

PROSPECTS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF A UNIFIED CULTURE

Annual Gathering of UTS Alumni and Friends Bonsall, May 29th , 2010

In order to evaluate the “Prospects for the Emergence of a Unified Culture” it is necessary to first have a vision of such a culture. That vision must inevitably be subjective and probably quite contentious. Even if such a vision can be convincingly communicated to a wider audience, it is then necessary to propose a process whereby today’s disparate and fragmented multi-cultural world can move from here to there.

Notwithstanding the challenges, I will begin by outlining my original vision of such a culture, briefly summarise how that vision has changed with time and then attempt to evaluate its prospects of coming to pass, based on past and more recent observations.

Vision of a Unified Culture

Inside the Unification movement the Korean phrase *Cheon Il Guk* is now used widely. In the Divine Principle, the term Kingdom of Heaven on Earth describes the ideal world to which we strive through the completion of the three blessings. Both suggest a time and state in which the full restoration of humankind will have taken place and all mankind are living in harmony with God and each other. Whether Unified Culture is synonymous with this kingdom is a matter for further discussion, but for the purpose of this paper, I will assume that all three terms – *Cheon Il Guk*, Kingdom of Heaven on Earth and Unified Culture – are interchangeable.

From early on in my Unificationist life, I envisioned a future world in which the teachings of the Divine Principle would be universally accepted. People would grow to live in God’s direct dominion. Spiritually mature men and women would come before God as couples and would be the channel through which God’s love would find expression in their families, society and world.

The ideal would bring an end to religion. Man would not need to talk endlessly about God, but rather the presence of the Divine would be manifest in our daily lives, through our thoughts, feelings and actions. People would become extremely sensitive to each other and the environment. The choices they make from moment to moment would maintain harmony at every level – individual, family, society and beyond. There would be choice and individual expression but no division and conflict.

My understanding of the organisational form which such a society would take has always been less well defined. I envisioned a profoundly democratic society, based on a Christian ethos of sacrificial love and charity. Leadership would be bestowed on those who sacrificed the most. Leaders would display a parental heart to all under their charge.

In this vision, future generations would trace the development of the ideal world back to Sun Myung Moon and his teachings. He would be seen as a great messianic figure, even surpassing Christ, Mohammed and the Buddha. The True Parents would be revered as the original true couple.

I foresaw this ideal coming about over a period of at least seven generations through the successive purification of lineage and spiritual development of children growing within God-centered families. Once we, as Unificationists, could demonstrate to ourselves and the wider society that the Principle and the Blessing has the power to transform lives and create harmonious communities, the teachings would spread very quickly. We would create what True Father calls the “Love Race”, transcending national, ethnic and cultural divisions. This would be the Unified Culture.

Time to Update the Vision

This was my vision and one that I am loath to forsake. Nonetheless, according to True Father’s recent words, it is now hopelessly out of step with the Providential reality, both in its content and time frame. In one of his recent speeches, Father tells us that just three years remain to the opening up of the era of *Cheon Il Guk*:

“The ‘era of heavenly affairs’ is in the final stage, in which humanity should follow the path of living for the sake of others. They should do this through establishing an absolute standard on the foundation of purifying themselves, both inside and out, through the holy marriage blessing ceremony. The era in which we live today is the time of opening up the era of God’s kingdom of Cheon Il Guk, a time in which we can return to the heart of the one true God. Please engrave this point on your hearts again and again.

“Once the actual time of Cheon Il Guk begins, the spiritual and earthly worlds will be connected and brought into oneness, and all things will be governed under the Association for the Connection of the Spirit and Physical Worlds which will be established on this earth for the first time.

“Moreover, the providence will be carried out under the heavenly law and the heavenly way. Elections conducted in a purely secular way will disappear from the face of this earth. All people will become one family through cross-cultural marriage and the World Peace Marriage Blessing and we will enjoy tranquility and happiness in the sacred reign of peace. I am saying that only three years remain until that day.”

SMM “Honoring a Legacy of Peace” Arlington VA, April 1, 2010.

If this is the case, the realm of *Cheon Il Guk* is not something that will gradually emerge through the spiritual evolution of man. It is far more imminent. How could my vision have been so wrong? I see three possible explanations.

- i. **False understanding.** The Providence and True Father’s underlying vision of the Kingdom of Heaven has not changed, but on hearing the Divine Principle in the early eighties, my mind had fashioned an improbable and idealistic vision, based on my own perceptions and dreams.

