

Theological Developments in the FFWPU since the Death of Rev. Moon

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This article discusses Mrs. Hak-ja Han Moon's effort to assert her leadership and put her particular stamp on the Unification movement. Known as "True Mother," she is emerging as an institution builder. If one likens Rev. Sun Myung Moon to Joseph Smith, then Mrs. Moon can be viewed as the movement's Brigham Young.

She has faced opposition, because while both Rev. and Mrs. Moon have the theological status of True Parents, in practice members of the Unification Church made Rev. Moon, whom they regard as the Lord of the Second Advent, the focus of their devotion. There had been little reckoning with the prospect of his passing and how they would regard the leadership of his widow, who today is the remaining True Parent on earth.



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The Question of Succession

At the time of Rev. Moon's death in 2012, many members expected Mrs. Moon would merely lead from behind while training a designated male heir to take over leadership of the movement. Rev. Moon had made the issue of finding a suitable heir a matter of serious concern during the previous decade. But those efforts were unsuccessful.

The eldest son, Hyo-jin Moon, declined the position due to past overindulgence, which contributed to his early death from heart failure in 2008. Ironically, because he returned repentant as a prodigal son, he now occupies a place of honor among the True Children. The next living male heir, Hyun-jin (Preston) Moon, broke from the Family Federation in 2009 to form a rival organization. Then, their youngest son, Hyung-jin (Sean) Moon, was given pastoral responsibilities in Seoul to prepare him for leadership, and following Preston's defection, in January 2009, he was chosen to be the next heir apparent. But months after his father's passing, he refused to work with his mother and moved to Pennsylvania to set up a rival church.

Thus, while few members of FFWPU anticipated that Mrs. Moon would take the reins of leadership for an extended period of time, after the sons who were designated as heirs refused to work with her, most members gravitated to her. They were willing to accept True Mother's authority after her husband's passing because it fit with the church's core teaching that Rev. and Mrs. Moon stand side-by-side in the capacity of True Parents.

Moreover, they accepted that Mrs. Moon knew her late husband's heart and mind best, having lived with

him for 52 years. Hence, amid the turmoil of transition, the slogan “We attend True Parents as one!” could rally the membership to her.

To decisively settle the question of succession, True Mother moved swiftly to draft the “Cheon Il Guk Constitution,” promulgated on February 12, 2014 (the first anniversary of Foundation Day, 1.13 by the lunar calendar). It set up a Supreme Council of 13 members, consisting of elders and those of her children who are loyal to her. This structure sets up placeholders for numerous members of the Moon family to be seated on the Supreme Council in the future, creating a corporate leadership combining blood relatives with faithful church elders, thus incorporating the Moon lineage into a stable corporate structure. If in the future, either before or after True Mother’s passing, there is reconciliation with either of the Moon sons, they could easily be seated on the Supreme Council.

The Cheon Il Guk Scriptures

Looking at the temporal development of the church is helpful for understanding current developments in its theology. Rev. Moon saw God’s providence the last decade of his life as opening a higher level of the providence, which he called the “Cheon Il Guk Era.” He considered it to be the time to begin instituting God’s original ideal, a time of transition from restorational activities to a creation-centered mindset where members strive to live according to the Principle of Creation. The arrival of the Cheon Il Guk Era gave cause for the numerous theological and liturgical innovations that ensued under True Mother’s leadership.

In this light, we can understand why True Mother could set out to create the “Cheon Il Guk Scriptures.” Rev. Moon stated he was leaving behind “eight textbooks” as his legacy. Among them was *Cheon Seong Gyeong* (2006), an anthology drawn from some 500 volumes of his speeches delivered from 1956-2003 and organized by theme. Yet Mrs. Moon set out to revise *Cheon Seong Gyeong* and commissioned two new companion volumes, *Pyeong Hwa Gyeong* (Peace Scripture) and *Chambumo Gyeong* (True Parents’ Scripture). She said it was necessary to refine and polish what was “not organized and in good order”:

Father’s words currently are not organized in good order. This greatly concerns me. Compare them to a gemstone. No matter how precious a gemstone is, it will not shine unless it is cut, shaped and polished. Father’s words are like the gemstone of all gemstones, but they are like a gemstone that has not been cut and polished. If I were to leave it the way it is now, who will cut it, shape it and polish it? No one else but I can do it. (*Chambumo Gyeong* 13.2.3.1, p. 1498)



The Cheon Il Guk Scriptures.

