the North, some fleeing to the South.

This history illustrates the fate of those who receive Heaven's revelation and do not fulfill their responsibility. The sole purpose of those groups was to welcome the Lord at the Second Advent, and they knew this was their mission and declared it. For that purpose, this group, to which my mother belonged, had endured unbelievably difficult hardships, but they failed when their concept of the Lord blinded them to the reality of the Lord.

Participating wholeheartedly in such groups, my grandmother and mother lived with devout faith in order to receive the Lord. For long years, they sincerely believed the prophecy that "The only begotten Son, the savior of the world, will come to the land of Korea." They offered single-minded devotion with unsurpassed zeal and purity. They never compromised with the world or stayed comfortably at home; they served God with heart and soul.

Participating in my grandmother and mother's walk on the path of suffering to receive the Lord, I inherited the essence of their faith.

Because they made whatever sacrifice was needed on the path of God's will, the only begotten Daughter, for whom Heavenly Parent had long waited and yet of whom the world was ignorant, was born on this earth in the third generation of their family. I was born into this intensely spiritual family in an intensely spiritual milieu, and grew up in constant rapport with God, who taught me the mission that was unknown to them: the mission of the Mother of the universe.

Worlds divide at the 38th parallel

"You came here to see your mother?" The guard asked this question as a formality; he knew why I was there, because I came every day.

"Yes, sir," I would respond in my soft voice.

"Wait here," he would say, in a fatherly tone. "I'll call her for you.

Would you like a candy?"

In 1948, when the oppression of religions by North Korea's Communist Party was at its height, my mother and grandmother were imprisoned for nearly two weeks for being members of the Inside-the-Womb Church. I was five years old at the time, and I would go to the prison to see my mother. The guards were nice to me because I was polite and well-behaved. Even those ruthless communists gave me fruit or candy when they saw me.

I cannot explain why the authorities released both of them, as the Party was increasing its suppression of religious activities. Perhaps it was out of their concern for me. The good result was that the imprisonment convinced my grandmother that to live a peaceful life, let alone a life of faith, they had to go to South Korea. Since Heo Ho-bin was still in prison, my mother was of two minds about it, but Grandmother persuaded her to go.

"If we stay here," she reasoned, "we will die before we meet the Lord. Once we are in South Korea and have met up with Soon-jeong, the right way will appear." The mention of her younger brother, my uncle Hong Soon-jeong, who was preparing to be a medical practitioner in the South, swayed my mother. She mounted a last protest as she gave in: "How can we go there with no destination? We don't even have a place to stay."

Grandmother took a deep breath and said firmly, "We still must go. God will protect us."

My grandfather did not join us. Like many, he had received the revelation that Pyongyang was the "Palace of Eden," and he was determined to remain there to guard it. Nonetheless, he encouraged his wife and daughter to leave for the South. Because her purpose in life was to meet the Lord at the Second Advent in Pyongyang, my mother had to pray for several days and nights before finally agreeing to go to South Korea, and she went on the condition that it would be temporary.

As good luck would have it, we received the news that uncle Soon-jeong had completed his studies in Japan and in Seoul, and had joined the South Korean Army. My uncle was an intellectual and a dapper young man. Moreover, he was very strong-minded. My grandmother missed her only son and wished very much to see him. In addition, she wanted to protect me, her granddaughter, at all costs. She wanted to prevent my being taken by the cruel communists and made to suffer at their hands. She was sincere

when she told me repeatedly over the years, "You are God's true Daughter." Her mission in life was to protect me from the misfortunes of the world.

Along with most people in the North, my family believed that North Korea's Communist Party would not last long. We expected that after a short stay in South Korea, we would see the downfall of the communists and be able to return home. As history shows, this dream was not to be realized. After we crossed the 38th parallel, we never considered returning to the North. Looking back, I believe that God worked through my grandmother's affectionate heart for her son and granddaughter. When all is said and done, a mother's parental heart reflects God's motherly heart.

