
“AS A PEACE-LOVING GLOBAL CITIZEN”: A REVIEW OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE REV. SUN MYUNG MOON

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Identities and autobiographies

What makes me the person I am? To think of the self in philosophical terms of minds and bodies does not touch on the distinctiveness of being *myself*. The real “me”, as distinct from other people, lies in the narratives that I construct for myself. The social psychologist Jerome Bruner describes such narratives of identity as “that swarm of participations that distributes Self across its occasions of use” (Bruner, 1990:122). A biography or an autobiography seeks to give a meaning or identity to someone’s life, and in doing so selects successive parts of a narrative to construct the subject’s identity position.

In his article “Narrative and Memory” David Hiles (2007) distinguishes between “bounded” and “unbounded” motifs in a narrative. The former he calls the *fabula* — the content of the story — and the latter the *sjuzet*, which is the form, or, as he puts it, the window through which I enable the reader or the listener to see the events within my narrative. Thus, an autobiographer must decide what best sums up his or her true self. Am I the impenitent sinner, the incurable optimist, the mad professor, the innocent victim, the alienated, or maybe some combination of these? These are all “windows” through which the autobiographer might try to reveal his or her life: they are the author’s constructions, and they are “unbounded” — the possibilities are numerous. The content (*fabula*), by contrast is “bounded” in the sense that my autobiography is fixed by social relationships in which I have actually participated. If I portrayed myself as a war veteran, a ballet dancer, or a brain surgeon, any such “autobiography” would be fictional, since I have not participated in the relationships that would merit such a self-definition.

An autobiography might therefore be challenged on two different grounds: one might question the veracity of the material, or one might question whether the author’s identity position is a valid one, and whether there might be other more appropriate ways of viewing the narrator’s life. Whether there is one definitive objective evaluation of one’s life, or whether — as postmodernists would suggest — merely a variety of possible ways of seeing someone’s existence, is a philosophical question which I do not hope to resolve here. What I

want to show is how Sun Myung Moon's *As a Peace-loving Global Citizen* (2010) can be challenged on both grounds.

First of all, however, some introduction to the book is needed. There is a kind of legitimating story attached to the work. Apparently, Eun Ju Park, the CEO of the Korean publishing firm Gimm-Young, and also a devout Buddhist, recounts that, as she was meditating, she experienced a vision of the Buddha, who requested her to seek out the Rev Sun Myung Moon, and publish his life story (Tardy and Burton, 2009). This kind of legitimating tale helps to add momentum to the enthusiasm for the book by the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU).¹ The book was first written in Korean and launched on 1 March 2009 in Seoul. It became a best-seller in the country, and sales have exceeded a million copies. Later in 2009 the book was published in English. The Unification Church has encouraged each Unificationist family to distribute 430 copies (Kim, 2010).²

Despite its claim to be an autobiography, the book is culled from excerpts of past speeches, assembled by UC members. Of course, the compilation of autobiographies by ghost writers is commonplace, particularly when the attributed author has a busy schedule, and — in Moon's case — prefers to speak spontaneously to an audience rather than to write down his material. However, according to rumours, Moon was not interviewed during the compilation of the volume, and did not speak directly to the author or authors in the course of the book's preparation.

Moon the Korean

In what follows I shall discuss a number of “identities” with which Moon has been associated, and the extent to which they have been treated in the book. Two principal “identities” are apparent: Moon the Korean and, as the title suggests, Moon the peacemaker. Moon's Korean identity is firmly defined in the first half of the book. *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen* starts off with detailed continuous narrative until nearly halfway through the volume, where it focuses on Moon's earlier years spent in Korea and Japan. No doubt this reflects the fact that previous biographers have written in some detail about these years, for example *Father's Course and Our Life of Faith* (1982) by Won Pil Kim, *The Path of a Pioneer* (1986) by Won Pil Kim and In Ho Kim, and *Sun Myung Moon: The Early Years 1920-53* (1997) by Michael Breen, as well as some of Moon's talks to his followers, in which he recounts his early life.³

