

## The Era of Applied Unificationism

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I have been working the last two years to help launch the undergraduate program of the Unification Theological Seminary, Barrytown College. One of the things I've noticed about working with second generation Unificationists is that they have a wide variety of interests, and for most of them, religion is not their #1 interest.

I imagine that 50% of their parents would have identified religion as their top concern; in fact, the first generation self-selected into an intense religious reality when they joined the young Unification Church. While many first generation hoped that their children would grow up to be super theologians, my experience shows that second generation Unificationists have a normal distribution of interests. This may cause some consternation to their parents. However, they are well equipped to engage society across multiple fields of expertise and to embed unification values in many fields.

From a historical point of view you could say that this phenomenon is similar to the Israelites. The first generation Israelites followed a charismatic figure across the desert at the price of their life, gave up material and political success and chose to live for spiritual values rather than material ones. God did not expect that of their children. He expected them to learn to use money, power and influence to build a substantial kingdom of heaven in the Promised Land.

The Puritans also had a sacrificial and strictly religious way of life, but so many of their children rebelled against the rules of the church that the Puritans had to create a "halfway" covenant. This was a less stringent version of the original commitments the Puritans made when they arrived in America and that every member was expected to sign. Unification Thought and the Divine Principle provide an advanced framework of thought that can be extrapolated to many areas of culture. First generation scholars have focused almost exclusively on theoretical and abstract concepts of the philosophy, leaving the applied areas of inquiry untouched.

What does a Unification psychologist do that is different than a behavioral psychologist? Is there a difference between a Unification educator and a secular educator? How should public policy be adjusted to accommodate Unification values?

These areas of what can be called "**Applied Unificationism**" are wide open for discovery, development and implementation. I anticipate that the movement will shift to focus on these areas over the next 40 years as the second generation intellectuals come of age and begin to exert their diverse passions.

This intellectual landscape has significant implications for the current direction of the Unification movement. While there is clear interest among first generation leadership to "turn back the clock" to the early days of the movement, to re-establish fervor and passion of young idealists drawn to a religious message, the data suggests that we should be expanding our scope, not narrowing it. Many capable second generation do not find a comfortable home in the current Unification culture, with its narrow focus on religious and spiritual themes. While they share the interracial, interreligious and ethical values of their parents, they find the intellectual climate is generally stifling and unimaginative.

The leadership of the movement should make an effort to expand the options for those members with an interest in **Applied Unificationism**. With the almost universal reach of the Internet, the cost of this ministry is small, relative the conference style activities we have pursued over the last 30 years.



A secondary benefit to widening the definition of Unificationism is that it gives a natural path to connect new members. In my experience, most new members are not initially attracted to the theology, but are interested in the activities that define the vision. We display the science conference, an interfaith seminary, service projects, peaceful and inspired communal living, fun-filled, loving families, creative music and art to our new potential members. These institutions are the external effect of the philosophy that prospective members analyze to evaluate whether this religion is worth pursuing. **Applied Unificationism** is the substance that distinguishes our movement from a host of other choices that are available in the marketplace of ideas.

In modern times, culture is changed by government policy, and government policy is changed through winning arguments about philosophy, and lobbying and organizing. The anti-slavery movement and voting rights movements were good examples of morality executed in public policy. The gay agenda is another. The science that says gays are immutably born that way is weak, yet they have used the argument of “fairness” to extract special treatment from government policy.

If Unificationists want to see Unification values practiced in society and build *Cheon Il Guk* (CIG), they will have to perfect the arts of philosophy, debate, rhetoric, and social engineering. It will not happen by itself. If the gay agenda can advance as far as it has by employing these techniques, then there is no reason Divine Principle cannot use the same tactics and do the same.

It is my hope that this **Applied Unificationism** blog can be a catalyst for new thinking about the premise and application of Divine Principle. It won't happen by itself. It will need a creative dialogue to build the body of knowledge required to move the national discussion toward God's ideal.