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The Concept of An Asian Community
and
The Unification of Religious Movements

In View of the History of Chondogyo

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I. A Brief History of Chondogyo

Chondogyo is an indigenous religion of Korea. It began as Donghak, East Study. In this case, East meant Korea with regard to the Centerland, China, and Eastern Learning meant the Korean religion as opposed to Western Learning, or Christianity. Donghak was founded by Choi Jewoo, who was born in Kyongju, a city in the southeastern part of Korea in 1824. Like most other boys of his time, he was brought up in the cultural climate of Confucianism and learned the Chinese classics from early boyhood. His father died when he was young, and at the age of thirteen he became a Buddhist monk in order to support himself. Choi traveled through many parts of Korea, observing the painful condition of the agrarian populace of the centuries old kingdom, which at that time was experiencing one of the greatest crises in its history.

It was an extremely turbulent epoch for countries in East Asia. They were being assailed by swarms of expeditions from Europe and America. In Japan, the Tokugawa Government opened its ports at the request of Perry's black ships from America. This caused the desertion of several powerful local lords, who then supported restoring the status of the royal family, which for centuries had been deprived of all political

power. Thus, the Imperial system was established in 1868. The Ching Empire of China was defeated in the Opium War of 1840-42. It gave Hong Kong to England and opened her ports to the Western nations, and came to be so despised by the native Chinese that Hong Siu Tshuen, who claimed the lineage of a noble family of the Ming Dynasty, started an insurrection in his native province of Kwangsi in south China in 1850. Hong had heard of the teachings of Jesus Christ. He called himself, Son of the Heavenly Father and a younger brother of Jesus Christ. The insurrection swept quickly through many provinces in southern China. He established the Tai-ping Tien-kuo, the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace, in 1851 and made many agrarian reforms. He continued to annex province after province with the slogan, "Down with the Manchus and let the native Chinese thrive." In 1860, in the midst of this civil war, the English and French attacked Tientsin and Peiking and forced the Emperor of Ching to sign the Tientsin Treaty, which gave the Western nations the freedom to disseminate Christianity in China.

It was in this year that Choi Jewoo began to preach his gospel of Donghak in Korea. It was a mixture of isolated quotations from the texts of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, combined with the concept that all men are children of the Heavenly Father. This concept was borrowed from Christianity, which had about 20,000 followers in Korea at that time. He called his new religion Donghak, Eastern Learning, as opposed to Christianity, the Western Learning, because at that time the royal government of Korea was persecuting the Christians very severely.

He said that all men are children of the Heavenly Father, are brethren who are born equal, and ought to be given equal human rights regardless of the social classes to which they belong. He accused the local government officials of corruption and graft and appealed to the people to rectify this abuse of power. He handed out messages on pieces of paper, saying that anyone who swallowed one would be free from all misfortune, cured of all sickness and live forever young in heavenly peace and happiness. These words were avidly believed by the illiterate populace. These followers were organized into teams and local groups

similar to the parish system of the Catholics. The royal government in Seoul was alarmed by this rapidly spreading new religion. They arrested its founder, Choi, and put him to death in 1864. This was the same year that in China, Hong Siu Tshuen was defeated in Nanking and committed suicide by taking poison. His death brought an end to the civil war, which had lasted for fourteen years, and paved the way for the downfall of the Ching Empire, which fell in 1911.

After the death of their founder, Donghak followers went into hiding. However, the belief in this new religion spread even more rapidly under the leadership of his successor as the internal situation of the country grew worse with the arrival of more foreigners. Finally in 1894, they started an insurrection in the southwestern part of Korea to remove a corrupt county governor. Very soon it became a civil war, and the royal government, which was being harassed by swarms of expeditions from other countries, requested the Imperial Ching Dynasty to send troops to help suppress it. But Japan, which had been looking for a chance to conquer Korea, also sent in armed forces without being requested. This started the Sino-Japanese War on the Yellow Sea and in Korea. After winning this war, Japan disbanded the Korean armies and quickly made moves aimed at annexing Korea.

The Donghak followers lamented the doomed future of their kingdom and tried in vain to drive the Japanese army out of the country with sticks and fists. They changed the name of their religion and began call it Chondogyo in 1898.

It was now too late to save their country, which was finally annexed by Japan in 1910. In 1919, when the Koreans rose in a mass revolt against the Japanese rule and demanded independence, the leaders of Chondogyo, together with Christian leaders and Confucian scholars, acted as representatives of the Korean people. This movement was crushed by the Japanese colonial government easily and cruelly. Since then, Chondogyo has become more moderate, and continues to be peaceful up to this day.