The material in this half of the book seems to depart from previous accounts. The founding of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) was typically set against the background of a number of previous Korean minority religious groups, with whom Moon first made contact in Hungnam prison — notably the Holy Lord Church, the “Inside Belly” Church, the New Jesus Church, which are given “positions” in the restoration process. Another organisation, variously known as the Israel

Monastery, the Israel Jesus Church, and the Pure Water Church was regarded as significant because its leader Kim Baek Moon was supposedly the 20th century “John the Baptist” who failed to acknowledge Moon as the new messiah (Chryssides, 1991:93-100). All this is missing, perhaps because *As a Peace-Loving Global Citizen* is aimed at an external readership, who might not understand or sympathise with the theological interpretations of Moon’s early career. Reference is made, however, to Moon’s inaugural vision of Jesus, although, surprisingly, the authors revert to the original claimed date of Easter Sunday, 17 April 1935 (Moon, 2009:Ph3). As critics have pointed out, Easter did not fall on that date, and some later Unificationist writings stated that the vision was “at Easter time” (Unification Church, n.d.), or even — as in Yu Kwang-yol’s (1978) account — that Moon also discovered the true date of Jesus’ resurrection. (cited in Breen, 1997:166). There is no account of Moon’s ensuing visions, in which he encountered Satan and discovered his secret crime — again a key occurrence in Unificationist soteriology.

The period from the early 1970s onwards, when Moon was given residential status in the United States, has little detail: it is sparsely populated with incidents relating to this period of Moon’s life. This may reflect the prominence given to Korea in Unificationist thought: *Divine Principle* argues that the Lord of the Second Advent can only come from Korea; Korea is the final battle-ground between God and Satan, and Korean is the language that will be spoken in the Kingdom of Heaven. Regarding the U.S., Moon states:

The reason I went to all this trouble to go to America was to fight against the dark forces that had caused America’s moral degradation.

I left Korea to wage war on the forces of evil. At the time, all the major problems of the world— communism, drugs, moral decadence, and immorality—were mixed together in a hellish stew. . . I was like a fireman who had gone to America to extinguish the fires of immorality, and like a doctor who had gone to cure America of the illness that made it lose sight of God and go to the brink of decadence (Moon, 2010:165).

Of the incidents for which Moon gained media publicity in the US, we have only brief reference to the rallies held in the 1970s, his support for President Nixon after the Watergate scandal, in which he delivered his ‘Forgive, love, unite’ speech. Slightly more coverage is given to the case of his alleged tax fraud, which caused him to serve a brief prison sentence in Danbury Prison in 1983. These incidents, however, are used to promote Moon as the saviour who has come from the East, and the innocent victim who transformed the inmates. The second half of the book contains relatively little narrative, but launches into homilies, principally about sexual morality, marriage and family life, peace and world unification.

Moon the Messiah

Soteriologically, Moon's greatest claimed achievement is to secure entry into the kingdom of heaven for the entire human race. At Unificationist workshops, considerable emphasis was placed on the need for a messiah, how Jesus did not fully accomplish his mission, and how a new messiah would come from Korea. It was not explicitly stated that this was Moon, until 1992, when Moon declared:

In early July, I spoke in five cities around Korea at rallies held by the Women's Federation for World Peace. There, I declared that my wife, WFWP President Hak Ja Han Moon, and I are the True Parents of all humanity. I declared that we are the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah. (Moon, 1992:5)

This was an important message, evidently, but we find no reference to Moon's messianic status in this autobiography. The expression "True Parent" is mentioned once (Moon 2010:84), and reference is made to his 1960 marriage Blessing with Hak Ja Han. One brief passage mentions the matchings that precede the Blessing that Moon offers his followers. This ought to be important, since Moon teaches that only married couples can gain entry into the kingdom of heaven.

