

The Spiritual Conditions for Reunification

By Fr. Archer Torrey

Korean version published in *Reunification Magazine (Tongil Nondam)*, 1993, Seoul, Korea
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What are the spiritual conditions for reunification? The Christians of our country have been praying earnestly for reunification for many years and prayer is the basic condition. But there is a problem with prayer: when we come before God with our requests they must be in line with his will and we must be seeking his face to find out what he is expecting of us. Too often we have just assumed that reunification was according to God's will and have gone no further.

Not long ago, God spoke to one of the leaders of the church and told him to stop praying for reunification. The man was shocked, but God was very firm. He said, "If you can't reunify your own denomination, you have no right to pray for the reunification of the country." There is a sequence in God's plans, and necessary conditions. If we are indifferent to the divisions in the Christian church, which are so flagrantly contrary to God's will and which prevent unbelievers from acknowledging that Jesus was sent from God, then our concern for national unification is false. If we are more interested in national reunification than in reunification in the Body of Christ, then we are idolaters: the nation is our God, not Jesus. If the Christians in South Korea cannot cooperate, how do they expect to be able to cooperate with the non-Christians of North Korea? The first precondition of praying for reunification is to pray for the church.

How on earth can the church in South Korea be reunified? Only God knows. But if we let the Holy Spirit fill us with love for one another, if we accept the teaching of the Scriptures in this matter, the Holy Spirit will also give us wisdom to know how to proceed. The Holy Spirit will not give wisdom to those who are double-minded, who want political but not spiritual reunification, or who want it on their terms, not on God's terms.

The Korean church boasts of its loyalty to the Scripture. There are over 68 Scripture references to loving one another, but they are not taken seriously. We spend far more energy in criticizing one another. Let us stop for a minute and see what the Bible is trying to tell us.

Look at Psalm 85:10: *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* What is God saying? These elements are all needed for a healthy relationship to God and to claim his blessing on our LAND (v.12): Mercy, truth, justice, peace. The church in Korea trumpets the truth from all the pulpits and seminaries, but mercy is in short supply, concern for justice, much less the practice of justice, is in short supply, and there is no peace--each denomination attacks the others and splits keep taking place. In 200 years there has only been one reunion.

How can such a church expect God to give that which is good to the nation? The current drive against corruption in government has exposed many Christians who have been involved in the corruption--not just rank-and-file Christians, but elders and pastors!

Now let us look at Jeremiah 32:39: *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.* and Ezekiel 11:19: *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh.* What is God saying? The New Covenant, which was made effective by Jesus' death and resurrection, is a covenant of oneness! By the gift of the Holy Spirit, God promised to give us one heart and one way. If we Christians do not have one heart and all go our separate ways, then we are not Christians at all: we are actors, fakes!

What is the conclusion, then? That the first condition for reunification is repentance for the disunity in Christianity in South Korea. Let the South Korean Christians get down on their knees and cry out to God to give us repentance and to give us determination to do something about our divisions, to send his Holy Spirit into our hearts, to give us a heart of flesh to replace our stony hearts.

The second condition for reunification is justice. If we have no plan to restore justice in North Korea, we have no basis for dialogue at all. Most South Koreans assume that the North Korean system, at present, is unjust. But how many South Korean Christians have any idea of what the Bible teaches about justice? What was Jesus talking about when he said, "Seek ye first God's kingdom and God's justice?" Is South Korea God's kingdom in any sense? Do we have justice in South Korea? What is justice?

When the man who can pay the biggest bribes gets the favorable decision of the judge, is that justice? When money can open any door, but the penniless can get nothing, is that justice? What does the Bible teach about justice? The Bible makes it very clear that justice begins with every man having his own land. The first "man right" is the right to land. The laws of the Bible protect this right and do not permit the wealthy and powerful to buy the land from the poor. They are allowed to lease it, but in the year of jubilee it returns to the family whose poverty forced them to lease it and the lease is terminated. There are various practical methods for implementing this principle, but we do not yet see them applied in South Korea. What we have seen up until now is the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer by the exact methods condemned in the Bible: "Adding field to field and house to house until there is no standing room left, oppressing a man and his heritage." The words "heritage," "redemption," "redeemer," and many other common Bible terms all derive from the land laws which are the basis of all justice. Yet the church today is indifferent to these teachings in the Bible and the few who have called for justice have usually taken their definition of justice from socialistic and other humanistic philosophers. If we believe in God we believe in God's laws. If we believe in God's laws then we will find a way to enforce every family's right to land of their own.

