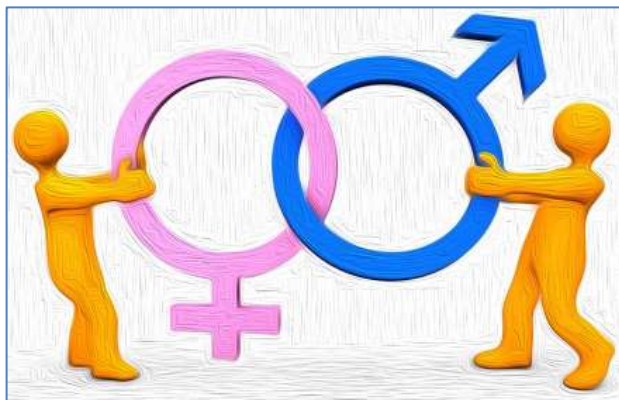


Battle of the Sexes in the Unification Movement

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The Unification Movement (UM) is embroiled in a battle of the sexes.

It began with the passing of Rev. Sun Myung Moon (True Father) in September 2012 and intensified as his widow, Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon (True Mother), consolidated her position as head of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) and the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC or Unification Church).

The battle lines are drawn between True Mother and her eldest and youngest living sons, Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon, both of whom lead break-away organizations. Conflicts among these three leaders and their followers have led to the fracturing of relationships among the movement's membership and leave-taking by some with little or no resolution in sight.

In this struggle, gender has become a flashpoint of contention. True Mother made it clear after her husband's passing she would assume direct authority over the UM. Her sons condemned her presumption and stated definitively that neither she nor any female will ever be in a position to inherit True Father's authority or lead the UM *because of* their gender. Thus, the dynamic of gender conflict in the post-Sun Myung Moon UM has been one of matriarchal assertion and patriarchal reaction.

This article outlines patterns of matriarchal assertion and patriarchal reaction in the UM. The concluding section proposes gender-neutrality as an alternative model of UM leadership.



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Matriarchal Assertion

True Mother's assertion of authority followed a four-stage trajectory in the years following True Father's passing. These included 1) her assertion of leadership; 2) a critique of masculine leadership; 3) altered practices and innovations; and, 4) theological interpretations from a matriarchal perspective.

Assertion of leadership. A week after Rev. Moon's *seonghwa* (funeral), Mrs. Moon sent a message to regional headquarters and mission nations that announced, "Everything that is carried out in Korea from this day onward will be centered on True Mother." Her assertion of authority rested on True Father's endorsements of her as the UM's "co-founder" or "second founder." She also emphasized that True Father, though deceased, was not absent but uniquely present to her and they, in fact, were conducting a joint ministry. This was sufficient for FFWPU supporters who understood True Mother is not in the position of a successor but that her leadership is a continuation of True Parents' leadership.

Critique. True Mother had previously contrasted the "masculine logic of power" with the "feminine logic of love." After True Father's passing, her remarks continued to have a matriarchal edge. In a meeting with Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), she stated:

"The only way we can save America is for women to take the lead ... I've come to see politics cannot be trusted. It is full of men who live day to day ... how can they be so narrow-minded? ... I could explain this better if men had experienced the pain of labor even once. If so, men would become so much more humble."

Her critique extended to Unification culture. She questioned whether women in the church had been "treated well by their children and husbands." She also questioned long meetings and sermons, stating her view that families should "be strong first," educating their next generation.

Altered practices and innovations. True Mother expressed her determination to make the Unification Church "a living and breathing church," a church "increasing with new members," and a church "filled with vitality." Some of her actions, such as changing the *Cheon Il Guk* national anthem, altering wording of the "Family Pledge," reducing the Unification blessing vows from four to one, and being photographed on a couple of occasions sitting on True Father's royal seat, elicited criticism from those who regarded church traditions to be unalterable. Other actions, such as convening committees that assembled three volumes of "Holy Scripture" and a "Heavenly Constitution," provoked outrage.