* * *

"It is dark now," my mother whispered. "Let's go."

It was the autumn of 1948, and we left our home in the middle of the night, my mother carrying me on her back and my grandmother carrying a couple of bundles. It is quite a distance from Anju to the 38th parallel, 200 kilometers (125 miles) as the crow flies. We had to walk for days and days to cover that distance. And we took every step on that journey with anxiety, fearing for our lives. At night we slept in empty houses, and when the morning dew fell we would start again. Our shoes were flimsy and the roads were rough, and so our feet ached from the very start. What was hardest to endure was the hunger. We would knock on the doors of shabby cottages and give them something from our bundles in exchange for food, which was usually a cup of boiled barley and rice. Undergoing such hardships, we walked and walked endlessly southward.

The communists had plowed the fields and broken up the shoulders of roads to make such a journey even more difficult. Our feet sank into mud as we walked through the fields, and we shivered all over with cold. Still, we continued on, looking only at the starlight.

North Korean People's Army soldiers were blocking the 38th parallel, and they easily captured my mother, grandmother, and me. They locked us up in a shed, together with other frightened people who had the same intention as we did. The soldiers were rough with the men, but they did not treat women and children harshly.

One day, one of the adults asked me to take food to the soldiers standing watch. Though my heart trembled inside, I forced a smile and handed the food to the soldiers. After I had done so several times, the soldiers' hearts softened, and one night they set my family free. They instructed us to return to our hometown, and we walked out of their sight in that direction. And then, as we stood at the crossroads between life and death, night fell, and we waited, and Heaven sent a young man to guide us on the path of life. Under the cover of darkness, we followed him across the 38th parallel.

As we crossed, I was so happy that I said to Mother, "We don't have to sing songs praising Kim Il Sung anymore, do we? I will sing a song from the southern part of Korea!" This too was God's intervention, for on the South Korean side soldiers also were keeping a strict watch. I sang a few lines of the song with a joyous heart. At that moment, we heard a rustling in the bushes in front of us. We were surprised and stood frozen in place, fearful that we would be captured by North Korean soldiers once again. Soldiers emerged from the bushes -- South Koreans. At the sight of them, we almost wilted in relief. Those South Korean soldiers told us that they had heard us as we approached and had been about to fire upon us. When they heard the voice of a child singing, they had lowered their weapons. They welcomed us and comforted us.

One soldier said, "It must have been difficult for you to make it all the way here with this beautiful young child. This isn't much, but please take it." We were so grateful to this soldier, whom God moved to give us money, enough to get us to Seoul.

Looking back, if I had not sung at that moment, those young soldiers probably would have mistaken us for North Korean soldiers and shot us dead. In this way, once again, God protected us. We arrived safely in South Korea after undergoing hardships such as these. Yet, in making that journey, we parted from my grandfather, whom we never saw again.

* * *

South Korea was a strange place to us. Having never been to Seoul, we had no idea how we could survive, and we were getting lost constantly. We also had lost the moorings of our faith; the hope to meet the returning Lord was indeed floating in the clouds. We had no money and no skills by which to make a living. We camped in a shabby, empty house and barely made it through each day. All we could do was talk to people.

Our most urgent task was to find my maternal uncle Soon-jeong. He was the only person we could

depend on in South Korea, and we were hoping he was somewhere in Seoul. My mother pleaded in prayer, "What should I do to find my younger brother?" She prayed most earnestly every day to find her brother on whom she could rely. We devoted ourselves to this search by visiting clinics and pharmacies.

Then we received an unexpected blessing from God. We met a man on the street who turned out to be a friend of my uncle's. This was indeed God's providential help. His friend told us that Uncle Soon-jeong was serving at the Army Headquarters in Seoul's Yongsan district. After returning from Japan, he had graduated from the College of Pharmacy in Seoul and then received training as a pharmaceutical officer in the Korea Military Academy. He was currently serving as a first lieutenant.

