

Thirteenth Annual Forum of UTS Alumni and Friends in the UK

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UNIFICATIONISM AT A TIME OF DISCORD – THE EVER CHANGING NARRATIVE

There is much talk nowadays about schisms within the Unification movement. Yet is the movement significantly well established as an integrated organisation that we can even consider ourselves undergoing a schism just three years after the founders' passing? Or could we merely be suffering from delusions of grandeur?

When most of us joined the movement in the 1970s and 1980s, we were not interested in building a religion. Some of us were even distinctly anti-religious. What attracted people to the movement was the belief that the Divine Principle could genuinely lead to spiritual transformation within individuals, families and societies.

Only since the early nineties, did Reverend Moon start to focus on formalising and institutionalising his legacy. Prior to then, the movement had lurched from one campaign to the next with a long-term vision to create "the kingdom of heaven on earth", a medium term vision to overthrow communism and establish the superior ideology of Godism, and an ever-present focus on bringing money and people. Over the next two decades however, against the backdrop of the "Cheon Pyeong Providence", there followed a series of initiatives, none of which can be called a resounding success:

- Jardim – an attempt to build a physical nation of God in the middle of the South American jungle.
- The island nation initiative – similarly an attempt to find even the smallest of territories that could be persuaded to accept the spiritual sovereignty of the True Parents to become God's first nation.
- The street "Blessings" and mass re-dedication ceremonies in the late nineties where people were randomly stopped and encouraged to sip holy wine.
- The proposed triumvirate of Hyun Jin, Kook Jin and Hyung Jin to guide the political, financial and spiritual future of the movement.
- The Coronation of God on Capitol Hill
- The formulation of the ODP, which attempted to lay the groundwork for a shift in doctrine and further glorification of the True Parents and the True Family.
- The assigning of members to one of the twelve tribes headed by a member of the True Family.
- The shift in emphasis, away from building a personal relationship with God through prayer, service and indemnity conditions, towards the establishment of a core tradition of HDH and the repeated reading of the words of the Founder, arranged thematically in the Cheong Seong Gyeong (now into its second incarnation).
- The proclamation of the God of Day and God of Night.
- The run up to Foundation Day and the establishment of *Chong Il Guk*.

While in the seventies and eighties the True Parents had been a standard to which all mankind should strive, somewhat analogous to Jesus's exhortation to people "Be thou perfect, even as your

Father in Heaven is perfect”, by 2010 they had become the physical manifestation of God from now through eternity. Moreover, as head of the so-called True Family, the True Parents became the founders of a new dynasty, whose descendants are to lead the movement after they themselves have departed for the spirit world.

In much the same way that Saint Paul and later followers put Christ on a pedestal and elevated him to a God-like position as the centre of a then new faith called Christianity, there has been an attempt to put the True Parents on a pedestal and elevate them beyond the realm of humanity as the centre of a new religion. Conveniently, the original teaching within the Divine Principle that identified the deification of Christ as the key failure of Christianity is no longer dwelt upon.

Although some with creative imaginations may see a certain continuity among the events that have taken place over the past twenty-five years, it is necessary to step back and take a dispassionate and objective look at ourselves.

Fundamentally, there was a patent failure to achieve the two original goals of the movement. But rather than acknowledge these failures, the narrative continually changed to focus the attention of members on the future rather than the present or past.

The first unrealised goal is the creation of an ideal family. Quoting the words of Reverend Moon:

“Throughout history up to the present day, individuals have modelled themselves on other individuals. Societies change, modelling themselves on more developed societies. Many people in many nations have tried to do this. However, there has not been a family that people have tried to emulate. In the history of the world, there has been no such family to this day. Nor has there been a teaching that guides people to emulate a certain family.... Then what is the problem that still remains? It is not that we need an individual or a nation to worship, but that we need a family that everyone can revere. It is only that kind of family that can found a new world and bring eternal happiness to the universe.”

