FFWPU UK: This Week In Our History: The Passing Of Lady Margaret Thatcher

Michael Balcomb
April 5, 2022

his Week In Our History we recognise the passing of Lady Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister Of The U.K., who was a friend of the Unification Movement.

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Lady Thatcher's legacy is instructive for the Unification movement as it seeks to implement Rev. Moon's vision of an emerging era of women.

She demonstrated that commitment to family life was not incompatible with public service and elective office, even at the highest levels.

At the same time, she showed that aspiring women leaders need not resort to victim scripts and sniping over sexist slights in order to be heard.

By exploding gender stereotypes, she demonstrated that effective leadership is, in fact, gender-blind. In all of this, Margaret Thatcher embodied a viable model of Unification feminism.

For more information on the history of our movement, please visit: familyfedcommunity.co,uk/history/

And for more on Lady Margaret Thatcher, please visit: appliedunificationism,com/2013/05/01/margaret-thatcher-unification-feminist/

Margaret Thatcher: Unification Feminist

By Michael Mickler, Professor of Church History, UTS

Former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013) was a friend of the Unification movement. In 2007, on the 25th anniversary of *The Washington Times*, she sent a warm video tribute. The following year she accepted the Universal Peace Federation's

Leadership and Good Governance Award, and in 2010, on the occasion of Rev. Moon's 90th birthday, she sent a hand-written greeting expressing her hope that it would be a "splendid occasion." Her appreciation stemmed from a common interest in combating global communism and promoting the values of "family, faith, and freedom." She likely was unaware of Rev. Moon's pronouncements regarding an emerging era of women. Nonetheless, her career as a national and world leader provides a model that resonates with Unification values.

Thatcher's passing on April 8 evoked wildly divisive estimations of her contributions to British and world society, including the advancement of women. In "Margaret Thatcher was No Feminist," Hadley Freeman wrote in the *Guardian*, "Far from 'smashing the glass ceiling', she was the aberration, the one who got through and then pulled the ladder up right after her." She described Thatcher as "one of the clearest examples of the fact that a successful woman doesn't always mean a step forward for women," noting that in her lengthy term as prime minister, she promoted only one female to her cabinet. Others disagreed. Lionel Shriver, writing for *Slate*, termed Thatcher "a real feminist. Not for what she said but for what she did … If we had more feminists like Thatcher, we'd have vastly more women in Parliament and the U.S. Senate." Bruce Thornton, a fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution, agreed. "In any morally coherent and intellectually honest world," he argued, "Thatcher would be a major feminist hero."

Thatcher expressed several of her core convictions in a 1982 speech on "Women in a Changing World." In the speech, she expressed disappointment that "more than half a century after all women got the vote, there are only twenty-one women Members of Parliament out of a house of 635 Members." She said it is "just" that women have full participation in politics and important that public life "be shaped and influenced by the special talents and experiences of women." So far, so good. The rub came when Thatcher claimed these "special talents and experiences" derived from home life, specifically bearing children and running a household. Many of the early suffragettes, she contended, were "very womanly," with a "background of full and happy domestic lives." They were "warm as well as immensely capable" and brought "enriched lives" to

public service. In particular, the “many practical skills and management qualities needed to make a home” gave women “an ability to deal with a variety of problems and to do so quickly.” It was this “versatility and decisiveness” that she regarded as being “so valuable in public life.”

Her sentiments, of course, were tinged with more than a little traditional, even Victorian, values and biases. However, there was an important difference. Victorian traditionalists conceded women’s gifts in the domestic sphere but failed to see that they were temperamentally suited or had much of a role outside of its bounds, especially in the rough-and-tumble world of politics. This was a position Thatcher emphatically rejected, arguing as she did that household management afforded a distinctive skill set for public service. As she put it, “the home should be the centre but not the boundary of a woman’s life.” In this respect, Thatcher identified with what is commonly termed “first wave” or “equity” feminism which focused on legal inequalities, most notably obtaining the vote. According to her, “the battle for women’s rights has been largely won.”

