

## Theological Foundations of Cheon Il Guk

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I recently chanced to read *Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. It was written in 1678 while Bunyan was in jail for preaching as a Dissenting Minister. Bunyan himself, born in 1628 had lived through the rise of Puritanism, the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell and the Republic (1648-1660) and the Restoration of the Monarchy – with which also came the re-emergence of the Anglican Church as a powerful political and social force. The Dissenters believed vehemently in the separation of the church and state. Many emigrated to America. *Pilgrim's Progress* was an allegorical story of a Christian man's solitary journey on the way to the Celestial Kingdom.

The basic message is clear. To truly find God's Kingdom, one has to be a pilgrim on a spiritual journey willing to deny oneself completely. The sub-text is that both one's fallen nature – personified by the people Christian meets along the way – and organized religion itself are obstacles along that path.

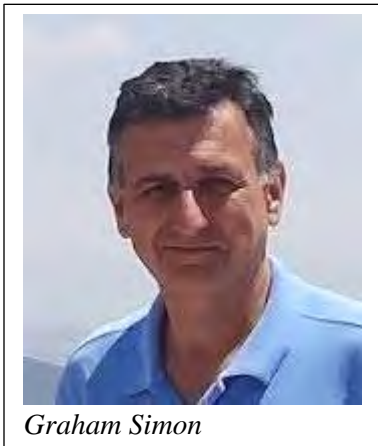
There are some very interesting parallels here with the situation in which we in (or out of) the Unification Church find ourselves today.

### One Theology – Two Conflicting Visions

Fundamentally, there appear to be two conflicting visions of the Kingdom within our movement. Both can credibly trace their roots back to the Divine Principle and True Father's teaching.

#### Democratic / Pluralistic:

One vision is distinctly democratic and pluralistic. It can be seen as a logical extension of Principles of Creation and three stages of growth. God's plan for mankind is that each of us grows to maturity to live in God's direct dominion and on that foundation we take a spouse. Together, husband and wife united in love come before God and become a channel through which God's love can pour into the world. Children of such a couple grow up basking in the love of God experienced through the heart of their parents who they see as perfect.



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In this vision perfected families are clearly the owner's of CIG. God's will is harmoniously manifested through billions of points of light. As God-centered beings, we see ourselves ultimately as citizens of the universe with a desire to manifest love towards our fellow man. Conflict will only arise when the objectives of individuals, families, societies or nations

bump up against the objectives of a higher expression of love. Because everyone is singing from the same song sheet, such conflict can be quickly resolved, because the higher objectives either trump or accommodate the lower ones.

The mechanisms by which such a world organizes itself remain hazy. But that is the way it should be. It would be a little presumptuous for imperfect people, living in an imperfect world, to tell future generations who will, by definition, be wiser and more spiritually developed how they should manage their social, political and economic

relations.

#### Monarchic / Oligarchic:

The other vision is monarchic or oligarchic with power being concentrated within a dynastic figure, who acts with divine authority, supported by a small group of leaders. These leaders sit atop a hierarchical structure through which power is dispensed. In essence the relationship between leaders and followers is a feudal one and patronage may play a significant role.

Proponents of this vision can also draw upon the Divine Principle, augmented by True Father's latter-day teachings. They point to the mission of the messiah, his ability alone to absolve mankind of original sin, his role as the Third Adam and the creation of a whole new lineage into which all mankind must be grafted. The logical extension of this is that though couples can come into direct relationship with God, it is the True Parents, even when ascended into the spirit world, who will continue to occupy a central governing role in the movement. This line of thinking has been bolstered by the elevation through proclamation of Reverend and Mrs. Moon to the positions of the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and All Mankind and the King and Queen of the Cosmos.

Successive leaders will come to occupy positions of authority as result of direct appointment by the King or Queen or as part of a leadership structure endorsed by them, prior to their ascension. There is precedence for such an arrangement in other religions –notably the Catholic Church and the Pope and the Mormon Church with its President and Twelve Apostles. Both leaders are seen as agents through whom God reveals his guidance for the Church. In the case of the Unification Church, it will be the True Parents, the visible face of the Heavenly Parent, who will be doing the guiding.

### Reconciling the two visions

Can these two very different visions be reconciled?

Yes, but only by identifying the first vision as an idealized state – Cheon Il Guk or the Kingdom of God on Earth – still decades or centuries away, and the second vision as the emerging organizational and leadership structure of the Unification Church.

Once we do that, the debate becomes much more manageable and the key question then becomes the role, if any, to be played by the Unification Church in ushering in Cheon Il Guk.

### **The role of lineage in building a new religion**

Whether or not the Unification Church can be the central vehicle through which the Heavenly Parent will establish his/her kingdom on earth hinges on the fundamental theological question what it actually means to be grafted into the lineage of the third Adam.

Are we talking about a physical lineage or a spiritual lineage? If it is physical, then clearly the True Family has an inside track. For generations to come, people will keep a record of their ancestry, identifying touch points with the True Family. Those who can claim more direct descent could emerge as a new aristocracy within a hierarchical religious movement. If it is a spiritual lineage, then how and at what point does this engrafting take place? Is it through the holy wine ceremony and blessing? What are the pre-requisites? What is the process for assessing eligibility? Clearly, the Unification Church leadership is highly motivated to establish its exclusive authority to answer such questions, because by doing so it can control what constitutes membership of the Church, the dispensation of its central sacrament, the Blessing, and also the financial assets. But how far can such leaders advance God's Providence?

Today, the likelihood of the Unification Church becoming the dominant world religion appears most implausible. Effectively this would require the exponential growth of a new religion that would displace all other religions. That's a big ask at a time when conflicts between major religions are escalating around the world and there is a growing anti-religious sentiment that sees them, with their dogma and orthodoxy, as the problem rather than the solution. A more probable outcome is that the Unification Church will end up as a small peripheral religion with some unusual beliefs and practices, regarded by the rest of the world with the same benign indifference as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian

### **Scientists or Seven Day Adventists**

That is not to say that such notions as "One Family under God", the nuclear family as the school of love and the basic building block of a healthy society, and many of the core teachings of the Divine Principle will not eventually become the bedrock of a future world order. But if they do, the main impetus through which these ideals will become enshrined in society is unlikely to be a new religion, but rather as a result of general shifts in consciousness and perceived wisdom – in much the same way that new scientific truths over time achieve widespread global acceptance.

Such predictions though are speculative, at best. With the passage of time, who knows what may happen? Just as the ministry of Saint Paul changed the course of Christianity, the emergence of a modern-day equivalent could change the future of Unificationism dramatically.

### **Conclusion**

For us as individuals and families living today, this is crunch time. We all acknowledge that we are imperfect beings, not yet living in the direct dominion. We know where we want to go, but not how to get there.

So, are we more likely to reach our desired destination within the confines of an organization led by other imperfect beings, or are we better to travel, like Christian in Pilgrims' Progress, as pilgrims, pilgrim couples or even pilgrim families, on our own separate path in search of the kingdom?

As the old aphorism goes: "You pay your money and take your choice".

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