This matter became a point of controversy, as both Preston and Sean Moon condemned the new scriptures as a serious deviation from their father’s intentions. Their adherents cite passages from Rev. Moon calling on leaders “not to tamper” with the *Cheon Seong Gyeong*. For example,

If you’ve read it five times, then don’t criticize it and don’t touch it! ... you still don’t have the authority to modify [the content]. Until I look at it and explain it, then there’s a reason why I’m leaving it the way it is. (477-187, Nov. 26, 2004)

Yet proof-texting Rev. Moon’s words in support of one’s opinion is a hazardous enterprise because he said different things on different occasions. We can find other passages in which Rev. Moon called for additional work to improve the *Cheon Seong Gyeong* and even add additional volumes, which adherents of the Family Federation cite in response:

Cheon Seong Gyeong has been compiled based on 400 volumes of my sermons which make up only one third of 1,200 volumes. The *Cheon Seong Gyeong* contents have been extracted from only one third of published volumes. Two or three times more contents must be published. (599-110, Oct. 10, 2008)

Nevertheless, the key issue is not one of divining Rev. Moon’s intent. It is really a dispute over Mrs. Moon’s authority as True Mother. Those who object to her altering the *Cheon Seong Gyeong* regard her position as that of a follower, that of a “bride of Christ” but not Christ himself. Or, they use the church’s theology of husband and wife as subject and object partners to adduce that her role was simply to follow her husband — and remains so even after he has passed away. Hence, they argue, it was an illegitimate overreach for her to alter Christ’s words once he had fixed them for all eternity.

Mrs. Moon, on the other hand, regards herself as the True Parent. As such, she has full authority, equal to that of her husband, to shape their joint legacy. That is why she stated, “No one else but I can do it.” In this light, the fact there has been such a flap over the new Cheon Il Guk scriptures makes sense, since it

was a test of Mrs. Moon's authority at her first opportunity to exert it over a matter of consequence.

Aside from the issue of authority, it was reasonable for Mrs. Moon to see the *Cheon Seong Gyeong*, as well as the eight textbooks as a whole, as only a half-finished concept and not a work and corpus of works that could stand the test of time. The first *Cheon Seong Gyeong* is full of duplications, being an amalgam of 16 booklets developed in Japan with overlapping content. It does not include any material from speeches beyond March 2003, leaving out the entire last decade of Rev. Moon's teachings. The three Cheon Il Guk Scriptures taken together include much of Rev. Moon's eight textbooks. Totaling over 4,800 pages, they contain far more extracts from Rev. Moon's speeches than the first *Cheon Seong Gyeong*.

The new *Cheon Seong Gyeong* (2014), and *Pyeong Hwa Gyeong* and *Chambumo Gyeong* that followed, display True Mother's growing confidence to assert her messianic authority, as co-revelator of the Word. *Cheon Seong Gyeong* includes 43 excerpts from Mrs. Moon's speeches given in the months following Rev. Moon's passing (pp. 1357-68). *Pyeong Hwa Gyeong* includes 16 of True Mother's speeches among the 168 major addresses that True Parents gave to the public. *Chambumo Gyeong*, which delineates the course of True Parents' life and ministry, covers not only True Father's life but also True Mother's, with excerpts from her speeches wherever appropriate. In short, it is a scriptural portrayal of the True Parents — True Father and True Mother together.

Status of *Exposition of the Divine Principle*

Exposition of the Divine Principle is still the core instructional text of the Unification Movement, and Rev. Moon included it in his list of eight textbooks. Its systematic nature makes it well suited for the FFWPU's educational programs, and it is still in wide use. Yet it is not one of the three Cheon Il Guk Scriptures; and I anticipate that over time it will become theologically subordinate. That is because its focus is the Second Coming of Christ, as evident in the concluding chapter which details the time, manner and place of his coming. Yet, it does not directly testify to True Parents; even the term "True Parents" is mentioned only a dozen times, mainly in the Christology chapter. True Parents is inclusive of True Mother, while the Second Coming of Christ is not. This makes it less than ideally suited for the Unification movement during this period when it is being led by True Mother.

