

# The Unification Church

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the story Sun-Myung Moon, the founder and leader of the Unification Church. First, it considers how Moon's background gave rise to his strong anti-communist and South Korean nationalist agenda in the early years of the Cold War. Next, it outlines how the Unification Church grew as a political actor in South Korea, especially as it forged ties with the Park Chung Hee regime. It then describes how Moon grew his church internationally by using it as a tool to garner support for South Korea in the United States. Finally, it examines how Moon and his heirs struggled to maintain the relevance of the church as the Cold War waned. It concludes that the church's success was only possible in the context of the ideological warfare of the Cold War and without a deeper connection to the lives of its members and the interests of governments, it inevitably began to decay.

## Introduction

The Korean War broke out early in the Cold War. It meant chaos, but it also meant opportunity. For Sun-Myung Moon, the founder and leader of the Unification Church, the momentum of the Cold War provided an opportunity to leverage his anti-communist and South Korean nationalist beliefs in the pursuit of national and even global influence. Sympathetic governments began working with Moon as his anti-communist and nationalistic stance dovetailed with the political needs of the Cold War. Using this agenda as a base of power, Moon raised up a massive, wealthy church organization that had major influence, first in Korea and then in the US. Although the Cold War allowed Moon to grow his church globally, the reliance on anti-communist political ideology that empowered Moon's ascendancy eventually proved to be the church's downfall. As the Cold War ended, Moon struggled to find a new agenda for his church. When even his children failed to revive the church, the church eventually stagnated, and the reign of Moon slowly came to an end.

This paper explores the story of Moon and his church. First, it considers how Moon's background gave rise to his strong anti-communist and South Korean nationalist agenda in the early years of the Cold War. Next, it outlines how the Unification Church grew as a political actor in South Korea, especially as it forged ties with the Park Chung Hee regime. It then describes how Moon grew his church internationally by using it as a tool to garner support for South Korea in the United States. Finally, it examines how the Moon and his heirs struggled to maintain the relevance of the church as the Cold War waned. It concludes that the church's success was only possible in the context of the ideological warfare of Cold War and without a deeper connection to the lives of its members and the interests of governments, it inevitably began to decay.

## Sun-Myung Moon

Few things can be said about the early years of Sun-Myung Moon with any certainty (Cowan and Bromley 79). He was born in 1920 in a small town in present-day North Korea. He was raised in a devout family that followed the teachings of Presbyterianism, a conservative school of Christian thought (Chryssides 19). Young Moon pursued religion with unusual fervor, praying devotedly and volunteering at his church (Cowan and Bromley 80). Beyond this

uncontroversial childhood, the rest of Moon's youth, told through his own recollection and the testimony of his followers, is as much myth as history.

When Moon was 16 years old, he encountered Jesus on Easter morning. As Moon would recount years later to his followers, Jesus told Moon that he had been chosen to be the new messiah, the Lord of the Second Advent, and the Third Adam. After Moon received this vision, he wrestled with Satan, who was determined to stop Moon from becoming a new messiah. In the days that followed Moon's revelation, he prayed to God and received counsel from Buddha, Moses, and Jesus (Cowan and Bromley 80). Although the truth of Moon's youth is open to interpretation, he emerged from it with outsized ambitions for his life, determined to become a religious leader on a grand scale.

Whatever personal experiences that Moon had in his youth, the external forces that shaped his ambitions are much clearer. When Moon was in his twenties, the tensions of the Cold War began to develop globally and soon spilled over into the Korean Peninsula. Freshly liberated from the colonial forces at the end of World War II, Korea was soon split at the 38th Parallel, with the Soviet Union controlling the North and the US controlling the South. Each of these two powers installed governments in their own likeness, leading to an ideological split that would permanently reshape the peninsula and empower Moon's ministry (Brazinsky 1-2).

In 1949, four years after the division of South Korea, Moon claimed to have another encounter with God. God, he said, had instructed him to move to a church in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, where he was to spread Christianity zealously. Moon did as he was instructed, and neither the local church nor the North Korean authorities appreciated his fervor (Cowan and Bromley 80). Pyongyang Christians claimed Moon was committing heresy by claiming to be the new messiah, and the government accused Moon of being a South Korean spy. Only a month after Moon moved to Pyongyang, the Communist police put Moon in prison and tortured him nearly to death (Chryssides 20-21).

Although Moon became healthy enough to resume preaching, the Communist police accused him of encouraging social disorder and put him in prison again five months later. This time, Moon was penalized with five years at one of the harshest prisons in North Korea, Tong Nee Special Labour Concentration Camp. According to the Unification Church's description of the prison, the average prisoner did not survive longer than six months, and inmates were forced to work with fertilizer that "[burned and] peeled off [their] skin down to the bone Chryssides 20-21." During Moon's years of suffering, his messianic Christianity started to evolve. Soon, a hatred for communism and the North Korean government became core aspects of his beliefs, and his religious and political stances became inseparable (Galantar 124).

While Moon was still imprisoned, the Korean War, a major proxy war for the conflicts of the Cold War, broke out. In June of 1950, North Korea, with the support of the Soviet Union, attacked South Korea, and the war soon escalated into a bloody, three-year military conflict (Cumings 5-6). During the Korean War, Moon and the remaining prisoners in Tong Nee Special Labor Concentration Camp were rescued by soldiers from the UN. Over the course of 40 days, Moon and two of his disciples fled to South Korea through a grueling journey on a single bicycle (Chryssides 21).

By the time Moon reached South Korea, the fundamental elements of his ideology were set in stone. He was determined to lead a new sect of Christianity and equally determined to oppose communism and the North Korean state. To accomplish this purpose, Moon began laying the foundations of his church by promoting his teachings to people in South Korean refugee camps. Moon finally established the Unification Church, formally called the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, in 1954 (Cowan and Bromley 80).

At the time, a multitude of cults were appearing in South Korea due to the widespread desperation that followed the Korean War. At first, Moon's cult was merely one of many, but it soon became exceptional. Within a year after he established the church, Moon founded 30 more churches throughout the country. Then, in 1956, Moon published the first edition of the Divine Principle, the central text of Unificationism (Cowan and Bromley 80). According to the Unification Church, the Divine Principle contained the teachings that Moon specially received from Buddha, Moses, and Jesus as they prepared Moon to become the new messiah (Cowan and Bromley 80).