New CSG – Book 2, Chapter 2, Section 4, Paragraph 7. (1970 3.17)

Sadly, the disharmony within the movement today was preceded by disharmony within the True Family, between the children and their parents, among the children, and if Hyung Jin is to be believed, between the mother and father themselves.

The second unrealised goal is the creation of a single nation under God.

“Once we recover the nation that God is seeking, the restoration of the world will take place rapidly.”

New CSG – Book 10, Chapter 3, Section 4, Paragraph 22 (1972 5.18)

“Ours is the new Juche thought. It provides clear direction to individuals, societies, nations and the world, preventing them from going to ruin. It safeguards those whose views are in accord with the providence but are not centred on God. There is only one correct formula: the principle of living for the sake of others. Remember this truth. It is the principle that was present at the beginning, when God created the world, and will remain to the end.”

New CSG – Book 10, Chapter 3, Section 4, Paragraph 40 (1975 4.30)

“As Unification Church members, we should be willing to sacrifice for Korea as if we were one of its clans. If we sacrifice for Korea we will change this nation...It will become a unified nation, a nation with an ideal so high that even the people of North Korea will wholeheartedly welcome it. We must build such a nation guiding north Koreans to practice virtue and show reverence for God. If we succeed in this task, the peninsula naturally will come together as one nation.”

New CSG – Book 10, Chapter 3, Section 4, Paragraph 6 (1990 12.3)

It was clear that Reverend Moon expected the first restored nation to be Korea itself. His meeting with Kim Il Sung in the early nineties was to have been a watershed. It was to have been the meeting of Jacob and Esau on the worldwide level. Jacob would offer to Esau his worldwide foundation and their embrace would have heralded the reunification of the North and South. The passing of Kim Il Sung in July 1994 summarily brought such ambitions to an end.

So what is the future?

The Principles of Restoration tell us that when mistakes are made we need to go back to the point where things went wrong and start again. This sentiment is clearly driving some members to towards the Sanctuary Church. Many, I suspect, harbour a secret hope that a new model family will emerge, and that the founders of this family will be the charismatic Hyung-jin and Yeon-An.

Personally, I would go further back and question the fundamental assertion that we need *“a family that we can revere.”* Do we actually need a family to revere? Or could it be that what we really need are individuals and families all over the world that embody God’s love and realise the first and second blessings? If that is to happen, our focus should not be on building one or more new religions around contentious theologies that idolise an individual, a couple or a family, but to become mature sons and daughters of God and channels of true love in our own right.

To do so will require a measure of honesty, until now lacking in our movement. Just as we tried to encourage Christians to take down the cross several years ago, we now need to dismantle our own crosses and take the True Parents and True Family off their pedestals and bring them back to earth.

If we do, Reverend Moon can in time be recognised as an extraordinary historical figure who brought an amazing understanding to the world, changed the lives of many people, and strived unwaveringly throughout his lifetime to realise the loftiest of goals. But it should also be acknowledged that, to date, the achievement of these goals remains unfulfilled. Mrs Moon will be recognised as a woman of enormous inner strength who supported her husband in his quest and, in the process, endured much pain and suffering. Their children will be recognised as offspring who grew up in a difficult family environment, with a larger-than-life father whose ideals and accomplishments placed a huge weight on their shoulders.

Normalising the True Parents and True Family will indeed be a radical step for most of our members – heresy to many. But perhaps it is worth remembering that the word heresy derives from the Greek *hairesis*, the act of choosing. The choice we are faced with today is a stark one. Do we continue to watch the movement to which we dedicated so much of our lives consume itself in internecine struggles and become an irrelevant footnote to history, or do we dispense with mythology and religion-building and focus on living our own lives in accordance with the ideals to which we all aspire?

In the process of choosing, we may need to seriously review parts of our core teaching, particularly our understanding of original sin, the role of the messiah and the nature of the blessing. This is tough medicine, but perhaps the only way to restore the Unification movement to health, preserve the legacy of Reverend and Mrs Moon and ensure that the essence of the Divine Principle is absorbed as quickly as possible into the mainstream of human thinking.

Graham Simon -- 27th May 2016