

This is a complete transcript of the oral history interview with **Reuben Archer Torrey, III (CN 331, T2)** for the Billy Graham Center Archives. No spoken words that were recorded are omitted. In a very few cases, the transcribers could not understand what was said, in which case [unclear] was inserted. Also, grunts and verbal hesitations such as “ah” or “um” are usually omitted. Readers of this transcript should remember that this is a transcript of spoken English, which follows a different rhythm and even rule than written English.

. . . Three dots indicate an interruption or break in the train of thought within the sentence of the speaker.

. . . . Four dots indicate what the transcriber believes to be the end of an incomplete sentence.

( ) Word in parentheses are asides made by the speaker.

[ ] Words in brackets are comments made by the transcriber.

This transcript was created by Lannae Graham and Robert Shuster and was completed in June 1989.

**Please note:** This oral history interview expresses the personal memories and opinions of the interviewee and does not necessarily represent the views or policies of the Billy Graham Center Archives or Wheaton College.



**Collection 331, Tape 2. Oral history interview with Reuben Archer Torrey, III by Robert Shuster on May 14, 1986.**

**SHUSTER:** This is a continuation of an interview with Reverend Torrey, which took place on May 15...May 14, 1986. You were mentioning about your call to Korea. What was the name of the bishop?

**TORREY:** Bishop John Daley. He was a very remarkable man, an Englishman, and he had been bishop in two different places in Africa before he came to Korea.

**SHUSTER:** Where in Africa?

**TORREY:** Gold Coast and Ivory Coast. And then, he was bishop twice in Korea. Bishop of all of Korea at first. And then he divided the church and put a Korean in Seoul, the capital, and he took the provincial town of Taejon. And as far as I know, that's the first time in the history of the Anglican Church that a foreign bishop stepped down and put himself under, as it were, a native bishop. Usually, when they divided it up, the native bishops were put under the foreign bishop. The foreign bishop stayed in the capital, or they moved out of the country completely. I don't know of any case where the foreign bishop stepped down and took the smaller, new pioneering area.

**SHUSTER:** What kind of reaction was there?

**TORREY:** I don't think very many people saw the significance of it. They, they approved of it, but I don't think they realized how rare that kind of a thing was.

**SHUSTER:** So both the Koreans and the Westerners reacted [unclear]

**TORREY:** Yeah. I thought it was one for the books, but nobody else seemed to get very excited about it. But I think the day will come when people will realize what a really great man Daley was. He's written a long biography called *Under Four Mitres*. He was the bishop of four different places. [Chuckles] And very entertaining, and it's written with a typical British understatement all the way through, and a typical British humor. But it shows a very humble and very devoted man of God. It's a beautiful story, and he was that. And it was a privilege to work with him. And Jane and I told him when we first went out there that our theory of theological education was that theology is a science, is the queen of the sciences, and therefore must be taught in a laboratory setting. And we wanted to have three labs: the first lab would be the individual and God, the second lab would be the individual and the Christian community, and the third lab would be the Christian community and the world community. And if a person thought he...well, in the first place, does he know God, has he met God, does he communicate with God, does he hear God communicating with him? Is he in fellowship with God? And then the second thing is, suppose he thinks he's in fellowship with God, can he get along with his fellow Christians? Is there any *koinōnia* there? And John says if a man says he loves God and hates his brother, he's a liar, because how can he love God whom he hasn't seen if he hates his brother whom he has seen? So this was...the test was going to be putting all the students in a small house and living together, in community, taking all their meals together and worshipping together three times a day, and being responsible for one another. And then the



third test would be if we got something really going there, would we have any impact on the world outside, the unbelieving world? Well, it sounded great at first, because it sounded scientific and modern. But when the students finally found out that we believed in prayer, they decided we were very old fashioned. When they found out that we believed in repentance, they decided we were too old fashioned to put up with.

