

Freedom Society Conference Plots Strategy to Win the War of Ideas

Richard Panzer, Robert Beebe and Lourdes Swarts - edited by Ariana Moon
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*From left, Hero Hernandez, Carlo Santelli, Robert Beebe, Dr. Richard Panzer and Lourdes Swarts
Background: Jim Gavin, Barry Geller, Neil Angelino, Tony Ferrantello, Joseph Edwards, John Williams
Jeff Kingsley, Pierre Tardy.*

Thirty-three leaders from New Jersey and tuning in from several other states through Skype came together at the Unification Church Center in Clifton, New Jersey on December 15, 2012 to discuss the concept of the “Freedom Society” and how its propositions could gain acceptance in the corridors of academia, media and government.

Dr. Ann I., Pastor for District 3, offered a moving prayer to kick off the conference. Pennsylvania-resident Jamal Johnson, an abstinence education with the Free Teens USA organization in NJ who emceed the meeting, moved many with his big heart and sense of humor. On the topic of government services, he said that “we need to raise hell as folks no longer want simply a safety net but a hammock!”

Lourdes Swarts, Universal Peace Federation’s (UPF) director for Region 3 and coordinator for this conference, acknowledged the many ideas in shaping the Freedom Society received via online discussion. “We have come together because our country is in crisis and it is time to act,” she said. “We are here not because we were told to do so but we want to leave a better world for the generations to come.”

The first session from 9:00-10:45 a.m. involved a lively discussion during which everyone had the opportunity to present their ideas in an open forum. The following session from 11:00 a.m. to noon featured the keynote remarks of Dr. Anthony Guerra, president of the Washington Times Foundation and special assistant to Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, president of the Unification Church USA. Dr. Guerra is the author of *Family Matters: The Role of Christianity in Formation of the Western Family and Romans* and *The Apologetic Tradition: The Purpose, Genre and Audience of Paul's Letter*. In a presentation that addressed the general theme of the Freedom Society, Dr. Guerra defended the Freedom Society’s characterization of government as an archangel, saying that “its role is to serve the interests of the people and problems occur when it abuses its authority and seeks to dominate people.” His lecture will soon be posted online at www.freedomfaithfamily.org.

Next, summary presentations were given on the topic of “Freedom, Faith and Family” by Jim Gavin, president of UPF USA, Robert Beebe, UPF Region 3 senior advisor and Dr. Richard Panzer, president of Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) and Barrytown College and the founder of Free Teens USA. To date, these summary presentations have been developed as the core content of the Freedom Society. Jim Gavin provided two Powerpoints, one prepared for a religious audience and the second for a secular audience, as well as a framework for an educational program to implement in Unificationist communities that addresses key issues in culture and politics. “We need to start by giving presentations, getting feedback and mastering the content as we move forward,” Gavin said.

In a presentation suitable for universities across the United States, Robert Beebe brought new insights to the “God or no God” debate. “The question isn’t whether there is a God, but whether there is a moral order to the universe,” he said. “This is the unspoken issue behind the culture wars, which are primarily concerned with the values that guide people’s lives. There are three main spheres where this argument is being played out: the origin of the universe, evolution versus creation, and the problem of evil.”

Beebe added as part of his conclusion, “Atheists have a mistaken view of God as a judgmental, oppressive dictator who wants to control us. Our task is to reveal that God is a suffering.”

Dr. Richard Panzer spoke about his 20-year effort in New Jersey to bring an abstinence message to youth and prepare them for healthy marriages as the basis of a peaceful society. He reported that recently in his work, the New Jersey government had requested all grant recipients to remove the word “marriage” from their curricula. In response, he gathered the grant recipients on a conference call, at the end of which they all agreed not to comply with the government's request, contending that they had a contract and that the grants were given to them based on their curricula. As a result, the government backtracked and ultimately gave the money to the grant recipients. “We need to understand that New Jersey's government is not in accord with our values,” said Dr. Panzer.



From Left: Neil Angelino, Tomislav Bijukovic (standing) E.J. Parada, Tony Ferrantello, Joseph and Machiko Edwards.

During a luncheon that was catered by Greg and Elke Noll of Healthy Gourmet Living (www.facebook.com/HealthyGourmetLiving), Dr. Gordon Anderson, presented via Skype a summary of his book *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Version 4.0*. “In the Declaration of Independence, the Founders gave ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ as the mission statement of the United States,” he said. “Everyone seeks happiness, but happiness may not mean the same thing to everyone. The founders of great civilizations have always sought ways to achieve it, and freedom is essential for the pursuit of happiness.”

