

## Democracy, Theocracy or Both? The Politics of Cheon Il Guk

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More than 20 years ago, in an unofficial Unification publication titled *Currents* (Fall 1989 <http://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Talks/Casino/Casino-910400.pdf>), Bruce Casino asserted that Unificationists hold four distinct positions on democracy:

1. Some members, he said, believe that a republican democratic form of government is required in God's ideal.
2. Other members believe God alone knows what the ultimate political system is, but democracy is the best way to get there and is certainly the political system God wants at present.
3. A third group believes a democratic, constitutionally limited monarchy after the British model is the ideal.
4. A final group believes the ultimate goal is a non-democratic monarchic feudalism patterned after the movement's internal polity — the "Korean kingdom" approach.

Casino argued that "close examination of fundamental Unification concepts leads inescapably to the conclusion that democracy is mandated by the religious doctrine of the Unification movement."

He went further, stating that Unification religious tenets "support a republican, democratic system modeled after the American constitutional system, with elected representatives and a separation of powers between legislative, executive and judiciary."



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What the movement sought, he contended, was not to alter the republican, democratic system, but to focus it on "higher ideals," a "greater spirituality" among citizens, a stronger sense of community, and to combat immorality, materialism, and racism."

The question is whether Casino's conclusions apply in the Cheon Il Guk (CIG) era.

Recent attention has focused on the CIG Constitution and rightly so. However, it is not the only expression of a rightly ordered civic society to emerge since Rev. Moon proclaimed "The Nation of Cosmic Peace and Unity," or Cheon Il Guk, in 2001

Much of the buzz a couple of years ago focused on Kook Jin Moon's exposition of "The Freedom Society," which still has its proponents. Prior to that, the Movement established the "Family Party for Peace and Unification" (FPPU) and ran a slate of candidates in an effort to apply CIG-compatible principles within the Korean political context.

Apart from this, Rev. Moon's UN proposals included governance recommendations as well as successive Abel, Peace, Parent, and Women UN platforms for their implementation. At the same time, he convened successive "Peace King" coronations of himself and Mrs. Moon.

Finally, various UM-related entities, such as The Washington Times, embody distinct political philosophies.

In brief, there is no shortage of initiatives and viewpoints as to the politics of Cheon Il Guk.

It is impossible to cover all of these substantively in a short article. I will simply sort them into those that favor democracy and those that favor theocracy.

In doing so, I define democracy as a form of government in which supreme power is

vested in the people and exercised directly by them or their elected representatives. I define theocracy as a form of government in which supreme power is vested in religious leaders and exercised directly by them or their appointed representatives.

This article highlights Unificationism's "divided mind" about democracy and theocracy, and suggests why this should be viewed not as a weakness, but a strength.

### **Initiatives that Favor Democracy**

Kook Jin Moon's "Freedom Society," which he described as a "self-regulating society" based upon individual freedom, conscience and the mature use of "weapons" to establish and maintain "dominion," articulated a position best characterized as "direct" or "pure" democracy. In other words, he favored a system in which power is exercised directly by the people rather than through representatives.

In his "Freedom Society" talks, he called for "the minimum amount of government," free markets and unconstrained entrepreneurship ("no government ever created wealth"), private property, no income tax, a world "without laws, without lawyers, prosecutors and judges," private military and police, and a government GDP share of less than two percent.

He argued that vesting supreme power exclusively in the people was the only way to prevent the slide from democracy to welfare-state "populism," dictatorship and tyranny.

The UM-funded Washington Times continued to be a staunch defender of freedom. However, its editorial policy favored "representative" rather than "direct" democracy and limited government rather than the minimal or "no government" position of the "Freedom Society."

The Family Party for Peace and Unification (FPPU), like the conservative Washington Times, favored representative democracy and family values. But it expounded a liberal vision, i.e., an "expanded" rather than a limited role for government. Its platform, for example, included provisions for "free education" through college and exemption from military service for families with more than three children; "tax and housing development assistance" for three-generation families; and a "government allowance" for couples who have been married more than 30 years.