Theological interpretations. Mrs. Moon interpreted core Unification doctrines, i.e., God and Christ, from a "gender-balanced" perspective. In January 2013, she called on members to address God not just as

"Heavenly Father" but as "Heavenly Parent." She said that earlier ways of addressing God, such as "Yahweh" during the Old Testament period and "Heavenly Father" during the New Testament period, were now superseded. Supporters pointed out that Rev. Moon not only utilized the term "Heavenly Parent" on numerous occasions but also referred explicitly to God as "Heavenly Mother" as well as "Heavenly Father."

True Mother's doctrine of God flowed directly into her doctrine of Christ. After True Father's passing, True Mother asserted a position of Christological equivalence. This was evident in her assertion of her unique and independent identity as God's "Only-Begotten Daughter" which sparked additional controversy. However, Rev. Moon referenced the term "Only-Begotten Daughter" some 180 times in his collected sermons dating back to 1959. In 1972, he stated, "Where there is an only-begotten Son, there is also an only-begotten Daughter."

Dissidents said True Mother asserted not just Christological equivalence but Christological superiority in claiming the goal of providential history for the past 2,000 years was to recover the only-begotten daughter and that she was born sinless. However, True Father stated, "The returning Lord ... is not looking for a bride within the fallen realm. He is looking for the woman who was born of the unfallen, pure lineage." (*Collected Sermons*, vol. 35, Oct. 19, 1970) Still, the matter was ambiguous as he spoke differently on other occasions.

Patriarchal Reaction

Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon reacted strongly against her. Their rejection included three elements: 1) strategies of legitimation consisted of arguments advanced by Hyun Jin Moon and Hyung Jin Moon in support of their leadership claims; 2) strategies of delegitimation which consisted of arguments advanced against their mother and FFWPU; and 3) interpretations of core Unification doctrines from decisively patriarchal, though decidedly different perspectives.

Strategies of legitimation. Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon each made exclusive claims to leadership of the UM as True Father's successor. They rested their claims on True Father's direct or indirect endorsement.

Hyun Jin Moon based his claim to leadership on his status as the "True Elder Son." As the eldest living son, his followers understood him to be the inheritor not just of Rev. Moon's authority but of his "divine seed." He also relied on statements of True Father such as, "Centering on the lineage passed down through the eldest son's line, this foundation of heart will be passed on into the eternal future, for a thousand, for ten thousand generations." (*Cheon Seong Gyeong*, p. 2450)

Hyung Jin Moon carved out a sphere of authority as the thrice anointed "Second King." He and his followers referenced a speech in which True Father referred to him and his wife as "pillars of our house in the future." More importantly, they cited three ceremonies conducted by True Parents in which he and his wife marched attired in the same royal garb which True Parents had worn on previous occasions.

Strategies of delegitimation. Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon employed two main strategies to nullify their mother's leadership claims and disqualify her as head of the UM. The first was a strategy of demonization whereby they highlighted the ways in which they claimed True Mother had deviated from True Father and desecrated his memory. The second was a strategy of deconstruction in which they attempted to drive a wedge between True Parents and their relationship.

Hyun Jin Moon and his followers accused Mrs. Moon of betrayals but stopped short of explicit demonization. On the other hand, Hyung Jin Moon and his followers were entirely unrestrained. They claimed she was "seduced" by archangels, had committed adultery with Satan, forming a marital relationship with him, and was "the Whore of Babylon." Hyung Jin termed the "Age of Women," which Rev. Moon declared, to be "that of radical, atheist, power-lusting, mouth-frothing demons ... communists in panties."

Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon claimed that True Parents were disunited prior to True Father's passing and afterwards. Their arguments rested on three claims: 1) that they were disunited in heart and feeling; 2) that True Mother did not have exclusive rights over True Father (this was not claimed by Hyun Jin Moon or his followers); and, 3) that Hak Ja Han Moon was not the original choice as "True Mother," had no special dignity other than being a representative of "fallen" women, and was replaceable. These claims were less central to Hyun Jin Moon's group but integral to Hyung Jin's polemic. He and his followers pursued a relentless defamation campaign.