That *Exposition of the Divine Principle* is incomplete has been well known for many years. At one time members had the expectation that before he died Rev. Moon would write a "gold book" that would replace the existing "black book." Apparently the Cheon Il Guk Era was the appropriate time for this to happen, but instead of writing a new version of Divine Principle himself, Rev. Moon authorized a disciple to develop and present the "Original Substance of the Divine Principle" (OSDP) in workshops during 2011-12.

The term "Original Substance" refers to the True Parents themselves as the original embodiments of the Word. With its teaching that True Parents are the fundamental duality of God as masculine and feminine made manifest in the world, OSDP anticipated the shift from *Exposition's* focus on the Messiah and Lord of the Second Advent to the Cheon Il Guk Scriptures' focus on True Parents. However, OSDP fell short of being a thoroughgoing rewrite of *Exposition*, and despite great effort to promote these workshops, they did not prove to be convincing or particularly inspirational. OSDP's shortcomings may have encouraged Mrs. Moon to move on to the new educational format that she chose — the three Cheon Il Guk scriptures.

Naming God Heavenly Parent Rather than Heavenly Father

On January 7, 2013 in the run-up to Foundation Day, Mrs. Moon declared that henceforth Unificationists should refer to God not as Heavenly Father but as Heavenly Parent (in the singular). The theology of God as dual-gendered Parent is based on God become manifest on earth in the persons of True Parents. It speaks to the equality of True Father and True Mother's positions that had been secured for the Cheon Il Guk era.

I wrote an article on this Blog in support of this innovation, where I argue the term Heavenly Parent, meaning that the one God is Heavenly Mother as well as Heavenly Father, was already an established feature of Rev. Moon's theology. As evidence, I cite the teaching in Divine Principle (p. 18) that "God... has the dual characteristics of yang and yin in perfect harmony," and passages in the first *Cheon Seong Gyeong* that link God the "vertical Parent" with True Parents, the human "horizontal parents." I also pointed out that Rev. Moon's earliest teaching, the unpublished manuscript *Wolli Wonbon* (1951), speaks of God as both God the Father and God the Mother, and laments Christianity's fixation on only the male side of divinity.

This theology was enacted ritually on January 13, 2001 in the Enthronement Ceremony for God's Kingship. It began with a procession, in which Rev. and Mrs. Moon wearing crowns were preceded by attendants carrying two crowns and robes, one for Heavenly Father and one for Heavenly Mother. Likewise, the entrance ceremony to the Cheon Jeong Goon Palace had a configuration of four thrones,

two in front for True Father and True Mother and two behind them for Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother.



Entrance procession at the Enthronement Ceremony for God's Kingship, January 13, 2001

Members have taken to this change with varying degrees of acceptance. Some open their prayers with “Heavenly Parent,” but as they go on they revert to saying “Heavenly Father.” God is still addressed as Heavenly Father in the “Holy Songs” of the FFWPU’s hymnal — and as is well known, hymns are the heart of worship. FFWPU churches also include Christian praise music in their worship. This means the theology of God as the two-gendered Heavenly Parent is not yet fully made present in worship.

For those who embrace this change, especially women, it opens new doors in their spiritual life. As they pray and relate to Heavenly Mother, they are deepening their relationship to God by connecting with Her newly-accessible feminine energies.

The Only-Begotten Daughter

A signal theological development in the years after Rev. Moon’s passing is Mrs. Moon’s declaration that she is God’s “only-begotten Daughter.” In a similar vein, she states she was born sinless from a specially prepared lineage. She has made this point repeatedly ever since the second anniversary of Rev. Moon’s passing.

What is the reason for this? My understanding is that during the 52 years True Parents were married, Mrs. Moon could rely on being objective to her husband. But after his death, she found it necessary to declare that she also stands on her own foundation. The title “only-begotten Daughter” serves this purpose.

If she did not stake her own ground, if she only relied on Rev. Moon’s authority, she would be vulnerable to challenges from others who believed themselves more knowledgeable than she about Rev. Moon’s teachings. Moreover, this self-understanding gives her strength to overcome the many trials she has been encountering ever since the mantle of leadership fell on her shoulders.

