

Changing the Family Pledge - What's in a word?

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Words are powerful things and should be used wisely. They should speak *to* us, not impose themselves *on* us.

Recently our family pledge changed. Not in the very root and branch way it did when it went from ‘My Pledge’ to the ‘Family Pledge’. But the recent change has been much more to do with a new word for God.

So all of a sudden we hear people trying to pray in a new way. I say ‘trying’ because people don’t sound overly comfortable with the new terminology. “Oh, that’s just the way with new developments”, I hear some of you say.

I guess with ‘Aju’, it wasn’t, in terms of intonation, v far off from ‘Amen’. But, I wonder how much it helps us to pray with Korean words that we don’t instinctively understand the meaning of as English speakers, and that essentially separate us from conventional Christian pray. Is that one of our goals, to separate ourselves?

It seems to me that the actual difference of meaning between Aju and Amen is also superficial.

But now let’s look at this new terminology for God: **Heavenly Parent**. The odd think is I hear people now starting their prayer with heavenly parent and then once they have ‘done it’, complied with the memo, they slip back, as they continue to pray, to ‘heavenly father’. This is a bit ironic, because the superficial explanation that has been given about the new terminology is to do with us understanding how God represents in his essence the love of a mother and father.

But I thought we already understood that! We have been taught that through the Principle all along, and it is also deeply understood in our Judeo-Christian heritage too. It’s fully accounted for in our theology.

This whole phenomena of new terminology raises various issue.

Firstly there is the need to consider the limitation of translation. And so to be aware that every time we introduce a new word or bit of terminology, it is likely to suffer from the meaning being strangled out of it in translation.

I heard that the Korean for this new name for God more literally means something like **sky parent**. That sounds quite shamanistic.

Then there is the question of whether a conversation was had about how the decided translation works in the English language. Was an English person consulted? Or even an American?!

Somehow I doubt it. I wish I hadn't dropped English language as an undergraduate because it would mean I could explain more precisely why it doesn't work. But essentially it comes across as v impersonal. No one talks to their parents by saying, "good morning parent". It doesn't work....in English.

But probably the more important question is:

Do such matters need to be decided by papal decree as is the culture in our movement these days?

When a lot of new terminology appeared through the Divine Principle book was it not something that evolved in to the language of our community, rather than being sent out in a memo?

There is something v unnatural about giving people new words officially. It makes people feel like the old words were wrong, or are now out of date, and shouldn't be used. It does seem to remind me just v slightly of poor old Winston Smith in George Orwell's 1984 helping to develop Newspeak. That was a world where old words that didn't fit with the 'party's' ideological ambitions were systematically erased out of newspaper reports and books, and a new dictionary with new words was commissioned, ...by the party.

Shouldn't new words and terminology come to life through a natural need felt in the hearts and minds of people? Don't we catch a new word and adopt it because it 'speaks to us?'

I hope we take a non-dogmatic approach to all of this and allow people who feel inspired to adopt the use of new words the freedom to do so, and freely allow others to hold on to the words they cherish. Amen.