Theological interpretations. Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon's interpretations of core Unification doctrines, i.e., God and Christ, were decisively patriarchal but differed in significant ways. Both understood God as the "masculine subject partner." However, while Hyun Jin's representatives were willing to acknowledge "both genders are within God's nature," Hyung Jin understood God to be an exclusively masculine being. They parted company more decisively in their doctrines of Christ. Both understood True Father to be the Lord of the Second Advent and Messiah. However, Hyun Jin Moon understood his father to be a full (and fallible) human being, unique only in that he carried the original

seed of God's lineage. Hyung Jin Moon understood his father to be God incarnate.

The high and low Christological affirmations of Hyung Jin and Hyun Jin Moon could not have been more disparate. But they agreed that the Messiah came as a male being carrying God's seed. They also agreed that the Messiah establishes "God's lineage" perpetuated through "Three Great Kingships." Hyun Jin understood the Three Great Kingships to be God, the father (Rev. Moon), and the true elder son (himself). Hyung Jin understood them to be True Father, himself, and his third son (Shin Joon Moon). Neither has a role for the feminine in current or future leadership other than "to receive and nurture the seeds."



A Gender-Neutral Model of UM Leadership

The UM faces formidable obstacles in working through its gender-based conflicts. These include disagreements among contending parties as to the movement's authoritative texts and the polemical context in which claims have been advanced. However, the UM can draw on theological resources and take practical steps to eliminate gender-based stereotypes and entitlements.

Gender neutrality has the most potential to resolve differences within the UM and has the most resonance with contemporary practice. According to one Unification scholar, gender neutrality posits that in "specific life situations," notably in matters of law and employment (including leadership), "individuals act and are looked upon ... in terms of their underlying humanity, rather than in terms of the male or female coloring."

Rather than gender complementarity which commonly devolves into gender polarity (i.e., one gender having precedence over the other), gender neutrality expands the range of gender equality.

Gender neutrality offers the UM four distinct advantages:

1. **Breathing space.** Gender neutrality affords the movement breathing space to consolidate its tradition by leaving many questions, particularly those related to divine nature, open. At present, contending parties cannot agree on authoritative texts. This, of course, is not unusual for movements in their first or second generation of development. Nevertheless, disagreements over which of Rev. Moon's words are authoritative on gender relations have been a major source of conflict in the post-Sun Myung Moon UM.
2. **Mitigation of polemical attacks.** The UM ethos has become subject to emotional outbursts and name-calling, reliance on hearsay and subjective interpretations, demands of total surrender, and a tendency toward schism rather than engagement. In this environment, competing groups would do well to practice core principles emphasized by True Father such as living for the sake of others, loving the enemy, bringing enemies to "natural surrender" through service and sacrifice, the mandate to "forgive, love, unite," and not to be sectarian. All of these virtues and behavioral norms are clearly non-gender specific.
3. **A larger frame of reference.** All of the contending parties acknowledge "internal character" to be a more primary set of dual characteristics in creation than that of "external form," i.e., male or female. One solution to the battle of the sexes in the post-Sun Myung Moon UM would be to place more emphasis on the content of "internal character" than external form or gender differentiation. It follows that a person's most fundamental identity is as a human being and next as a man or woman.
4. **Empowerment.** Gender neutrality fosters fuller utilization of human resources. Matriarchal and patriarchal models of leadership are self-limiting. They perpetuate stereotypes and privileging. All Unification groups need to give up gender-based entitlements. FFWPU must give up notions of "the age of women" as affording females privileged access to authority. Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon and their followers must give up notions of leadership as a male entitlement. The UM will develop more fully under conditions of freedom and equality of opportunity.

There should be no limitations placed on women or men in aspiring to and attaining leadership at the highest level. The organization that best embodies this in practice will be in the best position to succeed.

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