

## Beyond Partisanship: A Proposal to Bring Our Divided Family Together Again

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At a recent scholarly gathering, one participant concluded it is likely the current divisions in the Unification movement will continue indefinitely. In this article, I propose a four-pronged approach to end the polarization between the disparate groups and bring them together to fulfill the highest aspirations of Divine Principle.

I do not intend to criticize any individual, institution or leadership, but want to present a

conceptual framework upon which we can overcome the historical challenge of denominational/religious division we face.

First, I discuss how reinterpreting “True Family theology” changes the rules for who can be involved in putting an end to the conflict.

I identify how the conflicting groups can shift from position-taking to problem-solving and move beyond sterile debate to engage in genuine dialogue.



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I suggest a third, alternative narrative to move us beyond the limiting narratives we’ve been told thus far by the conflicting groups.

Finally, I recast the conflict in terms of a need to heal broken relationships and strengthen bonds of love between family members.

The three groups involved in the conflict (Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Family Peace Association and Sanctuary Church) employ a variety of tactics to defend their positions, such as: assuming their group is always right; giving no possibility the other parties have parts of the answer to end the conflict; always trying to prove the other party wrong; listening to find flaws and refute arguments; defending “our own version of the truth;” seeing only one side of the argument; looking for weaknesses in the other’s position; creating a winner/loser mentality; and, seeking a conclusion that supports one’s own position.

This kind of position-taking and conflict is found in all types of organizations. For example, in the politics of the recent presidential election, it was all about painting a picture of “the other” candidate/party as being deficient, wrong, untrustworthy, dishonest, and unqualified to lead. There is no advantage for the opposing party to “toot the horn” in praise of the other, or to show how their opponent’s solutions have as much merit as their own. To do so runs the risk of losing votes, and as a consequence, losing power and control that come with winning the election.

Taking a close look at the division in our movement, it is not a stretch to conclude it has more to do with the desire for power and control by one group over the other to implement its version of “what is best and right” for everyone else. By themselves, the leaders of each group appear incapable of coming together in a spirit of discovering new options and solutions, other than their own original alternatives. This is bad enough, but another thorny reality to deal with is how True Family theology impedes any progress toward ending the conflict.

In 1993, as part of a worldwide speaking tour, Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon travelled to 44 countries and delivered the speech, [“True Parents and the Completed Testament Age.”](#) Here’s an excerpt referring to Divine Principle teaching on the True Family:

“Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great privilege to announce to you the establishment of the first True Family. My husband and I, together with our 13 children and 20 grandchildren are absolutely dedicated to serving God and humanity. With three generations in one family, we have achieved, on the family level, the central root, the central trunk, and the central bud of the “Tree of Life” mentioned in the Bible. It is our sincere hope that you will symbolically graft into this lineage by joining us in our efforts to create an ideal nation and world. This marks the beginning of the Completed Testament Age.”

Hyun Jin Moon and Hyung Jin Moon claim (for different reasons) Family Federation members must submit to their authority because of their blood ties to True Parents. This view is connected to the idea conveyed in Mrs. Moon’s speech, whereby she likens the physical children of True Parents to “the central

trunk” of the Tree of Life mentioned in the Bible. Both sons give specific reasons for creating organizations not affiliated with Family Federation, and level serious charges against Family Federation leaders.

In the midst of the conflict, Family Federation members are encouraged to “stay the course” and remain faithful to carry out Mother Moon’s instructions in fulfilling “tribal messiahship.” The general membership has no idea if any of the charges by the two brothers have merit, or if the three groups are communicating in an effort to resolve their differences.

Acknowledging the three groups haven’t been able to come up with a solution to the conflict is important in considering how to end it. Armed with this awareness, we can constructively start mapping out a plan of action to end the division. The first step is to address the need to reinterpret True Family theology.