**SHUSTER:** Hmm.

**TORREY:** And they insisted that their theological education should consist entirely of listening to lectures, writing them down, reading books, and then writing examinations. And if they got high grades on the exams, they should be graduated, ordained, and put in charge of churches. And they....

**SHUSTER:** You say they insisted. They petitioned the board or they petitioned...?

**TORREY:** They, they got to the clergy they knew, the Korean clergy, and brought pressure to bear on the bishop, and the bishop called me in and says, "Archer, the whole Korean church is up in arms about this thing, and you'll have to stop it, you'll have to change it." So I went home and Jane and I prayed about it, and we came up with another formula, and we presented this to the bishop, he says, "That's fine, let's try that." And after six months, he called me in again, he says, don't argue with me, you're going to have to change it." He hurt, I'm sure, because he knew this thing was making sense and he couldn't quite figure out why the Korean church was so up in arms about it. But part of his problem was that he only heard one side. Those who got to him through the interpreter. And everything was screened and filtered and some years afterwards, some of the Koreans wanted to get their point of view expressed, and they wouldn't use the regular interpreter. They thought I could be trusted to interpret for them honestly, and they called me in to interpret and they wanted to talk to a Chinese priest who came from Hong Kong, and was the representative of some international board or something. And to their amazement, he had the same attitude as the westerners. [Laughs] He was completely westernized Chinese, and they were shocked that he didn't share their point of view. And there was...there was a thing about trying to keep Bishop Daley, himself, from changing anything. These people had a dogged loyalty to his predecessor.

**SHUSTER:** Who was?

**TORREY:** Bishop Cooper, a beautiful, saintly man. But God sent Bishop Cooper away, and sent Bishop Daley in his place. And Bishop Cooper, was in the Long March. He survived. The...not the Chinese Long March, the Korean Long March. He survived being marched as a prisoner all the way from Seoul through North Korea, into Manchuria. And many, many people died on that march, but he survived. But he wasn't well enough to come back and take charge of the church again after the war was over. And so Bishop Daley was sent out. And the Archbishop of Canterbury had picked him for very special reasons. He felt he was the right man. And I think he was. But there were people who...their loyalty was not to Jesus Christ and not to the Church of England, but to Bishop Cooper's memory, as they remembered it. And they were determined to see that nothing changed. And they, they wouldn't let Bishop Daley know what was really going on, or what other people thought if people who disagreed with him. And....



**SHUSTER:** How would they keep this information from him?

**TORREY:** Because he always had to work through an interpreter. One time he had a very good interpreter, a young fellow who just didn't care about anything, and just interpreted just as he was, and it was great, and he began to get through to the people, and they began to get excited. And one time the, he asked them for their opinion on how to improve the Anglican church in Korea. And they said, "Bishop John, do you really want to know?" "Yes." "Well, you know how the British are, they're sort of bovine. Couldn't you send us an Italian missionary; they'd be more adapted to the Korean personality." And Bishop John just laughed; it didn't bother him a bit. He said, "I'd love to send for an Italian missionary to Korea, but unfortunately the Anglican church doesn't have any" [laughs].

**SHUSTER:** Should have sent some Texans.

**TORREY:** Yeah, he should've. So, this interpreter was great. He...he...there was real communication while he was interpreting. But he panicked, because he figured if he interpreted for Bishop John much longer, he'd become a Christian. If he became a Christian, he couldn't write the dirty stories he was expecting to get rich off of. So, he quit, and Bishop went back to Bishop Cooper's disciple. He was a dear gentleman, but very narrow-minded. And one day, we were having one of the conventions, and I was listening to the interpretation. Most of the time I didn't, you know I'd listen to the English and then I turned my mind off when the interpretation came on, but this time for some reason I found myself listening carefully to the interpretation. And suddenly I was shocked, and realized what had been going on, for years, for the first time. And after the session ended at lunchtime, I said, "Bishop John, the hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob."