Over the decades that followed, the Unification Church continued to grow rapidly, expanding throughout South Korea, to Japan, and eventually to the United States. Soon, Moon's dedication and the post-war desperation of South Koreans was no longer enough to explain the incredible growth of the church. As it turned out, the Unification Church's growth depended heavily on Moon's political ideology and his growing connections with those in power in South Korea and America.

## The Early Years Under Rhee

When the United States took control of South Korea, it immediately began the process of ensuring that the South Korean government would reflect American ideals and interests. The process of aligning South Korea with America's vision of the Cold War was not easy. Before the arrival of the US, South Koreans were mostly unfamiliar with western ideas such as democracy. Furthermore, many South Koreans were sympathetic to the communist government forming in the North and reluctant to adopt foreign American values. However, the US believed that South Korea needed to become the "bulwark against the expansion of communism" and was determined to see that it did (Brazinsky 13). To accomplish its goals, the US took firm control of the South.

In 1945, US forces replaced the interim South Korean government with the US Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) (Brazinsky 14). The USAMGIK worked diligently to remove the traces of Japanese influence from South Korea and to foster pro-US, anti-communist sentiment. In order to spread its favored ideology, the US looked to reconstruct South Korea's media, education, and society (Brazinsky 41). It completely overhauled the South Korean education system at all levels and transformed South Korea's most prestigious universities to ensure that their students would embrace Christianity and promote western values (Brazinsky 42-43). To further spread democratic ideals and anti-communism, the US government subsidized periodicals that endorsed westernization, like *Chayu P'yongnon* (Free Criticism), which published writing on "the relationship between the Korean constitution and the constitutions of other democracies."

In 1948, South Korea held its first election. Although the election was theoretically democratic, the presidential ballot only included a single name: Syngman Rhee. Rhee was a staunch anti-communist and Korean nationalist who had lived in the United States for decades (Brazinsky 4,16). The United States threw its support behind Rhee, who administered a highly authoritarian government that brutally repressed communist ideology through torture, assassination, and even civilian massacres (McDonald).

Rhee's harsh methods allowed him to maintain power for more than a decade, and during that decade, Moon's church thrived. By the time Rhee came to power, the Unification Church was well established and growing rapidly. At a time of widespread chaos and poverty in South Korea, Moon's messianic message seemed to promise stability and belonging. Just as importantly, it also espoused a political vision of South Korean nationalism and anti-communism that provided a way forward for Koreans devastated by war. Moon claimed that South Korea, empowered by the righteousness of democracy, must gain victory over North Korea and the evils of communism. According to Moon's teachings, the fight to overcome North Korea's communism would result in a Third World War—a war that would entail not only a military battle, but also a spiritual battle of fighting against Satanic communist forces (Barker 34).

At a surface level, Moon's political beliefs seemed to match perfectly with the philosophy of the Rhee regime. However, Rhee's government soon started to alienate Moon and his followers. Domestically, Rhee meddled consistently in religious affairs (Yoon 244-246). Internationally, Rhee was unable to maintain strong relations with the United States, and American officials complained that he consistently wasted the high levels of international aid that he received (Yoon 245). Rhee's wasteful spending had local repercussions as well, as religious leaders, including Moon, criticized his anti-democratic approach and the corruption that characterized his regime (Yoon 247). By the late 1950s, Moon came to believe that Rhee's anti-communism was merely a tool for suppressing political rivals, including South Korea's growing Christian community.

Most importantly, perhaps, it was becoming clear that South Korea's economic weakness, fostered by Rhee's corruption, was making the goals of nationalism and anti-communism impossible. The goal of the most passionate anti-communists like Moon became to ensure that South Korea thrived economically and provided an attractive alternative to communism (Yoon 251). Since it was clear that Rhee was unable or unwilling to abandon the corruption that was sapping South Korea's economic power, something had to change.

For Moon and other anticommunist Christians, South Korea needed a drastic philosophical shift in its approach to governance. Intellectuals and religious leaders developed a school of thought known as Victory over Communism (VOC) theory, which Moon quickly incorporated into his own teachings. The VOC Theory consisted of two parts. The first part proved why communism was flawed, exposing the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism and proving how it was unfounded in both theory and research. The second part of the theory sought to prove Godism, the "ideology that step-by-step scientifically proves the existence and nature of God." While supporters of Marxism-Leninism argued for communism by claiming that it explained patterns of human life, Godism proved why a divine Creator—not an unfounded theory such as communism—was the maestro of the human experience. Along with its political implications in opposing communism, Godism also intended to combine political theory with spiritual conviction by teaching what the existence of God implied for his followers' political action (Park 79). In terms of practical action, VOC theory contended that anti-communism needed to become more proactive by building an economic base of power that would pull South Korea and provide an attractive example to undermine claims of communist superiority (Park 21, 58, 79).

The Rhee regime actively attempted to block the work of Moon and other VOC theorists, whom it saw as competitors for domestic power. In response, Moon started to court sympathetic audiences abroad (Yoshihide 318). In 1958, one of Moon's disciples entered Japan illegally and began to grow a church there. In 1959, Moon sent Unification Church missionaries to the US (Cowan and Bromley 80-81). At the same time, Moon joined a growing domestic movement that sought to topple Rhee. Eventually, that movement succeeded.

By 1960, Rhee faced mass protests, and the United States pressured him to resign. The following administration, run by President Chang Myon, was also plagued by corruption and economic problems. Myon's opponents soon painted him as a leftist and communist sympathizer, successfully stirring up widespread opposition to his presidency. This opposition became particularly potent within the South Korean military, where hardline nationalist and anti-communist attitudes had formed out of the experiences of the Korean War. In 1961, military leadership conducted a coup that deposed Myon and immediately began purging the government and military of Rhee's supporters in the process (Jeong and Shin 70). After the successful rebellion, the military government elevated General Park Chung Hee to the presidency in President 1963 (Gemici 180). Park's presidency would be integral to the further growth of Moon's church.

