

Filial Piety and Resemblance: Challenges from Historical and Contemporary View

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To be able to breathe the same air as True Parents on earth is something that seems so normal we sometimes forget how precious it actually is and how privileged we are.

Even though we have the truth, we are still ignorant about True Parents and their course. There are historical examples of how filial piety and resemblance was practiced 2,000 years ago and recited in thousands if not millions of churches every day.

What can we learn from historical examples? In the sometimes dramatic encounters mentioned in the gospels, the disciples of Jesus often do not look very noteworthy in their behavior towards the Lord.

Here, I discuss three challenges to filial piety and resemblance: 1) Ideal and reality; 2) From neglecting to negotiating and arranging with this world; and, 3) The theological confusion surrounding Romans 8:30.



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Ideal and Reality

The period of history after Jesus' passing cannot be understood as one harmonious body of Christ. Numerous different Christian groups, plus the Jewish claim of exclusive choice (Christianity was seen as the true Jewish faith by followers in the beginning), formed a religion causing disagreement among believers, as well as nonbelievers, from the very outset. It used to be common practice for different faith groups to live side-by-side, but with the advent of Christianity, a whirlwind of orthodoxy and intolerance arose that had never been witnessed before.

An experience with the Holy Spirit, caused by a scriptural context attributed to Jesus' own words, could cause a major misinterpretation of the source — and therefore there were sometimes enduring struggles among competing missionaries.

What they all had in common was they believed they were “right.” Jesus' claim “I am the Truth...” was transformed into “I am right” by each of those “super-apostles,” as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 11.

In spite of having True Parents with us, in the latter part of the 20th century, attendance was at its ebb and filial piety became difficult and challenging. Even a powerful truth could become a dry sponge if it was not drained with the sweat of labor and the dew of harvest. The fire of the first days was off, the cold war at its end and the initial witnessing enthusiasm in the former communist countries had faded or met opposition and splinter groups started to emerge from within. Dark forces set in like a storm turning day into night. Some held up the Divine Principle and their own supposedly exemplary families and criticized the family of True Parents. It must have been like a crucifixion for Father and Mother Moon.

How on earth is it possible that someone who never took on Satan head-to-head can substantialize the ideal of the Second Blessing as our True Parents do, much less hold it against them?

In this environment the Chung Pyung providence started to unfold. Perhaps the Unification Movement would have come under severe pressure without liberation from Satan by the Great Works. The messianic mission that started with Jesus liberating and casting evil spirits to swine found its continuation and systematic further development by Grandmother Hong and Heung Jin Nim.

For early Christians, the luxury of such an opportunity (attending True Parents and receiving liberation) was seldom an option. Instead some of them were searching for creative ways of martyrdom to resemble their Lord, based on a vague concept that turned into a major belief, the promise of entering paradise as a reward.

At the beginning of the third century, Perpetua, a 22-year-old Christian noblewoman from Carthage, was pulled up the stairs of a Roman court. She was told to make an offering to the Roman gods, which she refused to do. Her father came running in with her baby, who was only a few days old, pleading with her to make the demanded offering. The governor encouraged her saying: “Care about the grey hair of your father and the tender age of your child.” She refused even when they started whipping her father. Leaving her father and child behind, she chose to die.

A more mature scope of resemblance however would be reflected by a person conveying the essence of

Jesus to his contemporaries. The subsequent anguish over their ignorance would resemble Jesus' heart on a more profound level. Early Christians were naïve seekers of resemblance to the crucified Lord, many times without understanding the underlying heart. Instead they held in highest esteem those who could forcefully go the way of martyrdom. Filial piety requires wisdom if only to avoid unnecessary concern by the Messiah, because such attempts could find its way to the lower realms instead of paradise.

Today, is it possible to experience the deep heart of anguish and sorrow of our Heavenly Parent and True Parents without corresponding experiences of hardship? The *CSG* contains a number of references of True Father on that subject (*CSG* pages 1149-22; 1150-27; 1294-19; 1321-9; 1322-16).

Neither Jesus Christ nor True Parents want their children to die. With my own eyes I witnessed True Father trembling in tears in the jungle of South America while listening to the widow of Masaki Sasamoto, a martyr missionary.



St. Perpetua comforting her father, 1857," by Antonio Ridolfi (1824-1900)

From Neglecting to Negotiating and Arranging With this World

The Roman Emperor Decius not only asked for offerings, but also wanted receipts to prove that the offering had been made. For Christians in the third century this was a real challenge, because it was interpreted as serving the wrong Lord. There were three groups who dealt with it in different ways. One group (a minority) took the way of martyrdom, like Perpetua; the second group escaped; and the third group obtained a receipt without actually making any offering by, for example, sending a slave instead. Martyrs occupied the highest prestige in Christian society at that time. In the end, church leaders put an end to this and "Romans 13" was applied and it became acceptable to serve two Lords. However, Christians were unable to categorize and harmonize the ethics of Jesus' teaching and they allowed emperors to hijack the cross and use it for their own glory and justification.