Moon the True Parent

As the True Parent and messiah, the Moons' salvific task was to give birth to sinless children under God's dominion (Eu, 1973:43-44). Again, this receives no mention, and indeed Moon's children receive little coverage. Brief reference is given to the death of Heung Jin — the Moons' fourth child — who was killed in a car crash in 1983. In the autobiography, the author gives the story a new twist: Heung Jin allegedly swerved the car to side so as to take the full impact, sacrificing his life to save the passengers. Some mention is made of the fact that senior leader Bo Hi Pak's daughter Hoon Sook (Julia) Pak was engaged to be married, but — it is stated — insisted on going ahead with a "spiritual" marriage to Heung Jin. This is the only allusion in the book to contact with the spirit world — a theme which is prevalent in Unification thought, and which I shall discuss below.

More seriously, no mention is made of Hyo Jin, the eldest son, whose misdemeanours are recounted by his ex-wife Nansook Hong in *In the Shadow of the Moons* (1998). Hyo Jin engaged in domestic violence, was addicted to drugs and alcohol, and was unfaithful, making use of the services of prostitutes. He finally died of a heart attack at the age of 44. Another son, Young Jin died mysteriously in 1999 by falling from a balcony. Other members of the family have left the movement, denying their father's messianic status. Not only did this raise obvious practical and emotional problems for Sun Myung and Hak Ja Han Moon, but it has raised important theological questions about how "sinless children" who are supposedly born

of the messiahs can be seemingly guilty of sin. None of this receives mention, let alone discussion, in the book.

One might have expected an autobiography of Moon to have made some reference to the problems of succession in connection with these family problems, coupled with the fact that at the age of 91 (at the time of writing) his life on earth cannot continue much longer. The issue of succession has proved enormously controversial and has received recent media coverage. In 2008 Moon appointed his youngest son Hyung Jin (Sean) Moon as the chairman of the FFWPU, but the ownership of the organization's assets is currently a subject of litigation between Sean Moon and the oldest surviving son Hyun Jin (Preston) Moon (United Press International, 2011).

Moon the Matchmaker

I have referred to the importance of marriage for gaining entry to the kingdom of heaven. Of key importance to this is the Unification Church's Blessing Ceremony, popularly known as the "mass marriage". Again, no mention is made of the Blessing, apart from the spirit blessing of Hoon Sook Pak and Heung Jin. This is strange, not only because of its soteriological importance, but because it is the key feature that is popularly associated with the Unification Church. No mention is made of the fact that the Blessing was widened, making non-members eligible to receive it, and with different prerequisites. As the Church came to teach in the late 1990s, entry to the Kingdom of Heaven was not through membership of the Unification Church, but by the Blessing, and various attempts were made to persuade or induce non-members to consume the Holy Wine, which is the physical prerequisite of undergoing Unificationist marriage. No mention is made of the highly publicised incident of Archbishop Malinger, a member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, who took part in a 60-couple Blessing in 2001, demonstrating the availability of the Blessing to those outside the Unification Church.

Moon the billionaire

In common with several new religious leaders, Moon has been particularly renowned for his acquisition of wealth. According to reports, Moon is a near billionaire who owns numerous large business enterprises, as well as expensive residences in various cities in the US. This is in contrast to those members who lived in cramped communities in the 1970s and who went around in mobile fundraising teams selling flowers and candles. These rank-and-file supporters receive no mention, let alone commendation for their pioneering missionary efforts. Regarding wealth, this is what Moon says in the book:

Material affluence is not a condition for happiness. It is sad to me that the phrase to live well has come to be defined in terms of material affluence. To live well means to live a life that has meaning.

