



Good News Mission (GNM)

Founder: Ock-Soo Park (b. June 2, 1944 in Seonsan, South Korea), known as “The servant of God”

Founding Date: 1972 (originally as “Korean Baptist Society”)

Headquarters: Gangnam, Seoul, South Korea¹

Related Organizations: include International Youth Fellowship (IYF); International Mind Education Institute (IMEI); Tomorrow Global Leaders Collective (TGLC); Good News Corps (GNCorps); Good News Medical Volunteers (GNMV); Good News Publishing House; Mahanaim Cyber Theology School (teaching “Good News Theology”); Gracias Choir and Orchestra; World Christian Leaders’ Workshop (WCLW); Christian Leaders Fellowship (CLF); Minister of Youth World Forum (MYWF); Good News Broadcasting System (GBS); Mindset Reformation Movement (MRM)

Educational Institutions: include Mahanaim Bible College and Mahanaim Cyber Theological College; Lincoln House School

Key Writings: include *Sin Offering* (2018), *Heart Store* (2016); *Navigating the Heart: Who Is Dragging You?* (2013); *Repentance and Faith* (2005); *The Secret of Forgiveness of Sin and Being Born Again* (1988)

Periodicals: include *Good News* newspaper; *The Good News* (and *The Goodnews*); *The Special Seed*; *Tomorrow*

Broadcasting: includes Good News TV/GNN Broadcasting Station (South Korea); GBS Broadcasting Station (Kenya)

Unique Terms: include Mindset Education

History

In 1962, missionaries Dick York and Kees Glass (and others) started a ministerial training program in South Korea. Three of their students went on to establish movements that have come to be known collectively as the “salvation sect” (*gunwonpa* in Korean, meant as a derogatory term). One of those students was Ock Soo Park, who has claimed that York ordained him in 1972, which York denies.² York has since distanced himself from Park, even stating that Good News Mission has “grown into a cult.”³ Since 1985 and as recently as 2014, at least seven mainline Protestant denominations in Korea have issued formal condemnations of GNM as a heretical cult.⁴

As of 2019, GNM had grown to “182 domestic [i.e., Korean] and 156 overseas churches in more than 80 countries.”⁵

GNM has also diversified. For example, in 2001 Park founded the International Youth Fellowship (IYF) to promote “the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth of young people around the world.”⁶ In 2008, Park opened Mahanaim Theology School, which operates from New York “with satellite schools in Korea, Africa, and

Southeast Asia.”⁷ In 2013, his International Mind Education Institute was organized under IYF (see below).

There is a persistent pattern of religious and legal conflict, together with allegations of manipulation and deception, that should cause anyone to regard Park and GNM with extreme caution. Controversy has erupted in various countries where Park and Good News Mission have sought to mount crusades and other public events, including Fiji and India. Press accounts and statements by former participants in GNM-affiliated groups allege a pattern of objectionable conduct, such as deceptive recruiting; pressure and manipulation; seeking to convert already professing Christians; grandiose claims and promises; and exaltation and near-worship of Park.

Of special concern are news reports and GNM websites linking Park and GNM with Unhwa Biotech, a company producing “Ddobyul,”⁸ a ginseng-based remedy which Park and his associates have promoted as a treatment for cancer and HIV/AIDS. For example, in a speech to international delegates at IYF’s 2011 Minister of Youth World Forum, Park stated: “We are in the process of developing AIDS treatment through stem cells at Unhwa, which is managed by IYF Chairman Kikwon Doh. We are currently conducting clinical trials on this treatment, which we have named Ddobyul [*sic*]. Once the medication is ready for distribution in 2015, we are planning to provide it at a low cost to Africans. I promise that the income from Ddobyul will be used for the young people of Africa.”⁹ There have been serious accusations in Korean print and broadcast media that some have died by relying on Ddobyul instead of conventional treatments.¹⁰

International Mind Education Institute

Park’s web sites exalt him as a “mind education expert” and “the best mind educator of the age,”¹¹ yet he possesses no formal training in the field of education. In 2013, Park published the book *Navigating the Heart: Who Is Dragging You?*¹² It soon became the basis of Park’s newly formed International Mind Education Institute (IMEI, developed under IYF). His book *The Heart Store* was published three years later with the subtitle *Navigating the Heart Part 2*. It became the “textbook of mind education.”¹³ The books mainly contain stories drawn from history and Park’s personal experiences that highlight what he calls “the flow of the heart.” (Interestingly, although Park claims that he learned “the world of the heart” through reading “the Bible dozens of times,”¹⁴ the Bible is mostly absent from *Navigating the Heart*.)