II. Crisis of the World and the Asian Community

In August 1945, the Second World War ended in Asia and the Pacific with the big bang of the atomic bombs. As I think of those men, women and children who were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the dreadful moments, I find it very difficult to control my emotions. Let us dedicate a moment of prayer for them and for peace on earth.

However only five years later, a new war broke out in Korea with the invasion of the communist army from the North. Sixteen nations of the free world sent troops to Korea. They fought under the United Nations Command against the communist world. It was a veritable Third World War, except that the battlefield was limited to the Korean peninsula. During that war Koreans prayed to Heaven and Earth, "We call you our Great Parents, and by this we avow that we are brethren, but we do not behave like brethren. If only we behaved as brethren, there would be no more wars like this on earth. Father, let there be a prompt end to this war." There was one Korean Christian though, who prayed differently. This was the Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Instead of attributing all responsibility to stop the war to God, he prayed as follows: "Our Father in heaven, who looks down upon the earth where your beloved children, the human race, have engaged in fratricide ever since Cain and Abel, I know that your heart must be almost breaking with sorrow. Father, give me the strength to make all my brethren in this country and in other countries live as your beloved children and love each other selflessly. If I succeed in doing this, there will be no more war on earth, no more strife between those who have and those who have not, and communism, which causes them to make wars, will die out.

Father, give me the strength to make all your beloved children worthy of receiving your overflowing love."

In 1954, the year after the ceasefire in Korea was signed, the Rev. Moon formally established the Unification Church and embarked on his crusade to establish a new era of brotherly love and peace on earth. The project for a community of the free peoples of Asia is a part of his crusade for peace.

In this connection, the International Religious Foundation, established by the Unification Church, sponsored the Assembly of World Religions in New Jersey,

U.S.A., in November 1985. The representatives of virtually all the religions of the world who attended that Assembly passed a unanimous resolution to cooperate with increased enthusiasm in order to promote brotherly love and peace on the earth.

III. Recent International Trends

The contemporary world is divided into two opposing camps, the free world and the communist world. Each of them has enough nuclear weapons to destroy all of the creatures on our planet in a few seconds. And yet, they barely succeed in maintaining a very unstable level of extremely strained relationships between the two demi-worlds. Let us consider this situation briefly.

In countries belonging to the free world, everyone is allowed the freedom to own private property, work at any trade of his choice, and seek profit to the best of his ability. Under this system the acts of each individual person and country are guided by the selfish drive to get rich quick. Consequently, there is a tendency that the rich become richer, and the poor become poorer, making the cleavage between the classes ever wider.

As a result, the poor underprivileged masses are apt to be seduced by the secret agents and propaganda from the communist block. As a result they frequently start social unrest and insurrections that are easily taken advantage of by radical political parties and rash generals who carry out revolutions or coup d'etats to establish communist regimes. In this way, too many free nations have gone over to the communist camp since the end of the Second World War. It is absolutely necessary that the peoples of the free Asian countries along the borders of the Soviet Union and the Chinese mainland cooperate closely to keep communism down within their countries and defend their free systems through joint efforts. It is for this immediate purpose that the project of establishing the Asian Community of Free Peoples has been proposed by the Rev. Moon and his Unification Thought Institute. I welcome it with my distinguished colleagues assembled here today.

Looking at the situation in the communist camp, and in all the countries belonging to it, all property has been nationalized and the Communist Party acts as the

sole entrepreneur under the name of the people's government. It allocates jobs to the people with the promise that they will be given equal shares of the profit. However, not a single communist regime has been known to keep that promise.

The common people in the communist camp are given starvation wages for forced labor, which often exceeds their strength. It has become quite evident that communism is nothing but capitalism in its most concentrated and diabolical form. The countries in the communist camp have become "animal farms" within the iron curtain, bamboo curtain and other curtains more or less solid. The dream of people within those countries is to escape to the free world, but there is no hope of ever realizing that dream. The frustrated masses are deprived of all incentive to do the work assigned to them. Consequently, even communist Russia and China, which have enormous arable plains, suffer from continued shortages in food production. China, whose population exceeds one billion, could endure this no longer and has allowed its people to have private property and earn profit as best they can, and is now making economic progress. The Soviet Union, which shares the longest national border in the world with China (and receives continual demands to return large territories it took from China), now finds that it cannot afford to be left behind. Already it has allowed people to have private property and become capitalistic.

In this way the systems of both are deteriorating and taking elements from the system of the free camp. These trends lead me to expect that if the countries of Asia form the proposed Asian Community, following the patterns of the European Community and the Association for the Unity of Latin America (which is in the process of being formed under the guidance of the Rev. Moon), combine their efforts to eradicate communism in each member country, and stand united in the struggle to defend the free system long enough, they will be rewarded by seeing the end of communism in the due course of time.

