

Redefining the Federation

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I joined the "Unification Church" in 1982 at the age of 18. Having gone through a period of anti-Christianism, then anti-religionism, then eventually coming to a theosophical view on life, I met the movement in my home town.

Knowing that this group was the Christ Returned made it entirely natural for me to join, although in the context of a wider society, I have never really felt all that comfortable with the "church" tag because of the unavoidable associations with established religions and what they are and do nowadays. The exception was when I worked in the island nation of Vanuatu, where Christian culture is real, where parliamentarians will readily sing Christian hymns and offer prayers at public impromptu meetings, where the light of Christ is widely understood as the guiding light for society.

Nevertheless, the "church" I joined was never really a church. We did weird things like live communally, but in an urban context. We "fundraised" as a method of spiritual training and for spiritual reasons more than for self-sustenance. We went out on the streets to preach, to meet people, to give "witness" to the new truth, but as a daily way of life. We thought of marriage as the highest pinnacle of spiritual devotion and shaped our families accordingly. In short, this was a "church" unlike any other.

In fact, we always have known that the "Unification Church" was temporary – a substitute for failed Christianity until the foundation could be restored and things could get "back on track" vis-a-vis the ongoing providence of God for world restoration. Heck, we even understand, theologically, if not practically, that religion itself is also a temporary process. But what is even more interesting to me, and clear to me at this time, is that we have *always* been redefining what a "church" is, what a spiritual community is. The redefining is not something new; we have been doing it since day one.



So, with a name change – back to Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP) according to a recent memo from international headquarters – or re-orientation, what should we really be focused on? There seems to be two broad lines around the issue, with a third tangent. One, some folks are hesitant to step forward and would prefer to preserve the label and trappings of a religious organization, feeling that this is inherently more consistent and logical. Two, some folks are glad for the change, seeing the possibilities of being more open, more broad, and being more acceptable to a wider or perhaps even more ideologically diverse society. Three, some folks are just worried that all the changing makes no sense and are kind of feeling a bit exasperated by it all.

Surely, though, going back to our roots, we never really thought to change ourselves so that people would like us more. When was that ever a core tenet of the Unification movement? Have the years worn us

down all that much?

One of the things I have always loved about our “movement,” our community, our family, is that we redefined everything we came in contact with. Fundraising? Foundation of Faith, inheriting the traditions of Abraham, Moses and Christ. Who else conceives of fundraising like this? Preaching and winning converts? Foundation of substance, subjugating the fallen angel to lay a foundation to receive and unite with Christ. Marriage? Marrying for God, to make him fulfilled and happy. Kids? Giving birth to mini-Christ, who will naturally become our teachers if we understand how to help them get there. Etc. Some of the outward trappings have been inherited, but nevertheless, and most importantly of all, we have always been redefining what a church, spiritual movement and humanity is.

And so, if we are not to be a "church" but a "federation," how do we work this? Perhaps we need a determination to step forward to define it *as we see it*, not as the world sees it. Perhaps it is actually for us now to set the tone, set the pace, and create a completely new dimension, formula, paradigm, and concept, one that no one has really ever seen before. We can draw from our past, we can draw from the world, for this is the dirt and the substance from which Adam was made (if you will permit the analogy). But the life, the breath of spirit – this is what we can now define, *must* define, as the children of God on earth. Who else will do it?

In conclusion, we actually have had lots of practice in redefining the outer forms and filling them with a new spirit. As many shortcomings as we may have, we are most definitely –different. So, in grappling with the changes currently in the process, perhaps we need to get creative. Regardless of the nitty-gritty of church mechanics, politics and economics, what is the over-arching providential context for FFWPU? A stage of life and realm of experience hitherto unavailable to *anyone* – Cheon Il Guk. Kingdom of Heaven. Beyond the Completion Stage.

Despite the outward trappings and labels, or perhaps, because of them, the Unification Church has always been innovative. What God has created in us is far more than simply a "church." Of course, questions remain: How can our “Federation” have a logical, consistent organization? How do we package it in a context that the world can understand, and benefit from? How do we interpret our spiritual lives and daily lives within the context of this “Federation?” Nevertheless, I suspect, if anyone can do this, it is us.

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