This kind man took us to Yongsan, and what a reunion it was! Soon-jeong was delighted to see his mother, sister and niece. He had no idea of the conditions in the North and was so distressed to hear of what we had gone through to get to Seoul. He immediately rented a small room for us in Hyochang-dong.

* * *

Our life in the South soon stabilized. I entered Hyochang Primary School and, in the free land of South Korea, began going to school for the first time. I loved going to school with my bag of books every day. The older residents of the neighborhood would pat me on the head, and the neighborhood children also liked me very much. Looking back, I find it interesting that our rented room was close to Cheongpa-dong, the neighborhood in which, seven years later, we would end our search for the Lord at the Second Advent. Until that day arrived, however, we endured many twists and turns on our odyssey.

While at Hyochang-dong, we heard the news that Jeong Seok-cheon, the eldest son of the founder of the Holy Lord Church, had settled in South Korea. We took it as a miracle and prayed that God would guide us to meet him. All in all, we praised God that my uncle was serving as an army officer, and that Jeong Seok-cheon's family from the Holy Lord Church had come to the South. Without doubt, our Heavenly Parent prepared a path to protect the one called to serve humankind as the only begotten Daughter, the one to whom He would entrust the providence. Now that our physical pilgrimage had reached an oasis, it was time to renew our spiritual pilgrimage.

A blue flash of death

It was early on a hot summer morning. Red balsam flowers blossomed on one side of our courtyard, and thick, old willow and sycamore trees stood along the street. I was seven years old, but I remember the moment clearly, as a frantic neighbor burst into our living room with the words, "War has broken out! The North Korean army has crossed the 38th parallel!"

Apprehensive residents gathered in the alley in groups of two and three. I had been getting used to settled life in the South, but when the North Korean People's Army launched their invasion, our short respite was over. Everyone was frightened, government reports mingled with rumors, and no one knew for sure what was going on.

What happened was that the South Korean interim government packed up and moved to the city of Daejeon, 90 miles to the south of Seoul. The government ordered the South Korean army to blow up the Han River Bridge, the only bridge across the Han River on the south side of Seoul. They expected North Korean troops to arrive in Seoul soon, and they had no means to protect the city. Their strategy was to prevent the communist army from crossing the river. They could do little or nothing to help the city's residents, who were crying out for Seoul's defense.

Two days later, my mother woke up at dawn and began packing our clothes in a bundle. Awakened by the rustling noise, I kept my eyes shut and listened to her conversation with my grandmother. "We have to seek refuge," my mother said. "After the communists get here, they'll kill us."

"I know they are bad," my grandmother responded, "but do you think they would treat women harshly?"

"If they find out we have escaped from the North," my mother reasoned, "they probably will kill us on the spot."

On the evening of June 27, 1950, two days after the start of the Korean War, Seoul residents streamed out of the city's ancient neighborhoods under a gentle summer rain. The more they realized that they were not the only ones seeking to escape, and that they all had to cross the same bridge, the more serious and desperate they became. This was war. My grandmother, mother, and I joined the exodus with our bundle, following the throng moving toward the Han River Bridge. When its dim shape appeared in the dark, something told me to stop, and I grabbed my grandmother's skirt. She stopped in her tracks, and my mother turned and asked her, "Mother, what's wrong?"

Grandmother looked up at the sky and then glanced down at me. Then she turned her head again in the

direction of our house. "Soon-jeong may come," she said with a steady tone, speaking of her son, my uncle. It seemed senseless to turn around when everyone else was fleeing the city, but she was firm. "Let's go back in case he does."

My mother understood. The three of us made our way back home, fighting the crowds. When we got home, I spread out my blanket and lay down to sleep, but it was not long before I was awakened by the noise of a three-quarter-ton truck. Its headlights illuminated our room as the door suddenly burst open. There was my uncle in his military uniform. My grandmother and mother gasped sighs of relief and hope. I thought to myself, "We can leave now," and felt at ease.