The early days in our Unification movement were characterized by a more or less strict abstinence from routines and rituals of this world as well, and each church center had its

own approach to this, but generally the daily bread consisted of DP life, which largely manifested in witnessing and fundraising. As such, there is a resemblance to early Christianity that separated from the Roman way of life. It was in these times that a majority of members joined. The Holy Spirit let our faces glow. In the course of subsequent decades, members formed varying depths of relationship with Father and Mother Moon. I would argue that every person who experiences and endures severe hardship while forming a 90° angle with True Parents is under their direct love and care.

As more and more single missionaries started family life, a gradual alignment with education, employment and partial secular life set in, unexplored in history. How to keep the balance between secular life, the DP and attendance of True Parents? This is a constant question that challenges our filial piety towards True Parents when we were or are asked to do Heaven's work, e.g., in South America, our ancestors' liberation and daily outreach in securing 430 couples Blessing.

The Theological Confusion Surrounding Romans 8:30

Faith in True Parents sometimes was an intellectual challenge that affected our attitude, as in this example:

What does it mean when True Father and True Mother declare that they are God's only begotten children? How does this fit into the interpretation of the Divine Principle regarding predestination, since "begotten" gives the notion from birth onward?

This biblical verse comes to mind: "And those He predestined He also called; those He called He also justified; those He justified He also glorified." (Rom. 8:30)

As pointed out on page 160 of *DP*, it is God that has a strong belief in us, knowing the potential of a chosen person. Thus, upon fulfilling one's portion of responsibility, one becomes the incarnation of Roman 8:30. Therefore, the declaration that True Parents made was after they had fulfilled their portion of responsibility.

Like all other human beings born in this era, we are predestined by God to attend and serve True Parents. We are privileged beyond compare, because we were capable enough to recognize them to the extent that we offered our lives to them from the tender age of our youth until today. We allowed them to pick our spouse and we set off to places far from our home to settle and preach the gospels and testify about True Parents. They became our constant host in our homes whom we attend daily in front of our altars.

A very interesting example of Roman 8:30 is the testimony of Gerhard Peemöller. In his book *Bodyguard for Christ*, he tells about a vision when he was about to join the Unification Church: He saw a then popular (alcoholic) advertisement called “Leibwächter” which means “Bodyguard.” Added symbolism in this revelation made it clear to him (in retrospect) that he was to become the bodyguard of Christ.

Visions, dreams, a smile of True Parents and a picture with them may be like a cup of water in a long race, but we cannot rely on such things alone. This is Jesus painful experience after performing miracles.

As Father and Mother Moon mention, our life is a marathon; at times we lead, at others we may hang on, however what is important is to not give up. We have to make sure to reach the finish line as we enter the final stretch. As such we also fulfil the predestination of Roman 8:30.

We saw those respectful Korean women, who, in their old age, surrounded True Father for many years in countless gatherings. They refused to marry any other person but True Father, until he matched them with saints in the spirit world. It is my understanding that they had similar revelations concerning their future as that of a begotten child. I witnessed how much True Mother cared for them in an encounter in Hawaii back in 2007.

My interpretation is that God does not just put all His eggs in one basket, but starts a competition to find out who qualifies best. In this regard, True Mother is not just God’s only begotten daughter, but Number One, winning the gold medal among all the prepared and chosen women in history.

What then was this needle True Mother was searching for in the desert? It was to find True Parents’ begotten children after she was abandoned following True Father’s ascension.

Mother Moon recalls that nobody believed her when she started working with Senegal. There is little membership in this country; still True Mother foresaw a providential development in Africa that ultimately secured the firm establishment of CIG. As a senior missionary to Africa explained to me, True Mother chose Senegal to be the center of action at this time.

Conclusion

History can teach us a lot of lessons and be helpful to avoid repeating historical mistakes. Perhaps one major purpose of the diverse chapters on history in DP is to teach us how to do things better today.

Mother Moon tells us that 7.8 million people of this planet are her children, and she also shows great concern for nature, for the earth. Environmental protection and a sustainable lifestyle was until recently not on many people’s agenda even in our movement. We can learn today that we should not separate ourselves from this world, as the early Christians did, but actively work to change it. Opinion makers of heaven are most needed in media, culture, politics, science, and sports to facilitate moral and ethics that fundamentally can change society.

Finally, Heaven’s fate depends totally upon the fulfillment of human responsibility. The new heaven and new earth will not come about by declaration from above, but by fulfillment from below. Even though Father Moon told us that our responsibility is actually only 0.01%, still we need to do it wholeheartedly with sincerity and utmost effort.

Mother Moon is capable of very dramatic and endearing poetry. She describes her life before the Holy Marriage as the life of a flower in a greenhouse — and afterwards as being pulled out and thrown into the desert. She and her husband work side-by-side today and overcame obstacles of which we are not even aware, but now after all these painful years, Mother Moon is in her final steps, and we, her children, would like to see her enjoy many more days on earth after terraforming this planet according to the design of *Cheon Il Guk*. As such the air we will inhale is the air of heaven and we will be able to breathe the same “air” as True Parents do in the hereafter.

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