

The Unification Movement's Next 100 Years

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October 28, 2019



The 100th birthday of Rev. Sun Myung Moon next February seems a fitting time for reflection, assessment and a reorientation to our shared providential course.

To do the topic justice, it's necessary to back away from the disappointments, challenges and victories of the present, and give ourselves a comfortable seat to try to look with God's eyes at the progress and potential of our relatively young Unification Movement.



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Learning from history

There are several ways to plan for the future. One is the religious way, to trust that God is in charge and close your eyes, do what you are told and go along for the ride. Counter to that, leftist intellectuals may be certain they can manipulate history and force society into a pragmatic scientific paradise.

My preference is the method discussed in the Divine Principle, where patterns of history combined with human responsibility and God's inspiration direct history toward tragedy or triumph.

It's instructive to look at history and identify the success path of movements similar to ours to see what worked for them and how they broke through to become embedded in the culture to achieve their goals.

If we look back over the last few thousand years, there are several movements that lasted beyond the life of their initial prophet and created a significant impact on history. Buddhism, Confucianism, Judeo-Christianity, the early American Puritans, and Marxism all have a similar development pattern.

An idea is given shape by a prophet, an originator, who either by revelation, inspiration or deep contemplation elevates the current fractured set of truths to a new level of integration and elegance. This new approach is digested, interpreted and practiced by early disciples and then over time the idea is refined and formed by following generations into the heart of the culture.

Early disciples often meet with mixed success. For example, Jesus remarked of his search for disciples in his parable to "Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23). History frequently minimizes the contributions of these early disciples, since the chaos of their journey often interferes with the desired ending narrative but they have often made up for their lack of earthly success with sincerity and passion and form the subconscious roots of the movement to follow.

Very few founding prophets live to see the full impact of their efforts, although Buddha and Mohammed had significant cultural impact due to their positions of power in existing society. It is usually in later generations that these ideas are fully digested, codified, and fill the culture with new expectations and development.

In most movements, there is a change in the rigidity and purity of the original founding when this next stage of development is reached. The original Puritans all signed on to a compact that was strict and religious, but their children drifted away from the faith and the leaders were forced to create a "halfway covenant" that allowed their less-religious children to have membership in the church.

The future of the Unification Movement

It is appropriate to regard the 2020 celebration as a transition from the era of the first generation to the age of the “grown up” Unificationism. The difference is not so much in the biological lineage of the second generation, but in the intellectual and spiritual inheritance of that age group.

The providential mission of the first generation is to establish the Foundation of Faith and of the inheritors to build the Foundation of Substance. The future of the Unification Movement will be determined by those second generation who have captured the essence of the Principle and inherited the internal compass connected to God’s suffering and hopes.

In all movements, the next generation must encounter and change the culture they are in by the use of power, influence and money. Those priorities will set up inevitable conflicts between the deeply religious and overtly sacrificial approach of the first generation and the pragmatic approach required by following generations.

In communism, Lenin sorted out the differences with a gun. In the Old Testament, God sometimes required the death of the first generation Israelites before He could work with the next generation. In early Christianity, the earliest disciples required new converts to become Jews first, then Christians. God sent St. Paul from Rome to liberate Christianity from the cultural chains that held it down.

In our Unification movement, we can see a combination of those realities as most of our second generation have “voted with their feet” to flee the well-meaning “oppression” of their parents and find their way in the world. Many have been manifestly blessed by God with good families, wonderful values and wealth. The same pattern happened with the Israelites, the Puritans and Marxists (The communists developed the *nomenklatura*: elite, wealthy families of party members). This wealth, power and influence can either corrupt or empower the ideals of the second generation.

Challenges ahead

If history is any indication, there is opportunity and danger before us. The Israelites spent 400 years in internal wars and conflict to finally create a nation for God, but in doing so extended the providence significantly. Christianity lost its root in the Holy Land and became a Roman religion. The Puritans kept their families together and created the Founding Fathers of America all within 100 years. The Marxists dramatically collapsed. All of these possible paths are in front of our young Unificationists today.

There are several important developing trends in the world our next generation will be facing.

Strategist and Geopolitical Futures founder George Friedman wrote a 2009 book, *The Next 100 Years: A Forecast for the 21st Century*. With, in his view, geography having primacy, the placement of America between two oceans gives it a built-in advantage in developing and projecting power. The rise of China in the East will create a new balance of global power, where the U.S. will have centerstage in the 21st century between Europe and Asia much as Germany did the last century in continental Eurasia. That China occupies the center of the globe’s largest land mass with one-fifth of the human population is also an inescapable geopolitical fact that will define political and economic reality for our next generation.