**SHUSTER:** Hmmm. How different were...?

**TORREY:** I said, only I said it was the voice was the voice of John Daley, but the hands were the hands of Bishop Cooper. And he says, "I see what you mean." He didn't make any further comment. After lunch, he announced that Mr. So-and-so had a terrible headache, and had to go home. Somebody else would interpret. But that was what was happening. He changed everything Bishop Daley said, to make it come out the way he thought Bishop Cooper would have said it. And so Bishop Daley just didn't have the impact over the Korean church he could have had.

**SHUSTER:** What were the changes that he wanted to make, as far as you were aware?

**TORREY:** They were subtle things. They had to do with attitudes. A broadmindedness about an interdenominational consciousness, friendliness to other denominations. The Anglicans up to that time had been very very much in their own thing, and having nothing to do with Protestants. They weren't Protestants, they were Catholics, and they just wouldn't touch Protestants. The...see the Anglican Church, as you know, has the evangelical wing, and the liberal wing, and then the Catholic wing. Well, this was a splinter off the Catholic wing determined to be exactly like the Roman Catholic Church, without a pope. And the English clergy were all single, but the Korean

clergy were all married, [Chuckles] so there was an inconsistency about the thing. Anyway, that's beside the....

**SHUSTER:** So, in other word these, these people who were around Bishop Daley, were really English missionaries.

**TORREY:** Well, they were Koreans who had been trained by the English missionaries. There were English missionaries involved too, but some of the...and some of the English missionaries disagreed so much with Bishop Daley's new ideas about theological education, and one thing and another, that they resigned from the mission. And some of them, I, I don't know whether they pulled against him or not, but the Koreans were definitely pulling against it all. But so they, anyway, the students were able to get through to certain people and bring pressure on the bishop, and keep changing the signals. And only about twice in the seven years, did I really feel I had to take a strong stand and not budge and not back down. Most of the time, I went ahead and backed down, because I felt that was what the Lord wanted me to do. It wasn't a big enough thing to make an issue of. But finally, after six years of it, I thought that the Lord was telling me to resign. And He had told me before that it would be seven years, so I was a little bit upset when He said resign. I said, "You said seven years." He says, "Don't argue with Me. You resign." And I said, "Look, a man's on the other side...." I was in Canada at the time, and Jane was out in Korea, and the Bishop and I were in Canada at a meeting and Jane was out in Korea and I said, "A man who doesn't have a wife on the other side of the world, and no carfare, nothing, and just resign a job without at least consulting his wife." He says, "I'll take care of that woman, you resign."

**SHUSTER:** This was the Lord talking to you?

**TORREY:** Yeah, it came through very clear. So, I said, "Bishop John, I, I want to resign from the seminary, I think the Lord's calling me into laymen's work." And he said, "That's fine, Archer, that's fine." [Laughs] He was so relieved, he didn't know what to do. And.... "But I want you to stay on one more year and see the class through to graduation." The Lord says, "See? Seven years." So then I asked him please not to tell anybody else until I'd had a chance to talk to Jane. But when I got back, I didn't get the opening to sit Jane down with the smelling salts and tell her we didn't have a job after this year. But all of a sudden one day, she says, "What's this I hear about you resigning from the seminary?" And I began to stutter and hem and haw, and....

**SHUSTER:** You were in a bit of trouble there.

**TORREY:** Finally, she says, "What day did you get that idea?" And I looked it up in my book and told her, and she thought a minute, she says, "Yeah, that's the same day I got the same idea." The Lord says, "see?" [Chuckles] And she had, she'd had a visiting priest from Indonesia, a missionary to Indonesia [unclear] American priest, visiting the seminary, and she thought he would be able to have an impact on the students. And he didn't touch the students, and he had a good interpreter. But they weren't the least bit concerned, and she said, "We've had it." So that's when we decided to move up in the mountains and start a little house of prayer. We'd been talking about prayer all these years and nobody'd believed us that prayer was of any value whatsoever, except purely subjective. And I said, "Let's start a house of prayer, and pray for the church, and pray for the nation, and see



if anything happens.” So we started the prayer...house of prayer, and it's been going twenty years now, and there are seventy-odd full-time people there. And average of about twenty guests all the time, coming and going, like 2,500 to 3,000 a year of guests coming and going.