## Moon and Park in Korea

Park grew up in a South Korea dominated by imperial Japan. Trained by Japanese military forces at the Manchurian Military Academy, Park was influenced by "a mixture of such conservative ideas as militarism, elitism, state capitalism, and anti-communism" (Jeong and Shin 59). Park later carried out the authoritarian principles of Japanese imperialism as a soldier in the Japanese Army while fighting for the Japanese empire in Manchuria (Jeong and Shin 64). When he took power in South Korea, Park emulated the Japanese empire's authoritarianism and anti-communism, establishing a harsh dictatorship that actively suppressed opposition (Jeong and Shin 70).

Moon celebrated Park's coup from the beginning, believing that it would rescue Korea from communism. Although many South Koreans were skeptical of the new military regime, Moon shared the widespread belief that anti-communism could not succeed unless communism's competitors were economically successful. Despite the obvious risk that Park would become an oppressive military dictator, Moon believed that he represented South Korea's best hope for economic growth and therefore the best hope for effective anti-communism (Yoon 253). Almost

immediately after it came to power, Park's regime announced that "anti-communism ranks first in our national policy" and rejected Rhee's anti-communism as mere slogans (Yoon 254). Moon could not have agreed more.

The Park regime likewise recognized the Moon's usefulness. Both Moon's anti-communism and his nationalism reflected key aspects of the dictatorship's ideology, and Park began to collaborate with Moon soon after he gained power. Over the following decades, the two developed a symbiotic relationship in which Moon developed institutions that fostered nationalism and anti-communism and Park supported Moon's church.

Moon's Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation (KCFF) proved to be one of his most effective institutions for supporting the Park administration. Established and led by Moon's confidante Colonel Bo Hi Pak, the KCFF promoted anti-communist and nationalistic ideologies through propaganda. The Park administration supported the KCFF in various ways. For instance, it spread propaganda through the KCFF's radio channel, The Radio of Free Asia (Horowitz 130). Through the KCFF's radio channel, the Park regime broadcast anticommunist messages at home and abroad. By using an unofficial network, the Park regime was able to maintain a hands-off appearance that bolstered its credibility (Crittenden). Over time, KCFF's work grew to include all manner of cultural offerings from youth dance ensembles to choral groups to think tanks that supported the regime at home and abroad. Eventually, the relationship between KCFF became so close that the Park regime openly advertised its mission. For example, in the early 1970s, President Park sent a personal letter to over 60,000 government officials and businessmen in the United States asking them to provide the KCFF with financial support (Horowitz 130).

Over time, Moon's connections with the government continued to deepen. Due to Moon's growing influence, he was also able to establish a favorable relationship with the Korean CIA (KCIA). Under the authoritarian system established by the Park regime, the government closely monitored its citizens, and the KCIA was "omnipresent" and "involved in virtually every aspect of Korean life" (Horowitz 129). Since Moon had a strong relationship with the KCIA, its prevalence in Korean society was key to his success.

Among other things, that relationship allowed Moon to operate the lucrative Federation for Victory over Communism (FVC). The FVC was an "anticommunist indoctrination center" for Korean military and government personnel owned by Moon (Horowitz 129). Considering the stringent regulations of the Park administration, a religious organization would conventionally not be allowed to operate such a facility, but Moon's close relationship with the KCIA afforded him the permission to do so. Unofficially, the FVC was "under the control of the KCIA's Second Bureau, which also control[led] the press with censors and supervising agents in each newspaper and broadcasting station" (Horowitz 129).

The connections that Moon forged with the Park government were powerful. However, as South Korea's economy grew, the Unification Church's membership stagnated. As the pressure of poverty decreased and the traumatic memory of the war faded, South Koreans became less interested in religions based around cults of personality like the Unification Church. At the same time, Park needed to ensure that South Korea kept a steady stream of economic and military aid from the United States to maintain the security of his regime. In the wake of Rhee's poor relations with the United States, this was no easy task. Luckily, Moon was looking for new followers and happy to find them abroad.

## Moon and America

When church membership began to stagnate throughout the 1960s, Moon decided to move to the United States in 1971, directing his attention to the American branch of the Church, which had been established years earlier (Galantar 123). During his time in the United States, Moon worked to build a foundation of influence that would serve both the interests of his church and those of the Park regime. Moon would engage in a decades-long campaign of influence that outlasted the Park regime itself and evolved to fit the times.

Before Moon arrived in the United States, Park was already well known for covertly trying to gain favor with the American government and ensure that South Korea received perpetual aid. Through Park's efforts, the South Korean government had developed the "Korea Lobby," an interconnected group of organizations that attempted to



“buy off” representatives in the United States government (Horowitz 155-156). Sometimes these attempts involved directly influencing American politicians. Other times, the “Korea Lobby” worked indirectly. For example, the Park administration secretly hosted academic conferences on international affairs that were tailored to case South Korea in a positive light, and it constantly published propaganda pieces in sympathetic publications (Horowitz 156).

Moon first contributed to the Korea Lobby from afar by sending followers to the United States to found the Freedom Leadership Foundation (FLF), an organization that encouraged youth anti-communism (Horowitz 157). From 1969-1970, the FLF created a major campaign that interventionism in nations that showed signs of communist sympathy, such as Cambodia and North Vietnam. The foundation also advocated for anti-communism by bringing speakers to universities (Horowitz 167). Although the Unification Church claimed that they only had a “coincidental relationship” with the FLF, a chairman of the foundation admitted that the FLF received instructions and financial support from Moon (Horowitz 157-158). Wood also recalled that within his circle of followers, Moon talked openly about his political goals and the process of working through front organizations to acquire enough influence to dictate American policy on major issues (Horowitz 158).

Based in part on Moon’s work with the FLF, Park envisioned a role for Moon in the “Korea Lobby.” Moon moved to America in 1971 to oblige him (Galantar 123). At the time, America was also a fertile setting for Moon’s anti-communism, which he pursued with his religious fervor, mixing religion and politics in messianic speeches. When he arrived in the United States, Moon established the Capitol Hill ministry, a group of 25 Unification Church members in Washington D.C. that sought to promote South Korea and increase US government support for the Park administration. The members of the ministry had discussions with politicians, participated in prayer meetings, and distributed Moon’s work, the Divine Principle (Horowitz 155-156). Although the ministry claimed to be apolitical, a former participant, Ann Gordon claimed that the ministry was constantly “try[ing] to influence [their] contacts to support Moon and South Korea” (Horowitz 156).