When South Korea has found a workable formula to solve the land question, then we will have something about which to dialogue with North Korea. If we continue to

allow, nay, to encourage land speculation in South Korea (the tax on buildings and homes encourages speculation in land) by our too complicated and unenforceable as well as incorrect (i.e. unjust) laws, we have nothing to talk about with North Korea.

Let Christians first pray that the church in South Korea will be concerned with justice. Then pray that the church will promote Biblical principles, not humanistic ideas of justice. Then pray that those in power, whether political or economic, will begin to legislate and to practice Biblical justice. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church on the day of Pentecost, the land speculators sold their real estate ("fields and houses") and brought the proceeds to the church to use for works of mercy.

Mercy is the next thing after justice. When a nation does not have justice, the number of poor keeps increasing, the widows and the orphans are exploited or ignored, and the people who would solve the problems of the poor by works of mercy find that their resources are strained far beyond their limits. When there is justice, then the number of unfortunate people who require works of mercy is small enough so that the rest of the people can easily meet their needs. When we come to talk with North Korea we will find many who have been discriminated against by a ruthless system that operated on bribery, not justice, and we must be prepared to be merciful as well as just. We must ask God to fill us with compassion and then to give us wisdom to know how to exercise compassion at the practical level.

There is a third thing that God associates with justice and mercy, and that is "walking humbly with your God." Many people boast that they are Christians, that they keep God's laws, and that they are pillars of the church, but there is no humility in their walk with God. If we talk to our fellow-countrymen in North Korea with that kind of an arrogant attitude, everything will go down the drain. We need to ask God for a deep humility in all our religious attitudes and relationships. Only with such humility can we possibly dialogue with those who have not met Jesus Christ or seen him manifested. They have only us to go by. If we are humble, if we are merciful, if we are concerned for justice based on the right to land, there will be room for dialogue and there will be a possibility that the honest people among them will see Christ in us and want to know him, too.

We can be reasonably sure that the totally anti-religious attitude of the North Korean government will have left a spiritual vacuum in North Korean life. Since there has always been an undercurrent of shamanism in Korea, it is very likely that some form of shamanism has continued and, possibly, even increased under Marxism. It will be underground, but it will have been winked at in a way Christianity will not have been winked at. Marxism perceives Christianity as a threat, because of its innate expectation of justice, but Marxism does not, at the practical level, perceive shamanism as a threat because shamanism has no ethical ideals and seeks only to bring about good luck through prayer and sacrifice.

There are many Christians in South Korea who have a shamanistic mentality, seeking to improve their luck with prayer, fasting, and church attendance. They assume that the God of the Bible is bigger than the little gods of the shamans and that Christians know

all the tricks for getting in good with him. If we come to North Korea with this kind of Christianity, we will find a welcome for it, but for the wrong reasons. It will do nothing to change people's hearts, but will only confirm them in their selfishness. The individualism of South Korea, on which we pride ourselves as over against the statism of North Korea, is the same sort of thing. It is self-serving and greedy; undermines true justice and mercy, and has nothing to do with walking humbly with God.

Is there a middle ground between the statism of North Korea and the irresponsible individualism of South Korea? There is. It is the Biblical phenomenon of koinonia. The key word in koinonia is "one another," and this is an expression that is repeated over and over in the Bible. We are told to love one another, and we are told in very strong terms that this is to be manifested in practical ways. We are to carry one another's burdens, whether practical, psychological, or spiritual. If the church in South Korea can learn to practice koinonia it will be able to demonstrate to North Korea the original of which "communism" is only a forgery and sham, a very poor counterfeit. Let us pray for grace to understand what koinonia is and to find ways in which to put it into practice among the Christians. When we have done that, we can hold up our heads and be unashamed when we talk to our fellow countrymen in the North.