Not surprisingly, on closer examination one discovers that Park’s “mind education” is not scientific, but subjective and sectarian. It is a fundamentally religious program, and the “mind lectures” on which it is based are essentially variations on Park’s sermons, strongly related to his peculiar views on salvation, supported by numerous anecdotes and selected, allegorized passages from the Bible.

According to Park, the heart is the condition or disposition of the inner man that prompts him toward different actions or attitudes. For instance, if someone has the heart for stealing, he will likely steal. If one attempts to change his desire to steal without understanding the heart, failure will result.¹⁵ Hence, Park’s thrust in *Navigating the Heart* is to help people understand what influences their hearts so they can experience true change.

Park teaches that there are six levels of the heart that “all people go through”¹⁶ (which roughly correspond to “five levels of the mindset”). The first heart level is believing or trusting in one’s own ability to do something, which inevitably leads

downward to the next four levels: 2) negligence and self-indulgence, 3) complete ruin, 4) pain, and 5) remorse. Remorse is “when you realize how foolish it is to believe yourself, then finally, when you enter the sixth level, you receive the blessing.”¹⁷ This blessing is the ability to humbly look to others for input in life decisions. Since trusting in oneself brings one to ruin, level six opens a world of personal growth by connecting one’s heart to others through open and honest communication. (Park gives special emphasis to suppressing one’s own thoughts, which “are from the wicked Satan.”¹⁸)

Since *Navigating the Heart* and the *Heart Store* are not strictly religious in tone, IMEI has been able to persuade world leaders to accept the “Mind Lectures.” The GNM website states that “the Mind Education is a good tool to deliver the heart of God despite having no religious content.”¹⁹ As of May 2019, IMEI claimed to have presented over 20,000 lectures to over 8.5 million people in 95 countries.²⁰ Unlike the books, the Mind Lectures are more overtly spiritual, emphasizing Park’s unique doctrine of salvation (see below).

Though it is not stated in *Navigating the Heart* or the Mind Lectures, the ultimate goal is not merely to get people to “throw away your thoughts,” rid themselves of “the heart of Satan” or open their hearts to one another (or even to Jesus). Instead, one needs to open one’s heart to Good News Mission (the church) and Ock Soo Park (the servant). For example, in a sermon GNM pastor Ken Chung explains:

The most important thing is about changing our heart. But when we cannot change our heart ourselves. There has to be someone who can do it or help us to do it. [...] If you establish the servant of God [i.e., Ock Soo Park] in your heart, then there will be no ‘razor upon your heart’. You by yourself cannot keep yourself humble. There is no strength to defeat circumstances. But if you live spiritual life through the church and through the servant of God, then you can live inside the servant of God like Samuel.²¹

A detailed search of Park’s “mind education” web sites and promotional materials reveals no empirical scholarship, no quantitative or qualitative studies in Europe, North America, or Asia that analyze its theoretical basis or evaluate its promised outcomes.

Doctrine

Authority: Park receives and promotes undue devotion and praise. His website claims that since 1962, he obtained “complete devotion” to God and his life became “completely based on the will [of] God and focused on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”²² His life was supposedly so exemplary that the news media called him the “New Leader in Christianity,” and he was awarded the “Grand Prize for the New Korean,” “The True Minister Award” and the “21st Century True Shepherd.”²³ He is also said to be “the best mind educator of the age.” His periodicals and followers refer to him as “the servant of God.” For example, Good News Mission in Kenya has urged its members: “Let us become one heart with the church and the servant of God.”²⁴