When Moon moved to the United States, Richard Nixon (1969-1974) was president. Although the days of anti-communist McCarthyism were long since over, the United States was still waging the Cold War, in Vietnam, in the press, and just about everywhere else. Moon quickly decided that Nixon would be an ally. He wrote frequent articles in support of Nixon, claiming that, “at this moment in history, God had chosen Richard Nixon to be the President of the United States” (Galantar 124). Moon paid for extensive advertisements promoting President Nixon that filled entire pages of the Washington Post and New York Times. During Nixon’s impeachment, Moon launched an additional \$72,000 media campaign defending the president (Horowitz 128-129). Moon also led protests to support Nixon. When Nixon was under scrutiny during the Watergate Scandal, Moon, along with 1,500 members of the Unification Church, held a Nixon rally at Lafayette Square (Galantar 124). In Korea, Moon went so far with his demonstrations for President Nixon that the Park administration issued emergency commands to prohibit the demonstrations out of fear that it would lose influence with America if Nixon were replaced (Horowitz 129).

As Moon’s influence grew in the United States, he also developed an America-focused anti-communist doctrine of his own. He declared this doctrine in his “God’s Hope for America Keynote Speech” at a 1976 Yankee Stadium demonstration attended by over 25,000 members of the Unification Church. Moon described Three Great Tests that had been given to America. The first Great Test the American Revolution. The second Great Test was ending slavery through the Civil War. The third Great Test, which he claimed that America was currently undergoing, was the battle against communism (Horowitz 8-9).

Moon preached that communism was an evil force trying to destroy America. Somewhat ironically given his attempts to help the Park regime, he described America as God’s chosen nation, and said that America’s war against communism would show “whether America [would] stand as God’s nation or fall” (Horowitz 9).

In 1980, Moon founded an American organization devoted to promoting his Victory Over Communism Theory—the Confederation of Associations for the Unity of the Societies of the Americas (CAUSA) (Park 82). Bo Hi Park, one of Moon’s closest associates, headed CAUSA, the purpose of which was to spread the Unification Church and its anti-communist message in South America, where dangerous communist sympathies were, according to Moon, spreading rapidly (Park 83). As the situation in South America became a national concern, Park went on the news and

declared that Moon had a solution for the situation: the CAUSA movement (Park 83). Bo Hi Park explained that the Marxism-Leninism plaguing Argentina could be overcome by the counteracting ideology of the CAUSA movement, preaching that the CAUSA movement would be “received like a promise of rain to a long drought.” Several politicians, military leaders, journalists, and even the President of Argentina himself rushed to meet Bo Hi Park and hear more about the CAUSA movement (Park 83).

After passionately advancing the CAUSA movement in Argentina, Park also traveled to other South American nations that were battling leftist movements, such as Paraguay and Uruguay (Park 83-84). Several South American nations such as Bolivia, Argentina, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras, Chile, Brazil, and El Salvador also hosted seminars for the CAUSA movement, and Park traveled tirelessly to build connections for the movement (Park 87).

By 1983, CAUSA had grown significantly and established its headquarters in New York City (Park 91). Although Moon was in prison for tax evasion during this time, his followers were successful in growing the CAUSA movement, establishing a training facility in Washington where Unification Church followers would go through a CAUSA curriculum (Park 91-92). By the time Moon was released, CAUSA seminars had taken place across the US. Due to its anti-communist nature, CAUSA was considered a patriotic movement and developed major political interest (Park 93). CAUSA forged ties with other conservative patriotic groups throughout the US, such as the American Freedom Coalition (AFC) and the American Constitution Committee (ACC) (Park 94).

CAUSA was a powerful force in Moon’s political campaigns in the America’s, but Moon’s single most decisive tool of influence may have been his newspaper. In 1982, during the presidency of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), Moon founded *The Washington Times*. *The Washington Times* was an anti-communist response to *The Washington Post*, which staunch anti-communists like Moon described as the “Pravda of the West” after the official newspaper of the Russian Communist Party (Park 21). At the founding of *The Washington Post*, Moon declared an urgent need for *The Washington Times*: “If things continue this way, the United States will fall... How can we just stand by and watch? Even if we have to sacrifice the entire Unification Church, we have no choice but to make a VOC [victory over communism] daily newspaper in Washington” (Park 24). It was clear that the sole purpose of Moon’s newspaper was to instigate political influence, even at the cost of financial loss. In fact, at the ten-year anniversary event for the newspaper, Moon would claim that he had invested nearly a billion dollars in *The Washington Times* with little return (Shupe 176).

Moon wielded his newspaper aggressively. Although the paper was a general interest news source that achieved relatively wide circulation, its main focus for Moon was to support anti-communism and military intervention in the Cold War. For example, when President Reagan promoted the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), his new plan to create missile defense systems, Moon and his newspaper were quick to help. When President Reagan first announced the idea of the SDI eight months before it was put in effect, *The Washington Times* claimed that it was “maybe President Reagan’s best ever [idea]” (Ward and Swarts). When the US government began official work on the SDI, the newspaper provided a “high profile, full-color article” to promote it (Ward and Swarts). Other news sources tended to criticize the SDI as, in the words of *The New York Times*, “a harebrained adventure that will induce a ruinous race in both offensive and defensive arms.” *The Washington Times* steadfastly supported it (Ward and Swarts).

In other areas as well, Moon’s ideology fit perfectly with the political approach of the Reagan Doctrine, a doctrine of global interventionism instituted in response to Soviet involvement in countries including Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Angola (Park 57-58). That doctrine committed America to “support[ing] all nations in the free world in their anti-communist activities” (Park 57-58). Quick to endorse the Reagan Doctrine, Moon utilized *The Washington Times* to support US intervention in developing countries that seemed to be at risk of falling under Soviet influence. *The Washington Times* declared that the nation’s most advanced arms should be sent to the anti-communist freedom fighters in nations around the world (Park 58). In particular, *The Washington Times* showed passionate support in advancing the Reagan Doctrine in Afghanistan and Nicaragua (Park 58; Swarts).