"Hurry," he barked. "We have to move now!" Uncle Soon-jeong, based in the army headquarters as a military medic, was aware of the progress of the war. As soon as he heard that the South Korean army was preparing to destroy the Han River Bridge, he requisitioned a truck and sped to our home, knowing his family was in danger. He had left the truck with its engine running in our foggy alley. We climbed in with our already-packed bundle, and he drove toward the bridge. In the pre-dawn hours, crowds of refugees were swarming there from all directions, creating total chaos.

We moved forward at a snail's pace on the congested street. As an army officer, my uncle had the official pass necessary to take a vehicle across the bridge. Honking the horn, he inched the truck through the crowd. Held in my mother's arms, I clung to her and gazed at the people fleeing their homes, their fear and confusion increasing by the minute.

As soon as we had crossed the bridge, my uncle shouted, "Get down in your seats!" As I squeezed down on the floor at my mother's feet, a huge explosion behind us shook our truck. There was a blue flash and a deafening sound. My uncle set the emergency brake and turned off the engine. Together we jumped out of the truck and clambered down into the ditch at the side of the road. I turned my face to the bridge and witnessed the next explosion. I saw a light like a demon's burning eyes piercing the night. Countless civilians as well as soldiers and policemen who were crossing the bridge were thrown about like plastic toys, flying everywhere, cast into the river below. For us, a few meters proved to be the difference between life and death. Our lives had been spared.

I closed my eyes, and many thoughts flashed across my mind. Why would anyone start a war? Why did innocent people have to die? Why is God permitting such pain and suffering? Who can bring an end to this madness? I could not conceive of any answers. When I reopened my eyes, I saw that the bridge was cut in half. The military had accomplished its mission, at the cost of hundreds of lives. What remained amid the corpses, the screaming wounded, and the dazed survivors, was an ugly skeleton of steel, smoldering in the dark.

* * *

The Han River Bridge was blown up at 3:00 a.m. on June 28, 1950. Even though the South Korean government had announced that it would defend Seoul, it severed the only link to safety, even before the North Korean People's Army came into the city. Hundreds of people, fleeing the city, were killed. Amid this desperate crisis, through the help of my uncle, my life and the lives of my family were preserved. At that critical moment, God guided me and protected us from danger.

Even today, whenever I cross a bridge over the Han River, I see that blue flash and hear people's agonized screams echoing as if they still are burning in hell. My heart aches at the sound. At a young age I directly witnessed the horror of war and experienced the wretched life of a refugee. The simple and innocent were killed like flies. Children who had lost their parents were crying and wandering in the streets. I was only seven, but I became so serious that war has to vanish forever from this world. It took place 70 years ago, but my throat still tightens when I recall the night the Han River Bridge fell.

* * *

Left by my uncle, who had to return to military duty, barely able to keep ourselves in one piece, my grandmother, mother, and I walked and walked on unfamiliar paths heading south. Once in a while we got a ride in a passing car. Presenting a document as to my uncle's position as a medic, we finally gained shelter in a refugee camp for military families. As the tide of the war shifted, on September 28 we returned to Seoul. The South Korean military had driven out the communists and reconstructed a passable bridge across the river. We lodged in an empty house, one that the soldiers from the North had occupied, to which the owners did not return.

Then the tide of war turned again. Half a million communist Chinese troops invaded Korea across the Yalu River. On January 4, 1951, the South Korean army again abandoned Seoul, and we again had to escape. This time we were able to board a train for the families of soldiers, and we safely arrived in the city of Daegu.

The day-after-day sights and sounds of our year-long wilderness course from the North to the South defy description. I saw countless dead bodies -- adults, children, victims of freezing, starvation, disease and battle. My family and I also teetered on the brink of death, but somehow, throughout this journey for survival, I felt God was with us. There was a greater power protecting our family as we escaped the North and found refuge in the South. Heavenly Parent gave me more than a sense of meaning and value. He provided me with a scale by which to measure my purpose in life.