**SHUSTER:** How exactly does it work?

**TORREY:** Well, we live in very rugged conditions, because we haven't had the money to build a fancy set-up, and people keep coming, and it gets more and more crowded. But we have a daily schedule, we have morning prayer, and evening prayers, and mid-day intercessions, and the evening program keeps changing from one day to the next. The morning program's pretty standardized, we have some Bible study together, and everybody joins in the discussion. There's preaching only twice a week, the rest of the time, it's discussions, and everybody getting in on the act, free meetings too, totally free, anybody can say anything they want. Sing or dance, or testify, or ask for laying on of hands for healing or what have you.

**SHUSTER:** How do you decide what to discuss?

**TORREY:** Well, normally we have a set lesson, and we go right through the Scriptures in order, and we have that day's lesson, and we discuss that day's lesson, so it's systematic in that sense. On the Thursday night meetings, there are no rules; anybody can bring up anything they want. And then on Saturday nights, they everybody tells about something good that happened during the week that they're thankful for, so that we can have the Eucharist, a thanksgiving service, in the morning, and that's beautiful, everybody loves that, you know, it's completely positive, and so many good things come out. Little bitty testimonies that, every week, you get testimonies that show that God was in action. It's beautiful. [Unclear] we've tried to support ourselves with a little bit of farming, and we've leased some land from the government. We have cattle, we have a woodworking shop, and a little craft shop, and we make sheep's wool into thread and yarn, and knit sweaters and various articles and things. And so far, we're about 38% self-supporting. That includes money from my lectures, or books, or something like that. Any kind of earned income, we all add it together, it comes out to about 38% of our income. Then the remaining money comes from donations and a slight majority, like 52% or something of the donations, come from Korean sources. I don't know of any other mission work that's supported by Koreans. I think that's rather neat.

**SHUSTER:** The time's just about up and there is a lot more I would like to ask but there is just one more final question. Can you describe how you came to join the Episcopal church, the Anglican church?

**TORREY:** Yes. In just a word, I was in the Presbyterian Church, and I felt called to be a pioneer foreign missionary and to go out on faith and the Presbyterian Church just didn't have any mechanism for that at all and didn't want to set up any. And I found the Episcopal Church did, it was far more flexible and they had people doing that kind of thing already. It was nothing new to them. And when I went to the Presbyterian mission and talked about faith missions, it made them very angry, "What's the matter, haven't we got faith?" When I went to the Episcopalians and talked about missions, they said, "You know, there's a lot you can learn from the faith missions."



[Chuckles] And they just had so much more flexibility, I decided if they could tolerate me, I could tolerate them. And that's more or less been our relationship. Actually, I've learned to appreciate the Episcopal Church a great deal since I got into it, but I came in on the basis of if they'd tolerate me, I'd tolerate them [chuckles].

**SHUSTER:** Was that just before you went to Korea, or was that....

**TORREY:** No, that was while I was in the middle of my seminary course, so I quit Princeton and went to [unclear]. Took me a while to get a bishop to sponsor me, and I still didn't know for absolute certain sure I was going to go into the Episcopal ministry, but I finally...I discovered a lot of things about the Episcopal church I liked, a great many things, and I've grown to...I...I wouldn't want to be in any other church now, unless the Lord tells me to change again, I'll change again, I mean, He's the boss.

**SHUSTER:** Just one final question on Korea. In the years you've been there, what seems to you to be the greatest change in the Korean church and the greatest continuity?