I wear a necktie only for worship services or special events. I don't wear a suit often, either. I generally wear a sweater when I am at home. I sometimes imagine how much money is spent on neckties in Western societies. Necktie pins, dress shirts, and cuff links are very expensive. If everyone stopped buying neckties and used the money instead for the sake of our neighbors who suffer from hunger, the world would be a little bit better place to live. (Moon 2010:331-32)

Moon declares that “[s]ome people might think I take conservation to extremes” (Moon 2010:332), and cites as examples of his environmentally friendly actions his wearing a sweater instead of a tie, taking a bath only every three days, not changing his socks daily, patronising McDonalds, only flushing the toilet after every third visit, and using no more than a single sheet of toilet paper after defecating (Moon 2010:332-33). Such allegedly ecologically-motivated savings, however, are not easily reconciled with Moon's previous goal that every family in China should own a Panda car, and his recommendation that couples should have at least three children (Moon 2010:219). A few ex-members have expressed their belief to me that these somewhat eccentric suggestions are evidence of senility!

Moon the shaman

Another of Moon's identities is the shaman, who claims to have journeyed to the spirit world, where he met many religious figures, and conversed with God, Jesus and Satan. The discovery of Satan's “secret crime” — allegedly the consequence of prolonged conversations with Satan, culminating in the discovery that Eve and Satan had a sexual relationship, which led to the “Fall of Man” — has been crucial to Unificationist theology. Surprisingly, however, there is no mention of Moon's shamanic activities, despite the fact that the movement's emphasis on spiritism appears to be increasing rather than decreasing. Heung Jin's death in 1983 was followed by members purportedly receiving messages from his “returning resurrection”⁴ and, after the death of Moon's mother-in-law — known to members as Dae Mo Nim (“revered mother”) — a large shrine and pilgrimage centre was opened at Cheongpyung in Korea, where a medium called Hyo Nam Kim mediated messages from her, and where members were sent for extended periods of training in the Principle.

As other senior leaders died, they reportedly sent messages from the spirit world, affirming Moon's messianic status. Dr Sang Hun Lee, who died in 1997, allegedly communicated with Young Soon Kim — another medium — who recounted his conversations with religious and political leaders. Lee's encounters were transcribed and published in a short work entitled *Life in the Spirit World and on Earth*, and became part of a

set of authoritative writings, known as the Hoon Dok Hae texts, which stood beside *Divine Principle*. Mediumistic activity continued to develop. In 2001 Lee apparently presided over a ceremony in the spirit world, in which the Buddha, Jesus, Confucius, Muhammad, Shankara, Madhva, Marx, Stalin, Lenin and numerous other deceased religious and political leaders affirmed a resolution, stating: “We resolve and proclaim that Reverend Sun Myung Moon is the Savior, Messiah, Second Coming and True Parent of all humanity” (Family Federation, 2002).

Moon the King?

Further developments in the Unification movement, attracting media publicity, were the “coronations” in 2004. Particularly publicised was an event on Capitol Hill, in which Moon invited a number of U.S. senators, donned ceremonial attire, and persuaded Senator Danny Davis to place a crown on his head. The significance of these events evidently was to signify that Moon was king over the “second and third Israels”: the United States was ascribed the role of the Second Israel, and Korea the “third Israel” and the country from which the Lord of the Second Advent would come. The crowning heralded a campaign to persuade Christian churches to replace the symbol of the cross with that of the crown. Moon was largely unsuccessful, although a small handful of Pentecostalist pastors were reported to have complied. In 2003 Moon held a ceremony in Jerusalem, in which a wooden cross was buried in the Potter’s Field, the site which Judas Iscariot is said to have purchased with the blood money for betraying Jesus. A rabbi apologised for the Jews’ treatment of Jesus, while a Christian expressed regret over Christian antisemitism throughout the ages. Again, we find no mention of these happenings in the autobiography.

Moon the “controversial figure”.

A controversial figure might be expected to introduce a section entitled “A reply to my critics” in an autobiography. In fact, all Moon says is:

I am a controversial person. The mere mention of my name causes trouble in the world. I never sought money or fame but have spent my life speaking only of peace. The world, though, has associated many different phrases with my name, rejected me, and thrown stones at me. Many are not interested in knowing what I say or what I do. They only oppose me (Moon 2010:xi).