As a consequence, Thatcher drew a hard line between first and second wave feminism, often referred to as “women’s liberation,” which emerged during the early 1960s. She said, “I owe nothing to women’s lib” and described it as “fashionable rot” and “poison.” She associated it with lessened regard for the family and an exaggerated emphasis on “individual rights.” She also insisted that women be promoted on the basis of merit, not sisterhood. She did not utilize the terminology of sexism but clearly considered second wave feminism to be sexist. If it was wrong to be held back by gender, it was equally wrong to be privileged by gender. Thatcher never claimed that women possessed innate capacities that entitled them to leadership. She did argue that women brought “special talents” to public service. However, these were not inborn but developed through life experience, particularly raising children and maintaining a household. She did not consider either of these roles to be sexist or oppressive but referred to “the inestimable privilege of being wives and mothers.”

Thatcher was not alone in criticizing second wave feminism. Bruce Thornton defined it as “a species of progressive identity politics predicated on perpetual victimhood as a means for

extorting more social and political clout."According to him, it has been "dead for decades" but continues "a zombie-like existence, stumbling around the universities, popular culture, and the media." In fact, a third wave dislodged second wave feminism during the 1990s. Post-modernist third wavers embraced diversity and challenged the second wave's assumption of a "universal female identity." Most of them regarded gender as an artificial construct. They rejected the male/female binary opposition and introduced elements of queer theory, womanism, cyberfeminism, ecofeminism, and transgender politics in upholding a fluid notion of gender.

Thatcher was far from being a third wave feminist. However, her philosophy and career resonated with aspects of all three feminist waves. She clearly identified with first wave feminism and likely saw her career as its fulfillment. As the first woman to become prime minister of Britain and the first to lead a major Western power in modern times, she held office for eleven years (1979-90), longer than any British politician in the twentieth century. More striking was the ease with which she exercised power. An ABC News correspondent tweeted, "Many of us grew up watching Margaret Thatcher on TV, thinking it was perfectly normal for a woman to lead a great power. It wasn't."

Thatcher hated the "strident tone" and politics of second wave feminism. Nevertheless, she resonated, at least partially, with its male/female binary opposition. Her personal style, as one commentator noted, was "unapologetically feminine." Her bouffant hairdo, tailored skirt suits, and "ubiquitous handbag" were "internationally iconic." She reportedly told a confidante that being elected to the International Best Dressed List in 1988 as a model of "of classic middle-of-the-road elegance" was "one of the greatest moments of my life." Apart from style, she occasionally drew managerial distinctions between women and men. On one occasion, she said, "I've got a woman's ability to stick to a job and get on with it when everyone else walks off and leaves it." Another time, she stated, "the cock may crow but it's the hen who lays the eggs."

Thatcher could not have been further away from third wave feminists' uninhibited deconstruction of traditional monogamy. However, as Lionel Shriver notes, she "consistently defied

gender stereotypes." These included views as to a woman's prerogative to change her mind, about being sentimental and soft, and about preferences for compromise, harmony, consensus-building and accommodation. In contrast to these stereotypical views, Thatcher was "rarely willing to concede a point and loath to compromise." In the face of early challenges, she famously announced, "The lady's not for turning." The Soviets nicknamed her the "Iron Lady," and she demonstrated steely, unsentimental resolve in the face of coal miner strikes. She termed herself a "conviction," not a "consensus" politician and advised, "You don't follow the crowd. You make up your own mind." She also "upended the traditional power structure of marriage." As Shriver put it, "Modest and retiring, Dennis Thatcher sat cheerfully in the backseat while his wife drove the car — and the country."