In particular, *The Washington Times* urged the US government to send missiles to the mujahideen, an anti-communist group in Afghanistan who were embroiled in a war with the Soviet Union (Park 58-59). In 1986, the

Reagan administration did just that, supplying approximately 200 Stinger missiles to the mujahideen. The mujahideen showed great success in overcoming Soviet air superiority with the Stinger missiles, and the Soviet Union began withdrawing its soldiers over the following four years until none were left (Park 59).

*The Washington Times* also supported intervention in Nicaragua. In the mid 1980s, Reagan sought to support Nicaragua's Contras, a controversial anti-communist rebel group that was fighting against the Soviet-sponsored Sandinista government. When a bill to supply \$14 million to anti-communist groups was turned down by the US Congress in 1985, *The Washington Times* started a project called the Nicaraguan Freedom Fund to collect private donations for the Contras (Ward and Swarts). The *Washington Times* also pressured Congress to reconsider the bill, publishing news reports that compared Congress's negligence towards the bill with the ardent military aid that the Soviet Union was providing to Nicaragua. Two months later, the US Congress changed its position and decided to provide \$27 million—almost double the previous sum—to the Nicaraguan resistance groups (Ward and Swarts). Although it is unclear how much Moon's work contributed to results like this one, it is clear that it aligned with the political interests of the time and that it contributed to South Korea's continuing close relations with the United States.

## Moon's Rewards

According to Moon, his American ventures were extremely expensive (Shupe 176). However, he and the UC were heavily rewarded for their efforts. Recognizing the efficacy of Moon's efforts, Park Chung Hee and his government gave the UC and Moon's various other organizations access to government concessions and contracts that allowed the UC to develop a towering financial empire.

The Park regime closely regulated South Korea's economy from the beginning. Shortly after Moon moved to the United States in 1972, however, Park established the even more stringent Yushin system, which was founded on the principle of strict federal regulation of social and economic activities. The system was inspired by Meiji Ishin, the government initiative that reinstated imperial control in Japan in the 19th century. Despite the restrictive nature of the Yushin system, Park repeatedly allowed Moon and his church to circumvent normal protocols.

For example, Moon was allowed to create a factory to produce M-16 rifles for a US military aid program—a privilege that would normally not have been given to a religious organization (Crittenden). The Tongil Group, a conglomerate business founded by the Unification Church, was also granted the freedom to produce products for the South Korean military (Crittenden). In 1972, the South Korean government appointed the Tongil Group as its primary supplier of axles and transmissions for military vehicles. In the same year, Park also granted the Tongil Group a government license to produce weapons such as grenade launchers and machine guns. Over the next few years, the Tongil Group developed into the main producer of cannon barrels and guns in South Korea (Crittenden).

Moreover, Moon was also granted various advantages in the pharmaceuticals market. While the Park administration heavily scrutinized drugs, pharmaceuticals, and various herbal supplements, it allowed Moon the freedom to operate businesses in these industries. For example, Park allowed Moon to establish the Il Hwa Company, a pharmaceutical company specializing in ginseng. With the Park regime's support, the Il Hwa Company grew rapidly. In 1987, the Il Hwa Company made \$132 million in sales (Hiatt).

Along with the various exemptions that he received from commercial restrictions, Moon was also excused from regulations against public demonstrations and foreign travel (Crittenden). While the South Korean law at the time illegalized any form of political protest, the Unification Church held massive demonstrations, some even exceeding a million participants (Crittenden). Additionally, despite the Park administration's close surveillance of all international travel, Moon was able to send missionaries to nations such as Japan and the United States to expand his church overseas (Galantar 123).

The Park administration's preferential treatment toward Moon also allowed Moon to own valuable real estate in South Korea. Under the Park regime, the government had exclusive control over land ownership. Despite this federal regulation of land, Moon's church was able to hold a significant amount of real estate, including a \$200 million



plot of land next to the Korean National Assembly in Seoul—one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the entire nation (Hiatt).

As revealed by various events and activities of the Unification Church, anti-communism was not simply a political belief that Moon and Park shared—it was the master key that unlocked the doors to influence in the Park government, creating an environment in which Moon could flourish. Park came to power because of anti-communism, and he needed the continued support of the United States to be successful. Therefore, anti-communism was not only a personal belief of his, but also a vital source of power. As such, Park relied on anti-communists like Moon to build on that source of power.

## Opposition to Moon

Initially, American and Korean societies alike viewed the Unification Church as a force for good. Most media reflected a positive image of the church, and government officials in both countries invited Moon to their own offices. In America, Moon even attended important events such as the annual National Prayer Breakfast. However, as Moon became more ambitious with his preaching, people started to suspect that his church was an arm of the South Korean government and a business tool for ensuring his financial success (Shupe 175; Horowitz 155).

For example, many of Moon's followers questioned his overzealous teaching that they must support South Korea's victory over North Korea until the point of death. Dave Jensen, a US soldier who fought in South Korea and claimed to be a firm anti-communist himself, stated, "I believe we should support the South Korean government...But if we should ever go to war for South Korea, it should be a careful decision of our government. Why should our military die to protect a place just because it's Moon's birthplace? I get angry when I read about the South Korean lobbying in Congress—and I think Moon's just part of all that" (Horowitz 155).

As skepticism towards Moon and his church grew, United States government officials began investigating Moon, hoping to expose his connections with the South Korean government. In 1976, US Representative Donald Fraser investigated Moon and the Unification Church. Fraser claimed he had gathered information "which strongly suggest[ed] that certain persons and associations close to Sun Myung Moon [had] a cooperative relationship with the Korean Government and Korean C.I.A" (Crittenden).

