

Movement, Church or Business?

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There is an old movie called *The Poseidon Adventure*, where a passenger ship has an accident and capsizes. The passengers are all freaked out, and although there is trapped air to breathe for a while, everything is upside down and all the passengers have different ideas about the best way out though multiple, dark, inverted passageways. Groups of them argue and head off in different directions, most coming to a cold and lonely end.

Feel a shiver?



John Redmond

Our Movement is heading off in many directions. Some want to build churches along the Christian “praise church” model, with home churches becoming traditional churches becoming mega-churches. Others keep doing banquet events, hoping to get luminaries to have their picture taken in front of a banner. Still others have retreated to the business world, seeking to make a foundation for the future when the money will be well-spent.

Most of the second generation seem to have decided to focus on careers. They are certain that their inheritance is going to include a lot of flowery words but not much money, so they have decided to focus on education and jobs. They are getting careers and families in a place where they can at least take care of themselves and perhaps their elderly parents. The American church is also currently focused on the bottom line, laying off long-time staffers and sending “sacred cows” to the meat market, or at least to the gym seeking to slim their budget. Many members are just trying to hold on to their families and get a family-level victory, to find some part of the Principle that means something to their children.

All of these are worthy activities, and necessary to the survival of the Unification phenomena. What is missing is a collective sense of direction and purpose. Why are we doing all this? What is the larger mission or vision that pulls all these elements together to let them work as one?

In the past, we would wait for Rev. Moon to give the direction, to tie the pieces together for us. Many times the directions from Rev. Moon seemed arbitrary and unreasonable, yet when they worked they made sense, so we surrendered our own opinion in favor of his. Recent leadership decisions have made it obvious that blessed central families have to take a more mature and responsible role in the direction of our church and not presume that leaders automatically have the integrity and breadth of vision of Reverend Moon.

The Unification vision includes many activities and levels of contribution. On the individual level, personal salvation, perfection or completion of character is a big one. On the family level, it is creating a true family, where love is created by all the relationships, the school of love. On a tribal level, we are all

part of the proverbial village it takes to raise a child. Nationally, our country is to serve the world in righteousness and should influence national policies to guide the nation towards God's ideal. The world? An interdependent body of nations and peoples that harmonize together to create a constructive whole where God is present and honored. Taken together these constitute a blueprint for our future. One way or another, soon, or in many years, this will be achieved because it is God's intention and our mission. Oddly enough, this vision is still the thing even our most cynical children find valuable.

This vision will not happen by itself. While we may feel that our spiritual foundation will be enough to influence the world toward goodness, that all we have to do is wait for the Pentecost, history doesn't bear that out. Early Christianity was assisted by the Holy Spirit, but Paul did the hard work of taking a small regional sect and making it a player in the most powerful nation of the day, Rome, and it didn't happen without discussion and argument. Peter and the original disciples opposed him until Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans.

When the Hebrews entered Canaan, they weren't welcomed or invited to a discussion, they had to fight their way in, (the first generation was such an obstacle that God didn't move until they had all died off). The skills required to blindly follow someone through the desert and the skills and basic mindset necessary to build an organization that change the world are very different.

The Unification vision is huge. It includes the whole world, each person in it and all their ancestors. If one is going to make any effort toward improving the world, this is about as big as one can dream. Reverend Moon planted foundational organizations at every point on the compass of this vision. He hoped they would prosper and mostly they haven't, but the fact that he spent treasure and time on them is significant. The reality is that our tactics, follow up and professional coordination have been insufficient to grow and develop those entities. They are mostly failures, except as symbolic offerings, and that time is past.

There are several ways to deal with defeat: one is to lay down and die, another is to run away, and a third is a fighting retreat. While we cannot claim a total victory, there is no reason to write off all our effort and live as losers.

Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon has identified a focus on rebuilding our core membership and a body of Unificationists that are faithful to the Unification vision. She has pulled back from the more exotic aspects of our foundation, for instance selling our champion Korean professional soccer team, and has sought to rekindle the original spirit of the Movement, to remind us of our roots. This is a good step and reasonable, given our current organizational situation. That said, we also need to salvage our nascent enterprises and begin new ones that lead to concrete success in the world.



If we are just a church, that narrows our appeal immensely. Who wants to join a church that promises you salvation through the blessing, but has no real plan to change the world? How about a church that has very successful businesses and lots of big buildings, but 80% of its children disassociate? Perhaps this organization should focus on symbolic gatherings where speeches are made and picture are taken, but no real dialogue takes place. By themselves, none of these activities will bear fruit. Only when integrated into a functional, strategic plan do any of these activities contribute toward accomplishing the Unification vision.

When a business consultant goes to a struggling corporation, one of the first questions he or she asks is: what do you do best? What product or service do you have that is better than all your competitors? While a company may do many things well, there is usually one area where they excel, and that defines them. When IBM reinvented itself in the 1990s, it went from the leading computer hardware company in the world, to the leading custom software company in the world. IBM's key skill was not computers, but identifying problems that computers could solve. With a lot of planning, work and effort, "Big Blue" turned this asset into a business model that paid them to do what they excelled at.

So what is the best of the Unification Movement? There are many better-functioning churches, only a few of our remaining businesses run well, and social movements, like gay rights advocates, for one, have completely out-organized us and achieved the kind of social dominance that we should envy.

We have a collection of the some of the best ideas in history contained in the Divine Principle, Unification Thought and Reverend Moon's commentaries. We have Reverend and Mrs. Moon, who have fulfilled the role of True Parents and are an example of what we teach. Our job is to translate these into bite-sized pieces, make it available to the culture and live our words through our families. This product and potential value that no one else has, and managed properly, will be a great gift to the world and to God.

Once the business consultant has identified the opportunity, the whole organization should develop the tactics and plans to make this happen. A strategic plan created in corporate headquarters without involving the members is dead on arrival. To be successful at fulfilling our vision, we will need a functioning church, healthy businesses and a good strategic communications plan for the whole Movement. This is not an impossible goal. These are basic business and management skills that need to be creatively applied to our Movement.

The alternatives are to blunder along obeying orders or to fall apart, neither of which says good things about American Unificationists.

John Redmond has served in CARP, AFC, and spent ten years in higher education in Colorado. He is the proud father of four interesting children, and has high expectations for the American Unification movement.