

FFWPU Europe and the Middle East: Hiromi Hiroto - The Great Joy of Learning and Living My Faith

Knut Holdhus
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Hiromi Hiroto (2024)

Believer and activist for freedom of religion describes the great joy that her faith gives her.

Continuing to Advocate for Freedom of Religion Despite Pressure

An interview with Hiromi Hiroto (廣渡広美さん), a woman in her 40s from Fukuoka Prefecture. She is a member of the [Family Federation](#). Originally published 14th October 2024 on the website of the [Family Federation](#) in Japan.

The "Kyushu Association for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion" was formed by members of the [Family Federation](#) in the Kyushu region and their supporters. From October 2023 to August

2024, they held symposiums in Fukuoka City and various parts of Kyushu on the themes of the unjust dissolution order request against the [Family Federation](#) and freedom of religion. They also gave speeches and held demonstrations in front of stations and on the street.



Hiromi Hiroto giving a speech as a representative of the believers at the "[Fukuoka Grand Assembly for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedom of Religion](#)" on 4th August 2024

This time, we spoke with Hiromi Hiroto, who took the stage as a representative of the believers at a symposium held in Fukuoka City, passionately expressing the feelings of the [church](#) members [Editor's note: Until 2015 the [Family Federation](#) in Japan was called the [Unification Church](#)].

Question: Thank you for joining us today. A video of you speaking at the symposium is available on the "Kyushu Association" YouTube channel. Before we ask you about the thoughts behind your speech, could you first tell us about your feelings towards the faith of the [Family Federation](#)?

Answer: I was introduced to the faith when I was 29 years old, and at that time, I was already married with children. While raising my young children, I had my own ideals of becoming a "cute wife" and a "kind mother". However, in reality, I was always struggling with how things didn't go as well as I had hoped.

Around that time, I attended a lecture held at the [church](#). During that lecture, I found a path that could resolve all the conflicts and doubts I had been struggling with. I was deeply moved. Actually, since I was in the fifth grade, my parents had encouraged me to chant Buddhist scriptures, but I wanted to understand religious truths more deeply in modern terms. However, when I heard the content of the [Unification Principles](#), I felt that all the answers were there.

Then, during the lecture, when it was said, "The [True Parents](#) of humanity are there," I cried from the bottom of my heart like never before. I felt like a lost child finally reunited with the parents, and I cried my heart out.

It was such a great joy for me that I told my husband about it. He said, "If you're enjoying it, keep going. If you're not, then stop." Since then, everything - from learning at the [church](#) to practicing my faith - has been incredibly enjoyable, and I've continued for nearly 20 years now. My life, which I had once struggled with, has become something precious. I now feel that my family and the people in my community are irreplaceable. It feels like I've gained more treasures in my life.

Standing in front of the station to give speeches as part of the activities of the "Kyushu Association for the

Protection of Freedom of Religion" is something that people around me commend. But for me, I'm standing there desperately to protect something important.



Participants in a demonstration march near Fukuoka City Hall under the scorching sun on the afternoon of the 4th August 2024, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture

My life of faith is truly full of joy. However, the current situation surrounding the [Family Federation](#) is tough. I try to live my daily life with a smile, but it is painful how the [Family Federation](#) is being scrutinized harshly. I want to express how seriously difficult our current position is. Honestly, I just want to continue sharing the good aspects of the [Family Federation](#). At the same time, I realize that I haven't made enough effort to communicate the truth until now, which is why I stand in front of the station.

After the incident [Editor's note: the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe] in July 2022, there was a surge of negative media coverage about the [Family Federation](#). I felt frustrated that the true nature of our [church](#) was not being conveyed, leading to misunderstandings. I also saw my children being hurt and confused by the changes in society's attitude toward the [Family Federation](#). Every day, I thought about how I could protect my children and how I could defend the [Family Federation](#).



Freedom of religion suppressed: From Falun Dafa parade in Berlin in 2007, portraying persecution of Falun Gong members in China

So, I decided to start by cherishing my own family, and I made sure to fully listen to and answer all of my children's struggles and questions. I could sense that my children had doubts, wondering if their mother was really doing the right thing. I faced those doubts head-on until they were resolved. Thankfully, I have lived my [church](#) life without any domestic conflicts.

I became a little worried when it was decided that I would give a speech as a representative of the believers at the symposium "Fukuoka Assembly for the Protection of Freedom of Religion" in October 2023. It was held to protest the unjust dissolution request against

the [Family Federation](#). However, then I witnessed the [church](#) leader, a second-generation blessed member, praying, "Please forgive our shortcomings." It's one thing for us first-generation members to say that as we made a deliberate choice to join the [church](#). But I felt that second-generation members shouldn't have to say it. That strengthened my resolve.

What I was thinking about in preparation for the speech was, first, that there are people with a heart who will definitely listen somewhere. And second, Also, although the incident in 2022 [Editor's note: the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe] was the trigger, in reality, there has been prejudice and persecution against religion in Japan for a long time. Before encountering the [Family Federation](#), I used to chant Buddhist sutras, but I always felt the difficulty of openly expressing my faith in Japanese society.