In addition to investigations by US politicians, former South Korean government officials began to reveal the connections that they had observed between the Unification Church and the Park administration. For example, Jai Hyon Lee, a former chief officer of the Korean Embassy who had "defected to the United States in 1973 when he could no longer support the increasing authoritarianism of the Park Government," revealed that Moon's confidante Colonel Bo Hi Park "had access to the embassy's highest communications channels" even after he quit his former job at the embassy (Crittenden).

Those who claimed that the Unification Church was a political arm of the Park government argued that the role of the church was to combine anti-communism and religion in ways that the Park administration could not. Thus, the Unification Church enabled the Park administration to circumvent the Korean constitution's prohibition on the mingling of church and state, amplifying its propaganda (Horowitz 167). These doubts about the church grew throughout the 1970s until Park Chung Hee was assassinated in 1979. With the fall of the Park administration, Moon and the Unification Church lost some of their close ties to the government. As a result, domestic criticism became less urgent because the church was forced to be less openly political within South Korea.

## Moon without the Cold War

The 1980s were relatively uneventful for the church. In Korea, the church tended to its membership and cultivated its financial resources. In America, it continued to support conservative, anti-communist political projects. Then, in 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, signaling the end of the Cold War (Lightbody 111). Although this was fortunate news for

most of the world, the future did not look very bright for Moon. Where Moon heavily depended on the momentum of the Cold War to propel his influence, the end of the Cold War meant that anti-communism was no longer an effective way to grow his power. The Unification Church's membership started to dwindle, and Moon's ministries lost momentum. He started seeking new ways to maintain the institutions he had spent a lifetime developing.

Moon found last major moment of political relevance in 1991. The Cold War was no longer a major concern, but the legacy of the Korean War surprisingly returned as North Korea came close and closer to developing nuclear weapons. At the height of tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the United States contemplated launching an attack on the North's nuclear facilities. Moon opposed any such plan. Despite his hatred of the North Korean government, Moon knew that a strike on North Korea could put millions of South Korean lives in danger (Park 319-321). As described by Bo Hi Park, Moon believed that such a strike would turn South Korea into a "global tinderbox" (Park 322).

Hoping to avert this disaster, Moon traveled to North Korea to visit President Kim Il Sung (Park 306). Moon saw his own mission as one of forgiveness. To him, the memories of his torture at the hands of the North Korean police were still fresh, and the North's repression of Christianity was still a hard pill to swallow. Even so, Moon was determined to put aside his lifelong hatred of communism and the North (Park 325). As he recalled, he did just that, listening to Kim Il Sung's request that Moon arrange talks with United States President George Bush and for over \$100 million in financial aid from Moon himself.

What exactly the Moon and Kim discussed was not published, but Moon's travels to North Korea brought surprising results. After Moon's visit, North Korea became significantly more willing to make agreements with South Korea, and multiple milestones were made in the relationship between the two countries. For example, in December 1991, almost immediately after Moon had visited North Korea, the "Agreement on Reconciliation and Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North" was signed by both sides of the Korean nation (Park 306-307). Only 17 days later, "The Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" was signed by the two parties. This was especially significant because the issue of nuclear weapons was a very sensitive and tension-filled topic between the two nations (Park 307).

While Moon's visit to Kim Il Sung seemed to yield progress towards peace, it was the beginning of the end of Moon's career as a political power broker. In fact, Moon's visit to North Korea in 1991 was the last major international political event Moon engaged in, and it signaled a shift in his approach to leadership. When the Cold War was at its peak, Moon preached an ambitious doctrine, claiming that his followers should fight against North Korea until the point of death. However, as Moon started to realize that the Cold War was coming to an end, he evolved. Moon's visit to Kim Il Sung was his own effort towards reconciliation—replicating the reconciliation that occurred at the fall of the Berlin Wall as the Cold War came to an end. By attempting to make peace with Kim Il Sung, Moon had acknowledged that the fervid conflict between communism and anti-communism was in its last days.

Sources on the population of the Unification Church also confirm that it dwindled following the end of the Cold War. It is difficult to quantify the exact membership of the church over time due to the unreliability of most sources that attempt to do so (Wakin). Nevertheless, membership in the church apparently peaked in the 1970s, and then began to slowly decline since (Wakin). Similarly, Moon's organizations found fewer opportunities to involve themselves in important political events of the day. Back in Korea, Moon had less influence with subsequent governments than he had with the Park regime, and in the United States, the Unification Church increasingly developed a reputation as a cult.

Once the Cold War was no longer a relevant foundation for his church, Moon reoriented his activities. In the place of anti-communism, he pursued a new philosophy of world unification (Chryssides 165). Under this agenda, he established the Unification Movement, a group of "satellite organizations" whose stated goal was attaining global peace (Chryssides 165). In the realm of international relations, Moon founded the Summit Council for World Peace, a convention of former government officials and political figures who were known for their works in promoting peace (Chryssides 170). In addition to fostering diplomatic unification, Moon also sought to unify the world infrastructurally, launching the International Highway Project to create an "underwater tunnel linking Japan and Korea, together with an arterial road linked from Seoul through China, India and Europe" (Chryssides 170). Lastly, Moon promoted

international cooperation in the field of humanitarian aid, instituting organizations such as the International Relief Friendship Fund (IRFF) (Chryssides 168). In 2003, Moon even created his own political party in Korea called the Family Party for Universal Peace and Unity, a party known for its promotion of anti-communism and unificationism under South Korean leadership (Barket 36).

The Unification Movement was a major departure from Moon's early teachings, as it neglected the core beliefs of the traditional unificationism. The Unification Movement did not preach Moon's divinity or messianic nature (Chryssides 172). It also did not convert participants to the church, and as one scholar noted, "the academics involved in Unification Movement conferences seldom even discuss[ed] the doctrines of the Unification Church" (Chryssides 172). Furthermore, none of Moon's ambitious Unification Movements succeeded. Thus, with his Cold War agenda obsolete and church numbers stagnating, Moon's presence was gradually fading away. He had reduced the Unification Church's focus on pure faithfulness to himself, and he appeared to be slowly but unquestionably accepting his own humanity.