He went on to explain how the stages of development of political society from the era of the ancient kings of Babylon, through the centuries of the Roman Empire, to the period of the U.S. Founding relate to the stages of growth of individual human beings. Furthermore, he said that in the last 400 hundred years, there has been an emergence of a new stage of society, which he calls “Version 4.0.” According to Dr. Anderson, this new stage develops principles “in which tribal and ethnic structures of society are being transcended by new social institutions in three cultural spheres – religion, politics, and economy – and the function of these spheres needs to be better understood and integrated to enable freedom and the pursuit of happiness in our time. The collapse of many social institutions around us is the result of actions outside the bounds of principle. We are today at a critical juncture in moving to the next stage of society because it is parallel to the point of growth analogous the human fall symbolized in the story of Adam and Eve. The Divine Principle elaborates principles for this new stage of growth in the religious sphere.” In his book, Dr. Anderson outlines core principles for the political- and economic spheres and discusses several policy measures that could reform and invigorate the U.S. political system based on these core principles.

The afternoon session began with a discussion on the need for a CAUSA-like* manual to help organize the educational content of the Freedom Society on the basis of the Divine Principle. This session was led by Beebe with input from Dan Fefferman, president of the International Coalition for Religious Freedom on Skype from Washington, D.C.

The following session was moderated by Anthony Ferrantello, the newly appointed UPF Director for New York, who provided a paper on what he feels the Freedom Society ought to emphasize. “We do not need a think tank but an action tank,” said Ferrantello, whose paper is available upon request. Speakers at this session included Arthur Herstein of Maryland, who presented his own paper, “The Freedom Society and the Future of America: A Blueprint for Success,” which will be accessible online soon.

Also speaking at this session was Pierre Tardy, an educator based in Pennsylvania who offered his perspectives on creating effective outreach efforts. He emphasized the importance of having an online presence if the Freedom Society is to reach the masses of people who could respond to its message. “The internet is somehow in between the physical world and the spiritual world,” he said. “We need to upgrade our communication capabilities and create high impact three-minute videos, explaining our vision. We need to create an echo chamber with on-going activities that connects with our message and push hard as others do. We should not be shy about who we are but put forth our ideas boldly.”

At 3:30 p.m., the audience listened to the keynote address of President of the Unification Church USA Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, who addressed more than 80 locations via live broadcast of the Original Substance

of the Divine Principle (OSDP) seminar taking place in the New Yorker Hotel that same day. The OSDP content focused on the completion of the ideal of creation centered on God's *shimjung*, or “heart,” and substantiating perpetuity through lineage and Rev. Moon’s address highlighted the idea of “absolute sex,” or, absolute sexual purity before marriage and fidelity within marriage. Some argue that these concepts are part of the blueprint for the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth and the Freedom Society.



Left (standing, Jamal Johnson, E.J. Parada, Dr. Ann Iparaguirre and Gregg Noll. Hero Hernandez and Carlo Santelli (seated).

The last portion of the conference was moderated by John Redmond, the UTS Chief Operating Officer, who offered the following points as the process in which a new idea can change a culture:

- Someone develops a theory or idea and writes a book.
- Academics discuss the impact of the book and look for evidence of this theory in existing societies.
- Practitioners experiment with this idea and seek to demonstrate it.
- The media publicizes the new idea.
- Organizations lobby for the new idea.
- Policy makers are approached to make laws about this new idea.
- Schools teach the new idea.
- Culture embraces the new idea

Redmond then proposed the idea of having five working committees that will work to identify ways to communicate Freedom Society principles to various sectors of the culture:

- Idea committee, bullets 1 & 2
- Education committee, bullets 3 & 7
- Media and communications committee, bullet 4
- Politics committee, bullets 5 & 6
- Social action committee, bullet 8

Participants made a determination to meet over the holidays and on an ongoing basis, as well as host a Principled Centered Leadership Conference to teach Ambassadors for Peace (www.UPF.org/ambassadorsforpeace) the OSDP and Freedom Society content in early February of 2013. Organizers closed the meeting with their wishes for developing the Freedom Society mission statement in the coming year.

*CAUSA was an organization founded by Rev. Sun Myung Moon in the 1980s that worked to expose the failure of Marxist ideology.