Though it is never stated explicitly, Park’s followers use his teachings unquestioningly. He mostly conveys his error through frequent use of storytelling and the twisting or misapplication of Scripture. At times, he clearly adds to Scripture. For instance, he misquotes John 8 when he asserts that Jesus told the woman caught in

adultery “I do not condemn you. You have no sin.”²⁵ Also, he claims that the prodigal son (Luke 15) departed with his father’s money so he could run his own business and prove himself successful.²⁶

God provides promises to GNM through Park that function like prophecies. For example, he has promised through the Servant of God to increase GNM’s ministry in Uganda,²⁷ Haiti,²⁸ India,²⁹ and the United States.³⁰

Atonement: Park explains that the Old Testament priest who, as a representative of the nation of Israel, places his hands on the sacrificial lamb or goat, transferring the sin from himself to the animal. Likewise, Park asserts that John the Baptist is the “representative of all mankind” who laid his hands on Jesus’ head, thereby transferring “the sin of mankind onto Jesus,”³¹ after which Jesus carried the sins of the world until his death on the cross.

Sin: According to Park, sin is not an action, but is only the condition of the heart. Therefore, the heart cannot be trusted as it will only produce bad things (stealing, lying adultery and murder).³² At times Park differentiates between “sin and act of sin,” but only to highlight that acts of sin are not *really* sin.³³ This nuance leads Park to make a bizarre distinction between sin and crimes—e.g., “You may have stolen, lied, and committed murder, but those are not sins, they are crimes.”³⁴ These errors are central to Park’s teaching and to his efforts to convert people who already profess to be Christians to his Good News Mission. In one online sermon he states: “Even now there are many people that preach something similar to the Gospel, but it is rare to see anyone preaching the true Gospel.”³⁵ In opposition to all others, Park divisively preaches “a different gospel” (2 Cor. 11:4).

Repentance: Salvation can only be obtained by repenting of the condition of one’s heart. Confessing to God that you have sinned “is not repentance.” Instead, you must realize “I am a seed of sin. There is no fruit I can produce other than sin...The core of my heart is dirty....That is true repentance.”³⁶ “We should not be confessing, ‘I stole,’ ‘I murdered,’ ‘I lied.’ We need to confess that we are humans by nature who could only sin.”³⁷ Repentance only happens once in a person’s life because he or she won’t have any sin to repent of, thus they do not need to seek forgiveness.³⁸ (Elsewhere Park defines “true repentance” as turning away from following one’s own thoughts.)³⁹

Sanctification: Once someone repents of his heart condition, “Jesus will come to you and He will cast out the filthy and dirty parts of the heart of old.”⁴⁰ This means Jesus will cast out “evil, filthy, lustful, and deceitful thoughts,” resulting in a “peaceful, and warm heart of faith and joy will arise.”⁴¹ Sin is now “completely washed away” and the Holy Spirit can work inside the person.⁴²

Though the heart is clean, Park acknowledges that the believer may still lie, steal, or engage in other kinds of wrongdoing. But instead of repenting, the believer must cling to God’s Word, which pronounces him sinless despite the obvious sin actions in his life. Park explains, “We should not try to do good or try to stop sinning. If the heart of Jesus dwells in us, that heart will lead us to do good, allow us to live an obedient life to the Lord, and give us great glory and increase our joy.”⁴³

Biblical Response

Atonement: Park’s claim that Jesus began to carry the sins of the world at His baptism is another example of adding to Scripture. The Bible nowhere indicates that John the Baptist laid his hands on Jesus (see Matt. 3, Mark 1, Luke 3).

First Peter 2:24 reveals that Jesus “bore our sins in His body on the tree.” This cannot mean that He *began* bearing our sin after His baptism, and then died on the cross. Instead, Jesus bore our sins *by* dying on the cross. The word translated “bore” is also used in Hebrews 9:28, which says that Jesus’ sacrifice was “offered once to bear the sins of many.” Hence, the *bearing of sin* by Jesus was His sacrificial death, because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).