Nonetheless, Moon did not give up on his church. Instead, 80-year-old Moon decided to pass the church on to his children in the hope that they would be able to revive it (Bromley and Blonner 89). In particular, four of Moon's children—Hyun-Jin, Kook-Jin, Hyung-Jin, and In-Jin—received the bulk of Moon's assets and Organizations (Mickler 47). However, inheriting the church also meant that the children were left to settle Moon's pressing quandary: finding a new agenda that would drive growth (Bromley and Blonner 90). As heads of the church's various organizations, each of these four heirs sought to employ a different driving force that could successfully substitute for the urgency of the Cold War. Ultimately, this division over whose agenda would reign was the final nail in the church's coffin. By the end of the heirs' prolonged feud, the church had become too fragmented to regain its former success.

## Hyun-Jin: The Global Peace Movement

The first of Moon's heirs, Hyun-Jin, endeavored to follow in the footsteps of his father and promote world unification. Hyun-Jin was appointed the chairman of Unification Church International, one of the central organizations of the church that held many of its most valuable assets, such as the Washington Times. Hyun-Jin devoted himself to turning the Unification Church into a global peace movement and advanced the "one family under God" approach (Mickler 89). Hyun-Jin believed that the Unification Church should center its attention on not only the inducted members of the church, but all of humanity (Mickler 48). In his own words, "the Unification movement must get rid of its church-centered framework and reconnect with its original roots as the model of an inter-religious, international, interracial movement that can unite all religions, nations, and NGOs within the 'One Family Under God...' peace movement" (Mickler 48).

To achieve this objective, Hyun-Jin made several efforts to extend Unification Church's activities. For instance, under Hyun-Jin's authority, the Unification Church held a total of twenty Global Peace Festivals—lavish three-day-long celebrations that assembled prominent figures and advertised the world unification agenda. According to Dr. Michael Mickler, a Distinguished Professor at the Unification Theological Seminary, the Global Peace Festivals featured "conferences of several hundred VIPs, many of whom were flown in and fêted in hotels; service projects; and concluding festivals held in public venues." In addition to the Global Peace Festivals, Hyun-Jin promoted world unification by making the ritual marriage ceremony of the Unification Church, which had been previously reserved for church members, available to the entire public (Mickler 49).

Although the "one family under God" approach was employed for approximately 10 years, it failed to endure for a multitude of reasons (Bromley and Blonner 89). To begin with, the opulent Global Peace Festivals drained the church's funds to little apparent benefit (Mickler 49). Additionally, with most of the focus being on globalizing the church, Hyun-Jin failed to take care of local congregations, and smaller branches of the church started to deteriorate (Bromley and Blonner 89).

As Moon began to recognize the futility of the global peace movement agenda, he ordered Hyun Jin to suspend the Global Peace Festivals in March of 2009 (Mickler 49). However, Hyun-Jin refused to comply and instead

began to separate the Global Peace Festivals from church (Mickler 49-50). Taking advantage of his position as chairman of the UCI, Hyun-Jin removed church members from the UCI's executive board and dissolved several businesses that the UCI owned so that funds could be channeled into the development of his Global Peace Festivals. Since the UCI possessed a significant portion of the church's assets, this became a major issue for the church, and legal action was even taken against the UCI (Mickler 50). Ultimately, Hyun-Jin's efforts to advance the global peace movement failed, splintering the church.

## **Kook-Jin: The Church as a Business**

While Hyun-Jin devoted himself to advancing a global peace movement, Kook-Jin devoted himself to the business of the church. A skilled leader who headed the Tongil Group conglomerate, Kook-Jin sought to ensure the financial success of the church's various businesses and organizations (Mickler 50). Kook-Jin pursued this objective by attempting to remold the Unification Church into a "'Freedom Society', characterized by limited government, minimum regulations, open competition, earned wealth, and philanthropy" (Mickler 50). Kook-Jin believed that the church had to leave behind its traditional values of family, hierarchy and loyalty in the pursuit of more practical goals (Mickler 50).

In Kook-Jin's perspective, church authorities were more concerned with keeping their leadership titles than in cultivating tangible success, and thus needed to be replaced with qualified professionals (Mickler 50). Kook-Jin discharged approximately 90% of the Tongil Group's workers, many of whom were members and elder ministers of the Unification Church. He replaced them with "over two dozen certified public accountants, attorneys, and other professionals from the best firms in Korea" (Mickler 50).

Although some acknowledged the success of Kook-Jin's business ventures, many opposed his unorthodox and controversial agenda. Church members were especially discontent about the suspension of church members from the Tongil group and denounced Kook-Jin for abandoning traditions in the name of maximizing corporate success (Mickler 52). While Kook-Jin succeeded financially, the rejection of his agenda by church members separated his business from the church.

## **Hyung-Jin: The Monastic Church**

Unlike his two siblings who sought global peace and financial success, Hyung-Jin was a man of spirituality. When one of his siblings passed away in 1999, Hyung-Jin experienced a profound inner transformation. Adopting a monastic lifestyle, he began to wear Buddhist clothing, shaved his head, and committed his life to religion and meditation (Mickler 52). Every day, he awoke at 2:30 A.M. to complete a rigorous routine of rituals and religious study (Mickler 53). Eventually, this devotion to monasticism and religion led Hyung-Jin to advocate for a return to spirituality in the church.

In Hyung-Jin's own words, "...the central focus is taking religious life seriously... [the very successful churches were] extremely into spiritual practice" (Mickler 54). Out of his desire to center the church around monasticism, Hyung-Jin drew inspiration from Buddhism to develop religious practices of his own. One of the most notable of these were Jeongseong, or "sincere devotion," a program for retired church leaders that involved a strict schedule of devotionals, meditation, and religious scholarship beginning at 3 A.M. daily. Hyung-Jin also promoted Chung Bok, or "Heavenly Blessing," a Buddhism-inspired festival (Mickler 53).

In addition to establishing various religious rituals, Hyung-Jin modernized church orthodoxy. Instead of teaching that salvation was achieved solely through Sun-Myung Moon, Hyung-Jin taught that salvation was received through both Jesus and Sun-Myung Moon as they were "dual characteristics [sent by God]" (Bromley and Blonner 91). In his 2011 sermon, Hyung-Jin declared: "...we are forgiven not because of our own deeds, but because of the Son, and the dual characteristics God has sent, both Christ and True Parents" (Bromley and Blonner 91).