Lady Thatcher's legacy is instructive for the Unification movement as it seeks to implement Rev. Moon's vision of an emerging era of women. She demonstrated that commitment to family life was not incompatible with public service and elective office, even at the highest levels. At the same time, she showed that aspiring women leaders need not resort to victim scripts and sniping over sexist slights in order to be heard. By exploding gender stereotypes, she demonstrated that effective leadership is, in fact, gender-blind. In all of this, Margaret Thatcher embodied a viable model of Unification feminism.♦

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Peter Califano

May 4, 2013 at 1:13 pm

Good analysis of one the most important woman of the 20th century. She provided timely leadership to England in the face of an aggressive USSR, while that country was experiencing severe economic and culture decline. She was a remarkable woman and her story is an inspiration for men and woman alike. I liked the review and reinterpretation of the feminist viewpoint in light of Thatcher’s success. Very instructive.

1 Vote

Kevin Thompson

May 13, 2013 at 6:16 pm

“The cocks will crow but it’s the hen that lays the eggs”
“If you want something said get a man, if you want something done, get a woman”
Margaret Thatcher

Rate This Comment

Derek Dey

May 15, 2013 at 2:05 pm

She functioned on the world level but failed to understand the unresolved issues of restoration within her own country. If one takes Unificationism seriously the problems in Britain are related to Eves failure to return her sons to God – that one is in CSG. Therefore the son's are stll not restored and Eve (England) still hasn't come to terms with her failures. In this she does not embody a viable model of Unification feminism I'm afraid. Thatcher misunderstood her nation so internally it remains divided and faces a difficult future.

Rate This Comment

Kevin Thompson

May 15, 2013 at 2:42 pm

"To decide is to divide and the more decisive you are the more divisive you will be." Margaret Thatcher

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Jeff Scharfen

May 21, 2013 at 12:16 am

Nicely articulated.

Rate This Comment

Jon Quinn

May 22, 2013 at 12:02 am

Michael, you write, "Margaret Thatcher embodied a viable model of Unification feminism." Do you believe there are only two ideologies for marriage and family — Traditionalism and Feminism? I don't see a third way. The road of feminism leads to women in combat. The road of traditionalism that mankind has held for thousands of years until Father was born in 1920 leads to men putting women and children first on the Titanic. The ruling ideology of the Last Days is feminism.

Feminists are against what men did on the Titanic. Either men protect women or women protect men. I find Father to be politically incorrect and anti-feminist. Yes, there may be exceptions to the rule and perhaps Mrs. Thatcher fits into that but the rule is traditional family values, not the feminist family she had. So, I respectfully and completely disagree with you. She is not a good and principled role model for women.

In 1963 two women published their books — one for the traditional biblical family and the other for the Marxist feminist family. Helen Andelin's "Fascinating Womanhood" should be required reading for Unificationist sisters on how to be a godly woman. Even though Helen's book sold millions of copies, Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" became the leading text for the sexual revolution of the 60s that most people now be believe in and it seems, you do too. Am I right in saying you side with Friedan over Andelin's philosophy and lifestyle?

1 Vote

Denneze Nelson

June 6, 2013 at 9:15 pm

"Remarkable woman" – Yes
"Friend of the Unification Movement" – No
Just like Reagan, who could not pardon True Father [at the end of his presidency], she could not even open the doors for True Parents to visit England. She had to send a warm tribute to the Washington Times [on its 25th anniversary] – a political move in my view – because the Times wrote favorably of her almost all the time, helping to shape a worldview of her.

According to True Parents, women have to bring peace in the world together. Margaret Thatcher enjoyed the singular spotlight and ultimately left a legacy of someone many people have very mixed feelings about, such as admiration for her personal achievements and some of her moral beliefs, and devastation because of the many "divisive" polices and standards she established. Because of this, I would say she was a grateful recipient of the Unificationists support for her.

Rate This Comment

Peter Stephenson

June 28, 2013 at 7:15 am

Mrs. T was a great woman.

I recently hosted a discussion forum on Parliament's same-sex marriage legislation and of the 28 who attended only five were women. Of the eleven under-30's who attended only one was female.

There are seven times more female MP's in Parliament now than when Mrs. Thatcher lamented the number of her day but can we say that female leadership reflects that number?

Perhaps Mrs. Thatcher was a Unification feminist but can we say Unification females are Thatcher-like?

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