The way of God's will

By God's hand, on our way to Daegu we met Jeong Seok-cheon, a member of the Holy Lord Church, to which my family had belonged in Cholsan. He was very pleased to see us, and we all felt as if we were meeting long-lost relatives. The Holy Lord Church was the church in which my parents were married, and Jeong Seok-cheon's mother, Kim Seong-do, was its founder. She was one of many female church leaders in the northern part of Korea whose devotion to Jesus was unparalleled and who had received revelations of what was to come.

The Holy Lord Church had withered due to Japanese persecution, and the Communist Party's brutal oppression had put an end to it and all churches in the North. Escaping to the South, Jeong Seok-cheon continued to worship God. With scattered Holy Lord Church members who had found each other, he created a prayer group in Daegu. He maintained his ardor to accomplish God's will and prepared himself to meet the returning Lord. He also worked diligently and had a good livelihood managing mining, rice, and oil businesses. Mr. Jeong organized our lodging in Daegu.

My mother made a simple request of him. "When we were in North Korea," she said, "we received much grace through Mrs. Heo Ho-bin, and there were great works." Mr. Jeong knew of Rev. Heo, whose congregation had prepared food and clothes for Jesus, as well as for the Second Coming Lord. "As the Lord will return to Korea soon," my mother said to Mr. Jeong, "please, let us pray very hard to welcome him."

* * *

One morning, during the Daegu group's intense prayer, my mother received a revelation from Heaven. God told her that she had to live a life of greater devotion if she wanted to meet the Lord at the Second Advent. "Prayer alone is not enough," she was told. "You have to eat your food uncooked." My mother began to subsist on pine needles, which would have been digestible had they been steamed, but she ate them raw, even though they badly damaged her teeth.

My mother had come from a relatively well-to-do family. Her father had owned a large farm, and Grandmother Jo had a sewing-machine shop, so they were able to pay for my mother and her brother to attend high school. My maternal grandfather always taught my mother, "No matter how hard things may be, you must never be indebted to others." Abiding by his words, there in Daegu my mother opened a small shop, thinking that it would provide enough money to enable her to re-enroll her only daughter in elementary school.

Daily subsistence of two meals of kimchi broth, raw pine needle tips and peanuts, plus taking care of her shop, exhausted my mother's physical frame. A normal person would have eased off that discipline, but for my mother, her mind only became clearer. When I saw her serene countenance, while feeling sympathy for her, I could not help but be amazed.

"How can she run a business while consuming so little?" I asked myself. "It is nothing less than a miracle." My mother maintained a near-starvation diet, and her shop did not bring a profit for three months. Most people would have given up, but her faith was deep and, with supreme confidence that she was upholding God's dream, she persevered unconditionally. She did not compromise with reality. With the Holy Spirit, she created her own reality.

* * *

No matter her plight, my mother surrendered her mind to her search for Jesus at his return. Now, as I began to mature, she added to that the task of providing her daughter a spiritually safe environment. She wanted me to reach maturity in an environment of internal and external purity, and she considered how to separate me as much as possible from the influence of the secular world.

I was attending Daegu Elementary School in a neighborhood called Bongsan-dong. As time passed, not only my face but also my bearing became attractive. I was good at my studies, so I soon became popular among my friends, and I was well-liked by many adults as well. One afternoon, I was playing alone on the narrow street in front of the shop, with my mother inside. A Buddhist monk walked by and I caught his eye, and he stopped. I returned his gaze, and I remember his piercing eyes. My mother came out and bowed politely to him. Pointing to me, he asked, "Is she your daughter?" Hearing her affirmative answer,

his eyes turned warm and deep. As I turned to look at my mother, the holy man spoke.

"You live with only one daughter, but don't envy someone who has ten sons. Please raise her well. This daughter of yours is going to be married at a young age. Her future husband may be older than she is, but he'll be a great man with outstanding ability that transcends the sea, the land, and the skies."