Moon should scarcely be at a loss to find allegations that critics have made against him. Theologically, his messianic claims have proved highly problematical for mainstream Christians, exacerbated by the 2001 revelations that the world’s religious leaders have

accepted his messiahship. Comment on his treatment of followers might have been pertinent: their working for long hours in the 1970s in mobile fundraising teams, and their alleged subjection to intensive indoctrination or “brainwashing”. Moon is on record as saying, “I am a thinker; I am your brain. When you join the effort with me, you can do everything in utter obedience to me” (Anon 1976). Allegations of splitting up families have been rife, and his own family life, with allegations of extramarital relationships and illegitimate children has been the cause of recent concern within the church, as well as outside it (Maxim 2011). Moon’s anti-communist stance, allegations of munitions sales in Korea, and his support for the Contras in Nicaragua in the mid-1980s, are all controversial topics on which the reader might hope for some comment. There are many anti-UC web sites which provide ample scope for suggesting criticisms which could merit reply.

Moon the Peacemaker?

Discussing one’s critics, of course, acknowledges that there are several “selves” in the “swarm of participations”. The authors evidently want to select a specific theme, and promote it above all others. Primarily Moon is presented as an ambassador for world peace. Regrettably, the author does not seem to recognise the problems of making this claim in an unqualified way. The Unification Church remains the owner of the Tongil Group, which is alleged to have sold M-16 rifles and anti-aircraft guns, and whose profits have helped to finance the Moon empire (U.S. House of Representatives, 1978).

Moon’s role is inflated to that of a key player in the world’s political arena. At one point the book recounts an incident where Moon comes out of the Kremlin after speaking to Mikhael Gorbachev, and expresses a desire for an urgent meeting with North Korean leader Kim Il Sung. The text reads:

“I need to meet President Kim Il Sung before the end of 1991,” I told [Bo Hi Pak]. “There’s no time. The Soviet Union is going to end in the next year or two. Our country is the problem. Somehow, I need to meet President Kim and prevent war from occurring on the Korean peninsula.” I knew that when the Soviet Union collapsed, most other communist regimes in the world would also fall. North Korea would find itself forced into a corner, and there was no telling what provocation it might commit. North Korea’s obsession with nuclear weapons made the situation even more worrisome. To prevent a war with North Korea, we needed a channel to talk to its leadership, but we had no such channel at that point. Somehow, I needed to meet President Kim and receive his commitment not to strike first against South Korea. (p.106)

Moon’s account makes it sound as if his advice was essential to prevent international conflict.

A somewhat cynical view expressed by Moon's critics is that the book is an attempt to bolster Moon's chances of winning the Nobel Peace Prize. To those outside the Unification movement such a suggestion may seem absurd. Not so to Moon's supporters. One Unificationist leader in London writes:

According to Mr Alfred Nobel's will, the Peace Prize should be awarded to the person who "...shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."

Considering the cross-cultural marriage blessings, creating fraternity between nations in a very real sense, and the plethora of peace meetings inspired by True Father, I think he's in with a shot. (Huish, 2011.)

In sum, Moon's "autobiography" presents the *sjuzet* of Moon as the peacemaker from Korea. This is the window through which the reader is asked to see him. However, as I have argued, Moon has several other *personae*, even to his followers. One might have hoped that the authors would have presented some of these other important aspects of their leader, and that at least some of his detractors' criticisms would have been aired and addressed.

Endnotes

¹ The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) was the name adopted by the Unification Church in 1996. However, members continue to refer to their organisation as the Unification Church

² The number 430 is regarded as significant, being the presumed biblical period from Abraham's covenant to the Exodus from Egypt. It is also associated with 4300, being the "vertical history of Korea". The number also admits of various numerological manoeuvres, for example 4 + 3 equals 7, the perfect number. In 1968 Moon presided over the Blessing of 430 couples, and a further 43 couples in 1969. For further discussion see Chryssides, 1991:194.

³ Breen intended to continue Moon's biography, and had begun to collect data, but subsequently left the Unification Church.

⁴ 'Returning resurrection' is the Unificationist term for a departed spirit returning by manifesting itself in the physical body of a living person.

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