- ii. **Heavenly expediency.** The Providence and True Father's underlying vision of the Kingdom of Heaven has not changed, but in order to attract adherents from a western Judeo-Christian democratic heritage, and boost his standing in his own land, some aspects of the teachings were downplayed and others emphasised. Nowadays, the original vision is being revealed with more clarity
- iii. **A shift in the Providence.** There has been a genuine shift in the Providence, as a result of progressive revelation and/or the failure of the Unification movement to take root in Judeo-Christian soil while enjoying relatively widespread success in Japan. As a consequence, the vision presented thirty years ago has been supplanted by an updated one.

The need to reformulate my original vision of a Unified Culture has been bolstered by the following shifts that I have observed over the past 20 years. During that time the movement has seemingly become:

- Less Judeo-Christian; more Shinto-Confucian-Shamanist.
- Less Protestant and democratic; more Catholic, hierarchical and authoritarian.
- Less concerned about personal spiritual development and the notion of direct dominion; more inclined towards grace and salvation and the qualifications needed to become citizens of *Cheong Il Guk*.
- Less a rational faith that can be “empirically” tested through one’s life experiences; more a faith that relies on edicts, proclamations, superstitions and belief in things unseen.
- Less universal; more Korean-centered.
- Less a movement that seeks to end religion; more a new religion in its own right.

Today, I have a new vision of the Unified Culture – a kind of cosmic feudal kingdom, governed from the spiritual world by the ascended True Parents. The future seat of power will reside in Cheong Pyeong, and people will come in homage from around the world. The language will be Korean. The calendar will be Chinese. The traditions will retain some Judeo-Christian elements but will draw heavily on Shintoism, Confucianism and shamanism.

Future Prospects

What are the future prospects for such a vision becoming reality?

Without doubt, it is going to be a hard sell in the West and probably the East too. As Hyung Jin Nim has publicly acknowledged in recent speeches, the Unification movement has been stagnant or even shrinking over the past twenty years.

Some possible reasons for this are:

- The failure to actually create a model True Family
- The failure to make the transition from being a dynamic spiritual community of single members to a dynamic spiritual community of blessed couples
- The failure to put our ideals into practice and witness to others through our deeds rather than our words

- The obsessive need to have the world “recognise True Parents” and to proclaim every accomplishment as evidence of Father’s messiahship. We talk of God’s Providence, but do not appear to trust that if we follow the path of sacrifice and service, God might inspire others to follow our example.

The spiritual outpouring that resulted in the expansion of the core membership in the seventies and early eighties came to a halt around the time Father went into Danbury. The current attempt to kickstart the Providence with a 1000-day countdown to the Foundation Day of *Cheon Il Guk* relies on sufficient numbers of members buying into the vision and the spirit world descending in support.

I certainly do not want to denigrate the prospect of this happening. However, in conclusion, I foresee three possible long term outcomes relating to the establishment of a Unified Culture:

- The east ascends, the west declines.** In this scenario, the rise of the new Unified Culture will coincide with the collapse of North Korea (into the unifying arms of the South), and rapid growth and opening up of China. As communism falls apart, first in North Korea and then in China, there will be a huge spiritual void. People will hunger for a new “ism” to replace the discredited *Juche* (Kimilsungism) and Maoism. Unificationism will spread like wildfire throughout the prospering East. Meanwhile, as fast as the East ascends, the West will descend into chaos. Falling standards of living, rising unemployment, growing inequality, family breakdown, immorality and social unrest will cause societies to unravel. Out of this chaos a new world order will be born as the Unified Culture of True Parentism spreads from east to west.
- Our movement collapses, but a Unified Culture ultimately emerges.** In this scenario, our movement will attempt to define itself as a new religion and may find significant support in Korea, Japan and some other Asian countries. However, with the passing of the founder, the rise of factionalism and the Koreanisation of the movement, its appeal will be limited. Meanwhile, the ideas at the core of movement – mind-body unity, the centrality of the nuclear family, God’s love expressed through parents, the existence of the spiritual world, sacrificial love and service to others – will eventually become universally acknowledged. Over a period time, measured perhaps in centuries rather than decades, a global Unified Culture will emerge.
- Our movement collapses and the world continues as it is.** Here, as above, we proceed to create a new religion of limited appeal. It will be just one more religion (or multiple denominations of the same religion) competing in a crowded marketplace of ideas for people’s attention and loyalty. For the foreseeable future, humankind will remain as divided and disunited as they have since the beginning of known history.

If I was a gambling man, I might place a bet on the second scenario.

Graham Simon – 18.5.2010