Sin: Although Park correctly says that sinful actions come from the heart (see Matt. 12:34–35, Mark 7:21–23), it is also appropriate to consider actions as sin. Paul calls sexual immorality sin (1 Cor. 6:18) and says that if you cause your brother to stumble, you sin against him and Christ (1 Cor. 8:12). James labels partiality as sin (2:9) adding that “whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin” (4:19).

Repentance: First, the Bible *does* speak of people repenting of sinful actions for salvation. In Acts 3:19, Peter preaches “Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). By saying “sins” (plural), he’s referring to his audience’s actions, not their heart condition.

Second, the Bible *does* teach that believers need to continue repenting *after* salvation. For example, in Revelation 2:5 Jesus commands the church at Ephesus to “repent, and do the works you did at first.” John comforts his readers by explaining that “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Note that John isn’t talking about sins committed *before* a person is saved; instead, if the saved person confesses his current sins, God forgives. John repeats this two verses later: “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1). It is clear from the context throughout the letter that John is writing to *genuine believers* who engage in sin.

Sanctification: Unlike Park’s teaching, Scripture reveals that Christians will never be without sin: “If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:10). Hence, repentance by Christians after salvation, as explained above, is part of the sanctification process (i.e., growing in our relationship with God). Paul tells us, “Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness” (Rom. 6:13; cf. Rom. 12:1–2).

Conclusion: If sin *actions* come from a heart of sin, then why would a person still produce sin actions after Jesus cleanses the heart? If the heart is pure and righteous, then shouldn’t any ungodliness be gone? Also, if the sinful heart needs to be “completely washed away” for the Holy Spirit to work inside a person, then what work would remain for Him to do? Ock Soo Park’s conflicting teachings on sin, repentance, and sanctification are unscriptural and should be rejected by all believers.

¹ “Mission History,” Bible Crusade, http://web.archive.org/web/20141118192828/http://www.biblecrusade.com/mission_history.html (accessed

² Tim Martin interview with Dick York in New Jersey (USA), July 15, 2020 (video).

³ “YF,” Truth That Matters (blog), www.truth-that-matters.com/yf.htm (accessed April 2019). The authenticity was confirmed by York in an e-mail dated July 20, 2017.

⁴ The following list was given by Dr. Andrew Dongsup Chung and Ji-il Tark in July 2017 correspondence: The Korea Evangelical Holiness Church officially declared the organization heretical at its 40th General Meeting in 1985; The Korean Baptist Convention officially declared the organization heretical in 1989; The Presbyterian Church in Korea (*Koshin*) officially declared the organization as heretical at its 41st General Meeting in 1991; The Presbyterian Church of Korea (*Tonghap*) officially declared the organization heretical at its 77th General Meeting in 1992; The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea (*Hapdong*) officially declared the organization heretical at its 93rd General Meeting in