Rather than implying True Parent’s sons (and daughters) have the final say on movement issues that transcend “the family level” which Mother Moon referenced, we can say the following: “Reverend and Mrs. Moon emerged in the latter half of the 20th century to reveal how God’s love is most profoundly experienced through familial relationships of husband and wife and parents and children.”

Using this approach removes the special inferred status laid claim to by Hyun Jin and Hyung Jin Moon, and allows everyone to consider movement-wide issues on more equal footing. This reformulation of True Family theology makes it possible for the two sons and Family Federation members to “sit down at the table” and enter into authentic dialogue. That’s step number one.

The next task is to articulate a strategy to “move beyond position-taking to problem-solving.” In other words, coming together because of our differences, not despite them, and seeking solutions as a unified body to solve real problems in society.

Aakif Ahmad, co-founder and CEO of the [Convergence Center for Policy Resolution](#), believes in better ways to bring about change than each of us pushing our own agenda at the expense of “the other.” His organization follows four practices as an antidote to gridlock: 1) building on an agreed upon framework; 2) promoting trust and understanding; 3) ensuring diverse participation; and, 4) creating a safe space for dialogue. According to Ahmad, no one person or perspective has all the answers, and stronger and better solutions emerge when we cultivate more communication and cooperation among those who disagree. Organizations like [Mediators Foundation](#), [Bridge Alliance](#), and [American Public Square](#) bring together conflicting groups on a regular basis and effectively solve real societal problems “for the greater good” (as Unificationists often like to happily proclaim).

It is clear people with opposing views and perspectives can join together and accomplish something greater than their own individual solutions — for the greater good. Shifting from hyper-partisan position-taking stances to a solutions-based attitude is a key to “coming together in a spirit of unity.” As long as the parties involved try to resolve the conflict with a win/lose, right vs. wrong, us vs. them mentality, the separations will continue to play out with little chance of reaching a positive outcome.

It is imperative we allow individuals the freedom to be different, to advocate for one’s own special cause with passion, and to take firm stands with fierce commitment and resolve. Such is the heart of the democratic process. But, if position-taking and loyalty to one’s vision means holding fast to a pro or con stance with no chance of any change, such noble qualities can lead to exaggerated distortions, such as: always arguing to prove “we are right;” demanding power and control because “we know what is best for everyone;” insisting on “just listen to me and you’ll have to agree with my position,” and “we are on the right side so just come join the winning team.”

Anticipating representatives of the three groups to act as impartial judges in the conflict is like expecting referees in the Super Bowl who own stock in one of the competing teams to be neutral observers! Future efforts to bring representatives of the three groups together for productive dialogue (not debate!), must include highly skilled “impartial referees” to ensure agreed-upon rules for dialogue and civility are followed by all parties at the table. Dialogue among disparate groups must be led through the heart, first, and not just with our heads.

Are the differences between the Family Federation, Family Peace Association and Sanctuary Church impossible to resolve? Are we being told “the rest of the story” about what is at the heart of the conflict? Seasoned Unificationists, tempered by decades of spiritual training and practice, know only too well individuals who make decisions acting alone for themselves, or collectively as institutions, are likely affected by personal motives, greed, politics, sheer jealousy, and a desire for power. To deny this reality is tantamount to denying our human condition. That is why “We the People” do not accept the limiting stories we’ve been told thus far about the conflict:

**Narrative 1:** Family Federation leaders and affiliated organizations are always on God’s side, so members must pledge undying loyalty to Mother Moon and not get involved in the conflict, because there is nothing blessed families or tribal messiahs can directly contribute to bring about a different outcome.

**Narrative 2:** The two brothers tried for several years to educate Mother Moon about what they allege was rampant and willful corruption of some Family Federation leaders and affiliated organizations, but their efforts fell on deaf ears. It is now incumbent on all Family Federation members to come under the authority of either Hyun Jin or Hyung Jin Moon, because only their solutions can divert us from inevitable ruin and fiery judgment by God.