Hyung-Jin's doctrinal revision was not only a significant change for believers, but also a symbol of Moon's failure to achieve a messianic status. Thus, Hyung-Jin adopted the second Jesus figure in hopes that it would help promote the church's doctrine. However, Hyung-Jin's siblings did not accept his innovations. In particular, Hyun-Jin opposed Hyung-Jin's spiritual devotion and believed that his own brother was "inexperienced, untested and muddle-headed" (Mickler 54). Without the support of his siblings, Hyung-Jin failed to implement his new philosophy throughout the church.

## **In-Jin Moon: Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM)**

The final of Moon's four main heirs, In-Jin, was appointed as the president of the American Unification Church in March of 2009. Only a month after taking her position, she established the Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM), a new megachurch that functioned under the umbrella of the Unification Church (Mickler 54). The focus of In-Jin's LLM was "loving life": providing education, a support system, and a sense of care for followers. In In-Jin's own words, "part of the reason why my Father asked me to be responsible...is that a woman's touch was missing...the emphasis on education, the emphasis of mothering, the emphasis of a support system, the emphasis on cooperation" (Mickler 55).

Through the LLM, In-Jin adopted several changes to establish her own version of the church. She sensationalized church services through the incorporation of purposeful lighting and invigorating services. Additionally, In-Jin emphasized "romantic love": dismissing the traditional marriage system in which the church ordained marriages between individuals, she encouraged church members to choose their marriage partners. To support this new romantic mission, In-Jin hosted church-sponsored dances, balls, and a whole slew of social activities (Mickler 55).

Although In-Jin's new vision for the church seemed appealing at first, many felt that her ministry lacked authenticity and legitimacy. Church members criticized In-Jin's "bling-bling style," claiming that her church was a "mushroom church" because "all you do is sit passively in the dark." In 2011, two years after In-Jin had been appointed president of the American Unification Church, nationwide monthly attendance decreased by approximately 71% (Blake).

## **Conclusion**

The Unification Church was born out of a conservative religious tradition that valued family, hierarchy, and purity. In a time of chaos, those values seemed to promise stability to South Koreans who were struggling to thrive in the wake of the Korean War and the economic difficulty that followed. The values of the church were particularly attractive in the face of a common enemy: the world-wide specter of communism filled Moon and his followers with a shared sense of purpose that fit well with the political realities of the church's early years. In the context of the Cold War, the church grew rapidly in membership and embedded itself in the political machinery of the South Korean state. In turn, the church's political relationships allowed it to grow an international network of lucrative businesses and valuable properties.

Once the Soviet Union toppled and South Korea's economic success was cemented as one of the "Four Asian Tigers," the need for the Unification Church became difficult to discern. Indeed, despite the occasional provocations from North Korea, even the split on the Korean Peninsula came to seem unimportant because most South Koreans believed that reunification would be economically devastating. Furthermore, in an increasingly stable society that offered the benefits of modernity, the traditional values of the Unification Church began to seem quaint, irrelevant to the lives of any but the most faithful churchgoers.

As the church lost momentum, the efforts of Moon's heirs gave way to petty squabbles and discontent (Blake). With different heirs pushing different agendas, church members were thrown into confusion, and the church became divided over whose direction should be followed. For instance, when Hyun-Jin began to separate the Unification Church International from the Unification Church to pursue his Global Peace Festivals, the Japanese branch of



the Unification Church rebelled, discontinuing its financing of the Washington Times because it was owned by the Unification Church International (Mickler 50). Likewise, the Korean branch of the church filed suit against the Unification Church International's campaign to erect skyscrapers on Yeoido Island, the church's "holy ground" (Mickler 50). As each of the heirs pumped money into their own agendas with no unified goal, financial difficulties only exacerbated underlying disunity (Mickler 49).

The church deteriorated. In 2006, Kook-Jin traveled around Korea to inspect the 120 branches of the Unification Church (Bromley and Blonner 90). Appalled by the moribund state of the church, he declared that "urgent restructuring [of the Unification Church] was required" (Bromley and Blonner 90). To accomplish this mission, the Moon siblings were left with no choice but to forfeit their personal agendas, and in desperation, they converged to establish a new strategy for the church. Recognizing that the church's deterioration had gone too far to achieve any dreams of growing the church, the heirs acquiesced to maintaining the church population and initiated a reform plan to focus on existing followers (Bromley and Blonner 90).

In order to increase a sense of security and sustainability within each church, the siblings implemented mantras focused on accountability and teamwork. At the same time, they diminished the use of extreme language, altering the tone of the church's sermons to be more affirming and inclusive. Instead of promoting radical doctrine, the church focused on the practice of incorporating spirituality into members' everyday life (Bromley and Blonner 90). Through these reforms, the new leaders of the Unification Church hoped that members would be more satisfied with their church life and be less likely to forfeit membership. However, even once the siblings presented a unified front, the church never recovered.

The Unification Church that previously maintained a unified front and an urgent agenda thrived by working with sympathetic governments. However, as the relevance of the Cold War gradually declined, governments lost their need for Moon and his church. At the same time, as Moon's promise of tradition and stability became less relevant to churchgoers, the Unification Church internally lost its steam. Moon's attempt to globalize the church through efforts at promoting world peace took him even farther away from the core strengths that had helped build the church. Moon realized that he was floundering to recover the vibrant enthusiasm that had driven the church in its early days, and he turned to his children for help. At first, those children splintered the church further, driving factionalism and tarnishing the church's reputation. Although Moon's heirs attempted to rebuild the church after this division, the rapid growth of the 1970s was far out of reach.

Today, the Unification Church still exists, but discussions about the church have dwindled since the end of the Cold War. With its Golden Age well past, the church is no longer the political powerhouse it once was. Instead, it has faded into the background as one simply one of the many Christian sects in Korea. In the end, the Unification Church was inseparable from the success of Moon, and Moon was inseparable from the zealous anti-communism of the Cold War. Without an impending crisis on which to focus their apocalyptic vision of the world, Moon's heirs and followers have no hope of regaining their former influence.

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