My mother took the ascetic's words seriously. Acting on her intention to rear her only daughter in the most serene and secure surroundings, in 1954 my mother moved us to Jeju Island off the southern coast of the Korean Peninsula, to the town of Seogwipo. She wanted to leave the crowded city streets and allow me to mature in the pristine countryside. We spent our first nine months on Jeju with the family of Jeong Seok Jin, the younger brother of our Holy Lord Church friend, Jeong Seok-cheon.

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On Jeju, as she had everywhere, my mother led me on the path of sainthood for the Lord, with no thought of worldly matters, and this fit my emerging personality very well. I read biographies of holy women and devoted myself to the ideal of complete purity in preparation to receive my calling as the Daughter of God. Once settled in Seogwipo, I enrolled in Shinhyo Elementary School as a fifth-grader. At the age of 11, while my classmates were running around and playing, I lived a rigorous and strict life of faith. With my grandmother and mother, I devoted myself to prayer, study, and worship.

My mother soaked flattened barley in water and added it to radish kimchi for her raw food diet, while I ate millet porridge. Even though weak due to nutritional privation, when she saw farmers working the barley fields, my mother could not resist helping with the plowing. If she saw someone having difficulty carrying a load, she would volunteer to carry it for them. Without her saying a word, people were filled with admiration. "I've never met such a thoughtful person," one village woman would say to another, who would respond, "That's what I'm saying. I heard she's a regular churchgoer, but still, she is so different from the others."

My mother lived the exemplary life of an authentically religious person, always putting her faith into practice by helping others. She studied the Bible and shared with me the teachings of the Holy Lord Church and the Inside-the-Womb Church that Jesus would return as a man in the flesh, just as he had come 2,000 years ago, that he would find his holy bride and hold the marriage supper of the Lamb, as the Bible prophesies, and that all this would take place in Korea. From her I learned the meaning of Jesus' Second Advent and could imagine it and taste and touch it. And from my mother, I learned the meaning of true discipleship.

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My uncle, who had rescued us at the outbreak of the Korean War, married at the end of that war, and Grandmother Jo went to live with him and his new bride in Seoul. Within a few months, she was longing to see her daughter and granddaughter, and she came to visit us on Jeju Island. While she was with us, my uncle was posted to the city of Chun-cheon, some 50 miles northeast of Seoul. He sent us an abrupt but clear message: "Please wrap up your life on Jeju and move to Chuncheon." Grandmother Jo urged us to comply, saying softly, with the pleading eyes of a loving matriarch, "My only pleasure in life is to have Hak Ja nearby and take care of her every day."

That was it. In February 1955 we all three departed Jeju, bound for Chuncheon. My mother rented a small room for us in the Yaksa-dong neighborhood, and my grandmother lived with my uncle's family nearby. I enrolled in Bongui Elementary School and soon entered the sixth grade. On the school grounds stood a big sycamore tree, its circumference greater than I could reach around. I read books under its abundant shade in the hot weather. There was a coal briquette factory next to the school, and my shoes would be covered with black soot when I walked past. All this springs out fresh in my memory. In the next year, 1956, I graduated from elementary school. I was 13 and received my graduation certificate after having attended four different schools. Though I had been a student at Bongui but one year, I was honored at the graduation ceremony with an award for doing well in my studies.

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God finally responded to my mother's ceaseless prayers and pleadings. His care for her once again was extended through Jeong Seok-cheon, our friend from the Holy Lord Church. Mr. Jeong remembered the last words of his late mother, the Holy Lord Church founder, Rev. Kim Seong-do: "If someone fails to accomplish what God has entrusted him to do, it must be accomplished through someone else. The group to which the Lord is coming will be accused and slandered as a sex cult. Its members will be persecuted and imprisoned. If you hear of such a church, know that it may be the true church, and that you should personally investigate it and decide for yourself."