A second area of uncertainty is the political and existential nature of the future world. Friedman’s mechanistic and deterministic analysis contrasts sharply with the ultimate goal of Unificationism, which is the substantial creation of the Kingdom of God on earth. The details of this kingdom vary from culture to culture within our movement.

Where Easterners might look to a world culture bound by a hereditary monarchy, Westerners may envision a world-level Jeffersonian democracy and meritocracy. The Chinese are experimenting with a techno-paradise, characterized by control of the masses via artificial intelligence through social credit scores and a new type of concentration (re-education) camp they are prototyping against the Muslim Chinese Uyghurs.

Regardless of the political form of the future world, the root of this argument is that there are shared values and agreement on the purpose and value of life. The current battle between science, which sees humans primarily as biological and soulless, and religion, which finds that consciousness is eternal and transcends the body, will be fought by our children and largely determine the character of the future world.

A third major area of challenge will be the alienation caused by the tremendous technological progress on the immediate horizon. The confluence of genetic engineering in agriculture, ubiquitous electronic communication, and robotics will create a world where it is cheaper for governments to give people food, a robot-constructed house and mindless mass entertainment than it is to get them a job.

In this environment, lazy and sated citizens have time for decadence, self-destructive behavior and mob passions. Identifying a purpose for life, an answer to the “so what” question, will become a growth industry in the marketplace of ideas. A cadre of inspired, well-coordinated and well-managed Unificationists can win that battle for “hearts and minds” if they choose.



The YAYAM Summit 2019 held at UTS from August 30 to September 2.

Possible strategies

Rev. Moon made extraordinary efforts to reach John the Baptist-type figures who could, at a stroke, shorten the providence and infuse the global conversation with Unificationist ideals. These paths are still available to us, but frankly, without the charisma of Rev. Moon, are not likely to bear fruit without the concurrent healthy development of many principled local families and communities.

The likely model for the future success of the Unificationist model is the “Adamic model”: One at a time, person to person, heart to heart conversation and commitment. The Christians gained early success without power, as slaves and fishermen and in the face of lethal persecution. It will be important to model a similar level of spirituality to succeed at witnessing. Healthy, well-educated and wealthy individuals, families and interracial and intercultural communities will create the basis for a solid transformation of society.

It is unlikely that the present “archangelic” approach of big media, conferences and purchased influence will create success in the future world without the confirmation of Unificationists actually living fulfilled and happy lives.

The frontline of the battlefield of ideas will be the electronic and media world of the 21st century. Currently our Unificationist branding, messaging, and communication is reflective of 20th century propaganda films rather than highlighting success themes for modern families. Our brand now is narrowly focused on religious themes and on personalities rather than principles.

On the plus side, many of our children have positions in big Internet firms and are gaining valuable experience in communication and media. When they can distill and refine a marketable encapsulation of Unification ideals, they will be well-positioned to manage the media environment. They will be able to support and complement the authentic expression of Unification ideals by new Unificationist families and communities.

One of the important tools of successful movements is decentralization. When a movement’s values and strengths are absorbed into the culture, there is less need for a stand-alone organization. There will always be a deep respect for Korea and True Parents, but the future of God’s providence belongs to those who build substantial families of true love, who are self-funded and can influence their culture toward God. When many individual citizens share and support constructive spiritual values and beliefs, our enemies will not be able to disparage or malign Unificationists with broad generalizations, but will have to engage in the reality of the world of heart. If Unification ideals are sprouting all throughout the culture, the danger of concerted opposition is lessened.

What has worked

The best working model for success is the American Revolutionary movement. Preceding the Revolutionary War, there was a long period of discussion, social unrest and new ideas communicated by small town newspapers and the colonial postal service. The early Americans had religious extremes, like the Salem witch trials, slavery and loyalty to British rule to overcome, yet they were able to create a consensus among themselves around a higher set of principles.

The Founding Fathers (and Mothers) were exceptional people, with roots in Europe and hopes in providential new land. They were able, largely by their strength of character, to persuade their fellow citizens, many from completely different backgrounds, to trust their judgment, to dream big and to create the providential nation of America.

Starting in 2020, these problems will no longer belong to first generation Unificationists. Older Unificationists can support, encourage and love their talented children, but the covenant will have moved from us to them. Rather than collapse into retirement or cling to existing positions, the best use of our time is to actively support the well-educated young people who will become our leaders.

The transition to the next wave of Unificationist thinkers and believers can either accelerate the providence to a victorious crescendo, or drag out the providence over many painful years. There is a role to play for each of us. Let's rise to the challenge together.

John Redmond is married to a clever wife, is the proud father of four interesting children, and is one of the Tri-Pastors of the Mid-Hudson Family Church. He has high expectations for the American Unification movement.