

The Need for a Unificationist Blessing, Marriage and Family Theology and Education Providence

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November 6, 2022



I experienced a flash of insight a few days ago while looking at Rev. Sun Myung Moon's picture (who Unificationists call True Father).

The gist of the revelation was that some 30+ years ago, I was in a position to facilitate and contribute towards the development of a Unificationist Blessing, Marriage, and Family Educational (UBMFE) providence.

If that was the case, you may wonder why am I only now proposing the development of such a

providence rather than 30 years ago? (I was first active in the American branch of the Unification Church's marriage and family ministry -- known as the Blessed Family Department [USA BFD] -- between 1987 and 1989 and then reconnected in 2004)



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In the 1970s and 1980s, the USA BFD work consisted of supporting and administrating the Blessing providence. The providence of guiding Blessed couples and families mainly consisted of preparing couples for their three-day ceremony, counseling, and the publication of two Blessing-related magazines, which included True Parents' speeches and some educational material, called *The Blessing Quarterly* and *The Blessing Journal*.

Family education was *not* pressing because most couples were just starting out and few had children. However, anyone connected to the USA BFD who was even remotely observant could see we were eventually going to need education material and programs that could minister to and provide life guidance for these

Blessed couples and families.

Unfortunately, budgetary concerns and administrative decisions occurred that had a major impact on the USA BFD and the development of that kind of material. Around 1990, the USA BFD was completely shut down, an action that wasn't reversed until 2004 (due to True Father's prodding).

Upon reflection, I believe that from the 1990s going forward, the development of mature, professional and comprehensive educational material on the Blessing, Marriage and Family derived from the revelations of True Father and Rev. Hak Ja Han Moon (who Unificationists call True Mother; together they are called True Parents) would have occurred. Sadly, such efforts were stillborn and cut-off abruptly due to the USA BFD's demise.

It was not a coincidence that during the time the USA BFD was dormant, the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education, LLC (CMFCE) was founded by Diane Sollee in 1996. I believe through the CMFCE and the Smart Marriages Conferences they sponsored, God worked to encourage faithful professionals who were caring for beleaguered families to identify and make available to the greater public, ministries, clinical practices, and educational programs dedicated to enriching healthy marriages and saving marriages that were in trouble. The purpose of the CMFCE, found on their website, is below. These are worthy and laudable goals.

The coalition serves as an information exchange and clearinghouse to help couples locate marriage and relationship courses; to help professionals, clergy and lay educators locate training programs and resources; to connect those with an interest in the continuing development of the field; to support community initiatives, legislation and research; and to promote the effectiveness of marriage education programs and increase their availability in the community.

After the USA BFD was re-established in 2004, USA BFD leaders began to attend Smart Marriages conferences. I believe the reinstated USA BFD was supposed to study the programs and ministries that were showcased by the CMFCE and other organizations and programs dedicated to saving the institution of marriage which was under attack. As well, from 2004, the USA BFD should have initiated the development of a UBMFE providence. Unfortunately, the Blessing and Family Ministry's (BFM – note the name change) family guidance providence relies heavily and almost exclusively on material that was spawned due to the efforts of what has come to be commonly known as the Marriage Education Movement

It is imperative for Blessing ministry leaders and Unificationist scholars to resuscitate, kickstart and rejuvenate the development of an educational system and ultimately a theology grounded in the revelation of True Parents. This theology should be derived from the words and guidance on the topic of Blessing, Marriage and Family Life given by True Father from 1960 until his passing and the words of True Mother from before 2012 until today. There is a historical precedent within the Unification Movement for the development of a theology of Blessing, Marriage, and Family based on True Parents' revelations. That precedent can be found in the systematization of True Father's revelation into what is now the theology of Divine Principle and the development of Unification Thought.