Conclusion

Asia is the native land of many great religions —

Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Chondogyo of Korea, and the ancestor cults of East Asia, including Shinto in Japan. All of these religions teach us to deny egoism, respect the Heavenly Father and love all men selflessly as our brethren. The willingness of peoples to believe in the common teachings of all religions has always been observed, as in the rapid spread of Chondogyo and the Taiping Tienkuo. The followers of these two religions started unsuccessful revolutions at times when their countries were experiencing unprecedented crises. They paved the way for the downfall of the Ching Empire of China and for the colonization of Korea. These examples give us a very precious lesson as we consider the project of an Asian Community. They warn us not to disturb social stability in the name of religious doctrine or of class interest in the face of a common threat.

These two religions sought to liberate the underprivileged and the oppressed from the abuses of governmental power, from the political enemy. In this respect they were similar to today's Liberation Theology. They tried to do something totally alien to the common purpose of true religions, which is to save men from the sins and miseries arising from atheism.

Consider the following words of Christ: "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." — John 8:24

Can it be any clearer that true liberation is liberation from sin?

Christ did not come to liberate the Jews from their Roman oppressors. It was not political liberation that he sought. He did not come to liberate the oppressed from the oppressors. He came to liberate the sinners from their sins, to liberate the human soul from the bondage of sin and selfishness and make it selfless.

In the contemporary world, the communist camp stands united, while the countries in the free camp remain divided. In the free world each individual person and nation is free to seek its own self-interest. This allows frequent domestic and international discord and conflicts to arise. In order to put an end to these tendencies, and to make the proposed Asian Community a monumental success, all member countries must obey the

common teachings of all religions. They must deny egoism, respect God and practice brotherly love.

In this context, it seems appropriate to add a few words about Liberation Theology, which endangers the security of many free countries. The Bible says that all men are brothers and that they should share what they have with those who have not. It does not say that any one should take what the rich have and give it to the poor. There is no doubt that Liberation Theology, which strives to do so, is contrary to the teachings of the Bible. The disturbances it causes in Asia and elsewhere will only contribute to the expansion of communism. It should not be allowed to exist in the Asian Community.

This paper was read at a seminar held in Seoul earlier this month. It was attended by all the members of the Korean delegation to this meeting and many others. Two of the comments given to this paper at that occasion were highly important. One was that there was no mention of the religious background of Korea which gave birth to Chondogyo nor any detailed information about the contents of its teachings. I accepted this comment with many thanks and I request you to allow me to add a few words.

On page 2 of my paper I said that Chondogyo borrowed from Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. It was intended to mean that Chondogyo contains a number of teachings from these great religions. The boundless mercy of Buddhism, the universal love of Confucianism, and the absolute self-denial to the point of nothingness of Taoism---all these are to be found in Chondogyo, and enable it to have about two million believers in Korea today. Oneness of God and man in the spirit, returning to the original oneness, doing no evils and all goods, founding the kingdom of heaven on the earth, these phrases from the teachings of Chondogyo show that it is a truly good religion.

A few lines below on page 2, I said that Chondogyo borrowed from the ancestor worship of Korea the belief that all men are children of God. In Korea this belief dates from the 24th century B.C. The History of Korea says that God is the ultimate ancestor of the Korean people. Therefore, Koreans like to believe that they are children of God and that all men are brothers. This

explains why the founder of Chondogyo readily understood the teachings of Jesus Christ, Son of God. This also explains why Rev. Moon keeps telling us that all men are brothers and sons of God.

The second point of criticism to this paper was that why did I quote two prayers without presenting written sources. It is very evident that I did not hear all the prayers done by Koreans during the Korean War. However, there is no doubt that those prayers were really done. Concerning the second prayer, I can say this much. I have heard and read many of the speeches of Rev. Moon. He is never tired of urging us to understand the boundless sorrows of God who looks down so many wars on the earth and wants us to stop making mischiefs. I believe that there is no one in this room and elsewhere who says no to this request of God and Rev. Moon's exhortation of brotherly love and God-centered living. I am waiting to see if there is anyone. There seems to be no one. Thank you very much.

The reason why I gave those two types of prayers in contrast is that they arise from two contrastive attitudes toward God. The Absolute majority of those who call God their Father ask God to help them in everything, but they seldom do anything to help their heavenly Father. This fact proves that they are not good sons of God, that they are hypocrites. The second type of attitude toward God, which is represented by Rev. Moon's attitude, shows readiness and eagerness to respect God as Father and love mankind as brethren.

The teachings of all the great religions of the world and of Chondogyo tell us that this is the only right attitude and true way to enlightenment that can bring heavenly peace on the earth. When everyone preaches this true way, there are countless religions; but when everyone begins to do what he preaches, all religions will begin to become one and start destroying all boundaries in our mind and our world, Then we can start building the Asian Community of lasting peace.