So Mr. Jeong diligently traveled the country to participate in revival meetings. He did not find what he

was looking for until May 1955, when he read in the Dong-A Ilbo, a Seoul newspaper, about an incident at Ehwa Womans University. Five Ehwa professors had been fired from the faculty for joining a group called the Unification Church, led by a man they called Teacher Moon, and fourteen students had been expelled from the same school for the same reason.

Sensing the spirit of his prophetic mother, Mr. Jeong sent a letter with the newspaper clipping to his older sister in Busan. His sister took a look at the clipping and, without thinking twice, booked passage to Seoul with her daughter. They arrived and found their way to the Jang-chung-dong headquarters of the Unification Church, but were unable to meet its leader at that time. The members told her the location of the Unification Church in Busan, and she returned home. From there, she informed her younger brother what had happened and that there was another Unification Church branch in Daegu.

Jeong Seok-cheon visited the church in Daegu, listened to Divine Principle lectures, accepted its teachings and joined. Then out of the blue, ten days later, the local group was sent reeling. On July 4, Teacher Moon and several of his church members were incarcerated at Seodaemun Prison in Seoul. Mr. Jeong traveled to Seoul to visit Teacher Moon in prison. In that visit he received inspiration and encouragement. Mr. Jeong knew that he had found the one whom Jesus had sent.

Some three months later, on October 4, Teacher Moon was acquitted of all the charges for which he had been imprisoned. At that point, Mr. Jeong secured his family's support in Daegu and moved to Seoul to devote himself full time to God's will.

After his release from Seodaemun, Teacher Moon visited Daegu. At that time, I was 12 years old, living with my family in Chuncheon, several hours north of Daegu. One morning, my mother told me that she had a dream of cuddling a white dragon in her arms. She did not know what the white dragon symbolized, nor what it meant to cradle it in her arms, but she said that something earth-shaking was about to transpire. That very day she received a letter from Mr. Jeong about his meeting the Divine Principle movement, and meeting Teacher Moon in prison, and who Teacher Moon is, and that Teacher Moon was in Daegu. My mother left for Daegu immediately, only to find that Teacher Moon had returned to Seoul.

My mother felt deep regret, and while staying overnight in Daegu she had another dream. In it she saw a pair of golden dragons prostrating themselves in the direction of Seoul. With this vision carved into her heart, she took the train to Seoul the next morning and proceeded to the Unification movement's newly purchased headquarters church in Cheongpa-dong. It was early in December 1955. There, she met the teacher of the Unification Church for the first time.

The moment she greeted him, she realized that the white dragon in her dream represented none other than him, and that he was the one she had been seeking. She was deeply moved to meet, in her lifetime on earth, the Lord at the Second Advent, for whom she had suffered and sacrificed for three decades. She stayed at Cheongpa-dong to study the Principle, and heard teachings that put together what she had learned in the Holy Lord Church and Inside-the-Womb Church. With each lecture, her eyes were opened and her initial inspiration was confirmed. At times she pondered the meaning of her dream of the pair of golden dragons. Not coming up with anything, she put that out of her mind.

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Despite my mother's admiration of him, and in contrast to his affectionate openness with everyone else, Teacher Moon related to my mother in a formal and reserved fashion. As a result, she felt empty and a little bit isolated, with a feeling of lack of love lodging in her heart. She invested in prayer silently, without rest, erasing from her soul all the concepts and expectations she may have had about whom she was going to meet.

Then one Sunday, Teacher Moon preached a sermon about the heart of Jesus. He said, "The people of Israel did not welcome Jesus, who came as their True Father. They allowed him to die on the cross," and asked the congregation, "Do you know how great was the sin they committed?" Upon hearing this, my mother withdrew into a corner of the church. There she wept, crying her heart out for the remainder of the service. Teacher Moon viewed this, and after the service he called to my mother and consoled her, saying, "A person anointed by God must pass the test of Satan as well as that of Heaven."

At that, like the snow melting in springtime, all sorrow disappeared from my mother's heart. Her faith in God became stronger than it ever was. Soon thereafter, she returned to Chuncheon to commence pioneer work for the Unification Church.