Fr. Archer Torrey
Jesus Abbey
September 18. 1993.

Koinonia

By Fr. Archer Torrey

Korean version published in *Reunification Magazine (Tongil Nondam)*, 1993, Seoul, Korea
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We ended our last column with a relatively brief word about “koinonia.” Since this not a subject that is taught in the theological schools and since it has been mistranslated in the Bibles in common use, very few Christians have any idea of what “koinonia” is. There is no single Korean or English or Chinese word for it. Therefore it is important to study this word, which is the Christian substitute both for individualism and for communism. First, it is important to note that the word “communism” in English and in most European languages is closely related to the Christian word “communion,” which is the basic word used for translating “koinonia.” “Communion” comes from Latin, “koinonia” from Greek. In the Apostles’ Creed we say, “I believe in the communion of the saints.” In 2 Corinthians 13:14, in the old English Bible, we read “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.” We also find the Lord’s Supper referred to as the “communion” of the Body and Blood of Christ. All these are from the Greek word “koinonia,” but they are all translated differently into Korean. In the English Bible, all other references to “Koinonia” are translated differently. The fact is that “koinonia”: (and its related words) appears 74 times in the Bible, but that in both the traditional English and the traditional Korean translation there are 17 different words used. In the traditional Chinese translation there are 23 different words used!

This fact, of confusing translations, not only makes it imperative that we find out what this very important word means, but that we ask ourselves how did it come about that our scholars were unable (or unwilling) to translate it satisfactorily? Let us begin with the original Greek and the secular Greek usage of this word. When I attended theological graduate school I was told that the word hardly ever appeared in Greek literature, that it was strictly a Bible word. I naively believed this until about three years ago. When I finally became suspicious and began to check on it, I found that it has been used frequently in all periods of Greek literature and that it has not changed in meaning over at least 1000 years. In secular Greek literature it is used for certain relationships which involve mutual commitment, lifetime commitment, and mutual responsibility. It is used for the relationship between husband and wife, for the relationship between own brothers and sisters (not uncles or cousins), for the relationship between sworn partners in a business, for the relationship between two kings who have a treaty, a sworn agreement to come to one another’s aid in time of crisis, and it refers to the relationship between the members of a gang—they not only share the loot, but they share the responsibility, they protect one another from the police, and they do not allow anyone ever to leave the gang except on pain of death. These are the relationships referred to in the Greek language as “koinonia.” You can see that we have no single Korean word that can translate this concept. We can use such expressions as “sang tong,” or “kyo tong,” or “saguim,” or “kyo jae” but all such expressions are inadequate: either they are meaningless or they are too weak. By the same token, “gong san” is a very far cry from “koinonia.” So is “Ji Bang Sa Hoi” for which the English language uses the word

“community.” Another use of the English word “community” is “kong dong ch'ae,” which comes fairly close, but is still not quite the same thing.

My theological friends may be thinking, “It is all very well for you to talk about what ‘koinonia’ means in secular Greek; but is that what it means in the Bible?” I reply by looking for the word in the Greek Old Testament, which was the Bible of the early Christians, and I find the same uses: treaties, marriage, business partnerships, and gangs. The Gospels also use the word in the same senses. It is not until we come to the book of Acts that a new dimension is added, the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks of the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit as if it is one of the most basic concepts of truth, along with grace and love. He assumes that what grace is to Jesus’ role, and what love is to the Father’s role, “koinonia” is to the Spirit’s role. When did the ‘koinonia’ of the Holy Spirit first appear? The first direct reference to it is in Acts 2:42. This is not easy to translate: It may mean “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and koinonia,” or it may mean, “they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the koinonia.” In each case, however, it assumes that the koinonia of the apostles, or simply, “the koinonia” was something already in existence. If so, when did it begin? The day Jesus rose he breathed into the apostles and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20.22). They did not receive the power of the Holy Spirit, but the koinonia of the Holy Spirit. From then on they were of one mind and heart.

Fr. Archer Torrey
Jesus Abbey
Sept. 22, 1993