Rev. Moon's UN proposals resonated with FPPU's liberal vision in that they favored representative democracy and expanded, even "one-world" government. He called for "a religious assembly, or council, of religious representatives" within the UN structure. At the same time, he organized a succession of Abel, Parent, Peace and Women UN counterparts, all organized, at least in theory, as representative, deliberative bodies.

### **Initiatives that Favor Theocracy**

The Cheon Il Guk constitution is the outstanding example of a UM initiative that favors theocracy. Subtitled "Religious law to actualize God's peaceful ideal world," it vests supreme authority in the True Parents, "the eternal King and Queen of Peace of Cheon Il Guk," and their appointed representatives. Their "territory," according to the constitution, "is the cosmos, which encompasses both the physical and spiritual worlds." (Art. 11)

The CIG constitution includes a 13-member "Supreme Council," all designated by True Parents. True Parents (or the "Supreme Council" exercising authority "vicariously" on their behalf) appoint the CIG "World President" and Vice President who have responsibility for all executive functions and "providential" organizations.

A "Chairperson," likewise appointed by True Parents, heads the CIG legislative body or "National Assembly" which consists of ex-officio and elected members. All legislative bills and budgets must be approved by True Parents. True Parents, in turn, appoint and have the power to dismiss the CIG "Chief Justice." They also appoint the Chairperson and committee members of the CIG Media Committee, which oversees "news reports, public information, and education" for citizens.

As it is intended to actualize God's "peaceful" ideal world, the CIG Constitution does not contain any provisions related to police or military forces. However, it states that some or all of the rights of CIG citizenship shall be forfeited upon disavowal of God and True Parents, the identity and ideology of Cheon Il Guk, or the CIG constitution. (Art. 23)

Apart from the constitution, Rev. and Mrs. Moon framed aspects of their ministry in royal or monarchical terms. These included coronations replete with robes and dynastic crowns, palaces, scepters, and "spirit world" testimonies of past American Presidents vowing to "attend" True Parents.

UM spokespersons were at pains to explain these as symbolic manifestations, especially after a "Peace King Coronation" in a U.S. Senate Office building evoked opposition and derision. However, a major UM leader interpreted the event as America, in effect, saying to Rev. Moon, "Please be our king."



## The Politics of Cheon Il Guk

The CIG era presents a full menu of political options. These include direct democracy with minimal or no government (“The Freedom Society”), representative democracy with limited government (The Washington Times), representative democracy with expanded government (the Family Party, UN proposals), theocracy (the CIG constitution), and monarchy (King and Queen of Peace “coronations”).

Some will see Unificationism’s “divided mind” on politics as a weakness. This is because they do not take into account key distinctions between religion and politics.

Religion is about ultimate concerns and commitments.

Politics is about proximate goods. Compromise is regarded as unacceptable in matters of faith. Politics is the art of compromise. Prophets emerge from the periphery of societies. Politicians govern from the center. Religion, in Unification terms, focuses on establishing a “foundation of faith,” i.e., being true to one’s God. Politics focuses on setting up a “foundation of substance,” i.e., finding a common base and relating constructively with the adversarial “Other.”

Unification teaching holds that religious, political and economic developments have been the primary drivers of “providential” history in the modern era. However, religion, politics, and the economy must remain within their proper spheres.

They are mutually reinforcing when they do. Religion, for example, supports morality which is essential to good governance. Modern political systems safeguard religious freedom.

On the other hand, religion, politics and the economy undermine one another when they invade each another’s space. Religious types running governments typically lead to repressive states. Politicians running churches typically lead to repressive religious establishments.

Unificationists should be free to engage in political debate not based upon obedience to a religious or political orthodoxy, but upon their sense of the common good.

If Unificationism were to be identified solely with one or another of the above-listed CIG political options, it would be a serious weakness.

As it stands, one of the UM’s greatest strengths has been its ability to inspire people from cultures that are poles apart in philosophy and sensibility. Adaptability to disparate contexts and circumstances applies not only to surviving species but also flourishing faith traditions, especially those with global ambitions.

The politics of CIG may seem messy at present. Politics usually is. However, the cacophony of options will serve Unificationism well in the long run.

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