With respect for aspects of these two perspectives, I strongly disagree. Neither of these narratives will bring our divided family back together. Instead, these two narratives will only continue to weaken and divide our worldwide family, by insisting we take sides and pitting individuals, families, and faith communities against one another. Fortunately, “We the People” have the power to create a third alternative narrative to the conflict.

Building trust and making intimate connections before taking on key issues is important. If anything, this conflict demonstrates the need to heal broken relationships and strengthen bonds of love. As long as individuals try to get their way via name calling, demonizing, telling half-truths, blaming, acting like the victim, or taking the moral high ground, it’s not possible to come together “in a spirit of unity.”

Until we are able to see past the incomplete and inaccurate stories we tell ourselves about “the other,” we can’t fully embrace those with differing views and ideas. Focusing on healing broken relationships and strengthening bonds of love between one another is the best strategy to take going forward. This approach pulls the magic carpet out from underneath those who claim the conflict is all about ideology, theology, worldviews, corrupted individuals and organizations, recalcitrant sons and daughters, failed leaders, etc.



Here is the third, alternative narrative to the limiting, hyper-partisan position-taking narratives thus far thrust upon us:

**Narrative 3:** Healing broken relationships: We need to recast the separations between Family Federation, Family Peace Association and Sanctuary Church as first and foremost a struggle to heal broken relationships and strengthen bonds of love between family members. It is here the most important work needs to be undertaken to bring our divided family back together, and we are all involved, not just the leaders of the three groups.

[Hilde Wiemann](#), founder of Hilltop Retreat and Generational Healing, a certified Family and

Relationship Coach, encourages parents and children to come together to safely uncover their pent up wounds and emotions. By doing so, according to Hilde, they can experience a wonderful bonding and reattachment, learn new family life skills for communication and loving support, and totally transform their family lifestyle. In the current conflict among the three groups, it is easy to see the need for such work to be encouraged and embraced. Furthermore, all blessed families and tribal messiahs can embrace such work to ensure our families and local faith communities are healthy and strong.

It’s time to let representatives in the three groups know “We the People,” schooled through decades of spiritual warfare and practice with True Parents, “will not be fooled again.” We can no longer settle for half-truths and incomplete stories, driven by decades of unresolved emotional pain and anger between parents, children, brothers and sisters, and co-workers. We know in our own hearts we need one another and we love one another.

It’s time for members of the Family Federation to acknowledge any merits to the charges leveled by the two brothers, and let its volunteer base know everything possible will be done to make sure the highest levels of integrity and honor will be embedded in its institutional practices (and what’s wrong with that?). It is time for the two brothers to accept the reformulation of True Family theology as suggested here, and to begin the important work of learning how to mend broken relationships and strengthen bonds of love in their tribe.

I see what I call “a new breed of Unification leader” emerging in America and other parts of the world. They are largely in their thirties and forties, and for the most part are far removed from the heavy baggage associated with the “wilderness period” of the first generation of Unification adherents. Some are highly skilled in the area of ministry and conflict resolution. We need more of them to emerge. I believe they are

the ones who can effectively act as impartial referees in this conflict. Seasoned Unificationists who are interested to do so can work as advisors and mentors to prepare this new breed of leaders to help our movement transition into its next level of spiritual practice and lifestyle.

We will do well to not expect quick fixes and to avoid knee jerk, simplistic black and white thinking when considering “what must be done” to move forward in a healthy and productive way. It took a long time to get us to where we are today. It will take time to manifest a different reality than what we are facing today.

Reformulation of True Family theology, shifting from position-taking to a solutions-based mindset, cultivating an alternative narrative to the conflict, and healing broken relations is the formula to apply in bringing our divided family back together again — for the greater good. The seeds are there to be cultivated. Let’s help water the seeds with our wisdom and discernment, so strong, healthy, and beautiful minds and hearts can lead us forward as we continue working together to “build the kingdom.”

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