There are several reasons the time is right for the Unification Movement to launch a UBMFE providence. For one, the BFM recently created a Family Ministry Department, and the leaders of that department are grappling with how to initiate and shape their department from the ground up, including crafting their vision, mission, objectives, organizational structure, curriculum, and practices. In relation to this challenge, the leaders of that department are searching for scholarly works related to UBMFE, especially in couple care and parenting.

In addition, since True Mother is strongly pushing our Unification Movement to bestow the Blessing worldwide, certainly mature, and professional educational material that reflects a Unificationist worldview and that can care for and raise up these newly Blessed Central Families is urgently needed.

The Unification Movement is uniquely positioned to pioneer the establishment of a Blessing, Marriage, and Family providence. In contrast to what I would characterize as individual-focused content widely found in many religious traditions, the Blessing and marriage in the Unification tradition has been one of our core sacraments and pivotal traditions of the Unification Movement.

Words sharing insight into the sacredness and significance of Blessed Marriage and the way of life of a Blessed Family are interwoven throughout the speeches and sermons of True Parents. Those of us familiar with and dedicated to supporting the providence initiated by True Parents understand the Unification Movement is uniquely qualified and positioned to contribute to the transformation of the family into an ideal and sacred institution.

Let me mention an initiative I felt called to start in 2017 called BLESS-ED. BLESS-ED is a ground-breaking and trailblazing project. It is a first attempt to create a concept model for UBMFE-styled educational material which I hope will be followed by many future efforts to supplement, complement, and even totally remake this initial effort. Volunteers for this project are in the process of amassing a representative sample of True Parents' words on the Blessing and Blessed Family Life that will eventually be posted publicly (we are two-thirds through the review of our targeted sources, though help is still needed to complete that effort).

As this is an unofficial grass roots project that is volunteer driven, where there is no budget, full-time staff, and volunteers lead busy lives, the organizers opted to utilize the venue of Hoon Dok Hae (HDH) as a platform when/where the review of speeches could occur. Speeches and anthologies are specifically assigned and designated, drawn from the large body of True Parents' words that have been translated into English and are available in digital format, to avoid review duplication.

The collected depository of thematically-related quotes will then be examined utilizing the tools of meta-analysis and eye-ball review. I envision that this analysis, to occur during phase 2 of the project, will be tackled by a panel of called and capable individuals. The goal of that phase is for the assembled panel to reach a consensus on the definition of the Blessing and to discover a model, system, and paradigm for UBMFE as well as systematizing and organizing the vast spectrum of detailed contents related to the life and course of a Blessed Central Family.



Phase 3 of the project will be to create a comprehensive educational curriculum and manual based on the output from the analysis phase that is intended to be crafted by a panel of qualified educators. In the future, I am hopeful that commentaries will be developed based on the completed BLESS-ED educational curriculum and manual that will convey possible applications and insights targeting specific challenges and circumstances that will be faced by succeeding generations of Blessed Central Families.

It would be ill-advised and premature for me to advance any hypothesis regarding what a Unificationist-inspired theology and/or educational system reflecting UBMFE would look like. This also applies to any attempt I might make at mapping what an educational providence in terms of theory, practice, and counsel for the daily life of Blessed Central Families would encompass.

Rather, based on the extensive research I undertook to write my Masters thesis, I am convinced the only way to responsibly discover, systematize, and promote content given by True Parents on the topic of Blessing, Marriage and Family will be through a rigorous, thorough, and extensive review of a broad and representative sample of True Parents' words on that subject.

I encourage scholars who feel called to create and contribute UBMFE material to True Parents' Blessing providence to do so now. I am convinced the world is in dire need of UBMFE material, especially since, as True Father said, the Blessed Central Family is the cornerstone of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Scholars and educators can submit their material directly to the BFM's Family Department, or post their work on my website bcf-ed.org, or on my husband's website, www.Tparents.org. I also encourage readers to post comments to this article and engage in discussion. Whatever avenue you choose, please invest in, and contribute to this crucial work.

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