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- 2008; The Korean Council of Churches declared this group as a heretical cult in the 1990s (year not specified); The Korean Presbyterian Church (*Hapshin*) officially declared the organization heretical (1995, 2014).
- ⁵ "Profile," Ock Soo Park, http://web.archive.org/web/20190112202224/http://ocksoopark.com/?r=pst&mod=1_profile (accessed May 2019).
- ⁶ "Our Mission and History," International Youth Fellowship, www.iyfusa.org/missionhistory/ (accessed April 2019).
- ⁷ "Theology School," Bible Crusade, www.biblecrusade.com/theology_school.html (accessed April 2019).
- ⁸ "Unhwa registers a patent for an "anti-cancer" wild ginseng Ddobyul product based on plant stem cells," UNHWA, http://www.unhwa.com/bbs/board.php?bo_table=online_press_eng&wr_id=24&page=2 (accessed November 2020).
- ⁹ Accessed July 5, 2017. URL?
- ¹⁰ See, for example: www.kportalnews.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=12495.
- ¹¹ Ock Soo Park, "Story of the Heart," <http://web.archive.org/web/20190111051054/http://www.ocksoopark.com/?c=2/10&uid=35> (accessed May 2019).
- ¹² Ock Soo Park, *Navigating the Heart: Who Is Dragging You?* (Mustang, Oklahoma: Tate Publishing and Enterprises, 2011).
- ¹³ "Foundation of IMEI and Mind Lecture," International Youth Fellowship USYD, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN_fNhyGVso (accessed September 2019).
- ¹⁴ "Pastor Park Ock Soo Meets President of GMA," Good News Mission, April 17, 2017, <http://goodnewsmission.net/philippines-pastor-park-ock-soo-meets-president-of-gma/> (accessed September 2019).
- ¹⁵ "Pastor Park Ock Soo Meets President of GMA," Good News Mission, April 17, 2017, <http://goodnewsmission.net/philippines-pastor-park-ock-soo-meets-president-of-gma/> (accessed September 2019).
- ¹⁶ Ock Soo Park, *Navigating the Heart: Who Is Dragging You?*, 49.
- ¹⁷ Ock Soo Park, *Navigating the Heart: Who Is Dragging You?*, 48–49.
- ¹⁸ See, for example: <https://web.archive.org/web/20170625065532/http://en.yeejo.rw/religion/article/all-things-were-made-by-him> (accessed November 2020).
- ¹⁹ "Ethiopia: the Duty to Have Mind Education in all Educational Institutes," Good News Mission, <http://web.archive.org/web/20170321103033/http://goodnewsmission.net/ethiopia-the-duty-to-have-mind-education-in-all-education-institutes/> (accessed March 2020).
- ²⁰ IMEI Brochure available at http://imei.or.kr/rb/files/2015/08/10/brochures_english.pdf (accessed September 2019).
- ²¹ "Sunday Sermon – 10 September 2017," Good News Mission Oceania, <http://goodnewsoceania.org/?p=465> (accessed September 2019).
- ²² "Faith," Ock Soo Park, http://web.archive.org/web/20190112200901/http://ocksoopark.com/?r=pst&mod=1_faith (accessed April 2019).
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Facebook post, May 22, 2018, Good News Mission Kenya, https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=790392657833616&id=338194583053428 (accessed September 2018).
- ²⁵ Ock Soo Park, *The Secret of Forgiveness of Sin and Being Born Again* (Good News Publishing House, 1997), 12.
- ²⁶ Ock Soo Park, *Repentance and Faith* (Good News Publishing House, 2005), 21.
- ²⁷ "Uganda 2019 New Year Message," Good News Mission, 2/7/2019, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:H37tuo1asQJ:goodnewsmission.net/uganda-2019-new-year-message/+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clink&gl=us> (accessed October 2019).
- ²⁸ "Hope and gospel are sprouting from the land of hopelessness, Haiti," Good News Mission, 12/28/2011, <http://goodnewsmission.net/hope-and-gospel-are-sprouting-from-the-land-of-hopelessness-haiti-december-28-2011/> (accessed October 2019).
- ²⁹ "The IYF Mind Changes India," Good News Mission, <http://goodnewsmission.net/india-the-iyf-mind-changes-india/> (accessed October 2019).
- ³⁰ "Easter Cantata, Part 1," *Good News*, April 2016, 22.
- ³¹ *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 212. See also Ock Soo Park, "2019 CLF World Conference—3/4 Evening—Pastor Ock Soo Park" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWdJcWQXX9U> (accessed September 2019).
- ³² *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 32.
- ³³ *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 32.
- ³⁴ *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 12
- ³⁵ <http://goodnewsmissionworld.blogspot.com/2014/11/two-types-of-righteousness.html> (accessed November 2020).
- ³⁶ *Repentance and Faith*, 29.
- ³⁷ *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 145.
- ³⁸ *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 114.
- ³⁹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20170625065532/http://en.yeejo.rw/religion/article/all-things-were-made-by-him> (accessed November 2020).
- ⁴⁰ *Repentance and Faith*, 38.
- ⁴¹ *Repentance and Faith*, 38.
- ⁴² *The Secret of Forgiveness*, 127–128.
- ⁴³ Ock Soo Park, "If the Heart of Jesus Is Within Us," Christian Leaders Fellowship, www.clfusa.org/if-the-heart-of-jesus-is-within-us (accessed May 2019).
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