Rev. Moon declared her as such, with statements such as,

Jesus must return to meet God’s only-begotten Daughter, who can totally receive God’s first love. That is why the Lord at his Second Advent must celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb... must marry a woman who completely receives God’s first love, and they must start a family together, thus restoring the positions of unfallen Adam and Eve.” (*Chambumo Gyeong*, pp. 33-37)

In addition, this self-understanding is rooted in her own life experience from an early age. When she was born, her mother had a dream in which her former pastor came to her and told her to raise the child with special care because she was not her own but God’s daughter. (*Chambumo Gyeong*, p. 191) When she was six, an elder in the church she was attending gave her a special blessing, saying, “You will surely be Heaven’s bride.” (*Chambumo Gyeong*, p. 144)

In saying she is the only-begotten Daughter, Mrs. Moon reminds us that the Holy Wedding needed to join a man and woman in an equal position. That is, to solve the problem of original sin, create a true family and beget sinless children, both the bridegroom and the bride had to be in the position of Adam and Eve prior to the Fall, without a trace of sin. After all, since it was through Eve that sin came into the world,

she, as the new Eve, has a crucial role for resolving sin. Were the young Hak-ja Han not in that sinless position, how could the offspring of her union with Rev. Moon be without sin?

Yet, for members who regard Mrs. Moon less for her own merit than from her marriage to the Lord of the Second Advent, these words are challenging. Their object of devotion and source of inspiration was Rev. Moon, but here is Mrs. Moon proclaiming herself a divinely-appointed leader in her own right.

Opening the Age of Women

I have argued on this Blog that God pushes Mrs. Moon to proclaim her value as the only-begotten Daughter because she needs to be victorious in carrying the cross of womankind. At the Fall, Eve led Adam to ruin. This led to the widespread view that no woman is worthy to be the leader of men. As a result, traditional cultures always put men on top, while women were valued mainly as helpers and to produce sons to continue the family line.

It may have been appropriate in the past for Unificationists to see Mrs. Moon's fundamental value as the Bride of Christ. But not now, after Rev. Moon declared the opening of the Age of Women. (*Pyeong Hwa Gyeong*, pp. 881-84) That the world has entered such an age is evident from the dramatic cultural shifts of our time, with women rising up to claim their original rights. Still, the FFWPU has been slow to change, especially in Asia where women are only rarely elevated to leadership. Mrs. Moon carries that cross, even as patriarchal attitudes persist.

Recognizing the role of women in the work of God should be a feature of the Cheon Il Guk era. With the era of restoration having come to an end, more emphasis needs to be placed on Chapter One of *Divine Principle*, which teaches the ideal unity of husband, wife and children centered on love, than all the chapters of Part Two, where male central figures from Noah to Abraham and Jesus led the providence. Accordingly, Mrs. Moon is putting emphasis on children's education, promoting godly families through the Blessing, and families doing activities to build up their "tribes." We can see a gradual shift from a restoration-centered to a creation-centered mindset.

In the Principle of Creation, families manifest the structure of a four-position foundation — God, husband, wife and children — such that any of the four positions can take the subject role to the other three. Sometimes God takes the lead, but at other times it can be the husband, the wife or a child. Now I believe that True Mother is taking the subject role because she is on earth, while True Father in heaven is playing the supporting role. I believe he is proud of his beloved wife on earth and is working to see her succeed.

I joined the Unification Church because I want to establish a world of harmony and peace. True Parents laid the foundation for that by bringing humanity to a new starting point. Yet more must be done, building on that foundation, if we are to finally have world peace. There are so many cultural trappings and ingrained attitudes of the fallen world that have to be got rid of, and among them is the subjugation of the female gender.

Elevating the female gender is not Rev. Moon's mission, since he is a man. Hence, it was God's wisdom to arrange that Mother be 23 years younger than Father. It was a providential set up, guaranteeing that there would be a time after his passing when, in the absence of his dominant male voice, she would lead the church. Her leadership, inclusive of the new theological developments she instituted, is key to redressing the imbalance between men and women globally, to create a better internal basis for the advent of a peaceful world.

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Top photo: Mrs. Hak-ja Han Moon during the "Seonghwa Festival Commemorating the 5th Anniversary of the Ascension of Sun Myung Moon," September 7, 2017, in Korea (courtesy FFWPU International Headquarters).