**TORREY:** The greatest change in the Korean church?

**SHUSTER:** And the greatest continuity.

**TORREY:** Continuity. You better stop the tape recorder and let me think about that a minute.

**SHUSTER:** Sure.

[Recording stopped and restarted. Brief period of distortion]

**TORREY:** ...continuity is that the Korean churches were founded by very conservative missionaries, and it's still predominantly a very conservative church. And the Confucian mentality causes them to preserve the past, much more than some other places might. And this is a doctrinal thing I'm talking about. The... there's a small handful of devoted people determined they've got to keep up to date, and this is also a Korean characteristic, let's be modern, let's be, let's stop being a developing country, let's be a developed country, and the symbol of that is liberation theology. So, you've got a small handful of liberation theology buffs, making a large noise, from very small numbers. But that's not a major change, really. The major change is the, is the coming in of the Charismatic thing. It was there, as I told you in our private conversation before, as sort of an underground thing, and never had come to the surface. Then the Assemblies of God missionaries came in and pulled it out in the open, and made it something to be reckoned with, and the Assemblies churches are growing faster, probably, than any of the others.

**SHUSTER:** During the post-World War II era?

**TORREY:** Yes. And they've been a challenge to the other, to the old line denominations. And today, they say that if the Presbyterian church would split over the Charismatic issue, the majority would go with the Charismatics. Because there are so many people in the Presbyterian church, and

the other denominations, (Methodists are the two main ones you see) and the Catholics, who are craving the work of the Holy Spirit, and have received, or think they have received the, something of the work of the Holy Spirit. That's the big new thing...is the new emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit, and a hunger for a clear definition of who he is and what he does. And that's been one of the major things that...ministries I have stumbled into. For years, nobody would listen to me on the subject. I couldn't get an audience. Now, they come up...come up and say, "Teach us about the Holy Spirit." And they invite me to come to this church and that church, this seminar and that seminar, to teach about the Holy Spirit. And I'm following my grandfather's teaching, and then building on it. So that...that's probably the biggest change. Now there's also a going stale change, which is bad. Big money, big buildings, big names, and all of the ugly things that can happen when the church gets stale and we had a prophecy come out several years ago, from a layman, but many people felt it was right from God, and he said if clergy of the churches, Protestant and Catholic, do not repent of their adulteries and their lies and their mishandling of money, their greed, that God will not fight for Korea, South Korea, when North Korea invades again. And the prophecy also said North Korea will invade and God will take His hand off and the whole country will be reunited as a communist country. But if the clergy will repent of these three sins, then God will fight for South Korea one more time and Korea will be reunited as a Christian country. But very few clergy have paid any attention to that message. A few of the great leaders have taken it seriously and joined in the call for repentance. Many of the students have felt this is right on. There's a tremendous movement of students asking....

**SHUSTER:** Seminary students?

**TORREY:** Seminary students and college students, mostly college students, wanting a response to this. And some of them went on a walk through the whole country, pleading with people to repent. And there was quite a wave of repentance, but it was almost...almost entirely among the lay people. There were a few outstanding clergy who backed this movement, but some of the people I most hoped would do something about it remained silent. And this is the most worrisome thing about the church in Korea today, because the Lord convinced me that this prophecy was right on by sending people to me immediately after I read the prophecy who were the victims of these three problems. I felt that was a symbolic thing, that the Lord was saying, "This is a problem." I, I just had no way of knowing how much of a problem those things were, and then all of a sudden, right after I read the prophecy, I'm praying for guidance, "Do I respond to this, do I say this man's off base, or do I agree with it, as a word from the Lord?" and here comes these people who were victims of those three problems. And I thought the Lord was saying, "It's on."

**SHUSTER:** Well I feel we have just scratched the surface in so many things, but I see our time is up. I know you have many other things to do. I'm very grateful for your willingness to come in today, thank you.

**TORREY:** Well, I appreciate very much your having me in and being interested in these things and giving me a chance to share, and I'll get a, try to get a copy of that tape for you, the video tape.

**SHUSTER:** Thank you.

**END OF TAPE**