I also realized that there are still people around the world today whose freedom of thought is oppressed. I

felt that my call for freedom of religion could also serve as a way to release their unfulfilled desires. That was the mindset I took to the symposium.

When I took the stage on the day of the symposium, I felt an overwhelming pressure. I had prepared a script, but I felt like I was reaching the limits of my mental and physical strength, to the point where I wasn't sure if I could make it to the end.

For the first time, I felt what it must have been like for believers who had risked their lives to protect their faith. As I stood there as the "representative" of the believers, it felt as though all the unexpressed pain and frustration of those who had suffered throughout the long history of the [Family Federation](#) were pressing down on me all at once. It made me realize how different this role was from standing there as an "individual" believer.

Additionally, I consider the members of the [Family Federation](#) to be my family, so I also had a strong desire to protect them. With that feeling, I continue to stand in front of the station. It might sound a bit presumptuous, but I want the church members to have more confidence and to be happy. I also want to show them, through my own example, that it's okay for them to stand up too.

Question: Thank you very much. One more question, please. The issue of "second-generation religious members" has become a social issue, particularly concerning conflicts over passing on faith to children. How do you approach this with your own children?



Participants in the demonstration that started in front of Fukuoka City Hall and marched through the downtown area of Fukuoka City, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu on 6th October 2024

Answer: Since I've had the experience of my life being transformed through this church, of course, I want my children to find something valuable here as well. However, I'm careful about the words I use with them because I don't want them to feel like their faith or participation in [church](#) activities is being forced upon them.

My older child remembers what I was like before I encountered the [church](#) and has said, "I think it's great that you found the [church](#), Mom." My younger child also has strong opinions and has told me, "I understand what you're trying to say, Mom." I make sure to clearly convey what I want to communicate while respecting their own choices and autonomy.

Additionally, I always want to be my children's biggest supporter. That's why I feel deeply grateful when they say things like, "Even after hearing my friends talk, I think my mom is better," or "I'm really fortunate to have such a great family." Those words mean a lot to me.

Also, although my children are from a different generation and have different perspectives, I'm so

thankful that they don't hold back from expressing their opinions to me. They often say insightful things that make me realize a lot. I'm not the most broad-minded person, so I'm grateful that they teach me about the things they care about. It makes my life so enjoyable even now.

Question: I see. Thank you for sharing such valuable insights with us today.

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God As Our Heavenly Parent (Father And Mother)

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• March 29, 2024 • Knut Holdhus



New insight into the concept of God – our Heavenly Parent

Heavenly Parent

Part 1 of a lecture given by Dr. David Hanna, head of the North European sub-region of the Family Federation, at an international prayer meeting by Zoom on 27th March 2024.

See part 2, part 3

This is the second in a [new set of seven lectures](#), and the title is "Heavenly Parent". It has Jin-su Hwang, professor of theology at [Sun Moon University](#), as the original author and presenter.

This lecture deals largely with the shift from referring to God or addressing God as "Heavenly Father" to "Heavenly Parent", what this means, and why we should do it. It doesn't set out to present a comprehensive view of God as in *Unification Theology*.

I have to sav. as a rule. I don't aive other



Jin-su Hwang, professor of theology at Sun Moon University, Asan, South Korea. Photo (2023):

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people's lectures, but I can try here to give a summary of what I consider to be the most important parts of this presentation and then add, if I may, some of my own thoughts or comments at the end. So my apologies in advance to Professor Hwang for what I've done to his presentation.

SCREENSHOT FROM VIDEO BY
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Actually, there's really nothing in this lecture that you will find difficult to accept, I believe, and at points the arguments are rather, shall we say, academic.

But I'm very happy that these lectures in general introduce us to some of the professors of the higher-level institutions that the [True Parents](#) have founded. They have all made great efforts to fulfil their brief.

Professor Hwang starts by expressing his interest in how we teach our children about Heavenly Parent, and how we educate them about the historical development in religious understanding that takes us from Jehovah to Heavenly Father and then to Heavenly Parent.

There are five main points addressed in this lecture. The first is taking us back to [Mother Moon's](#) words, the second, reminding us of [God's](#) dual characteristics of masculinity and femininity, as explained in the [Exposition of the Divine Principle](#). The third point is making clear that our view is not a form of dualism, the fourth is looking at the reasons why [God](#) has been addressed historically as Heavenly Father. And lastly, the final point provides some reasoning as to why the "Era of the Heavenly Kingdom" ("Cheonilguk era" in Korean) is the era of the Heavenly Parent.

Here is [Mother Moon](#) speaking just prior to what we call *Foundation Day* in 2013,

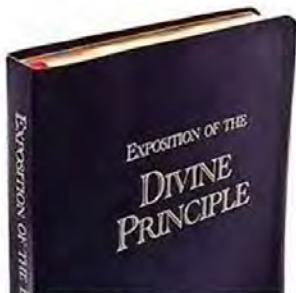
"We must now change how we address [God](#). When we pray, we will change [the Korean word] 'Hananim' to [the Korean expression] 'Haneul Bumonim'. This is 'Heavenly Parent'. It is smooth in English and is also meaningful in Korean. Therefore, when you pray, the very first words you utter should be 'Heavenly Parent' [...]. (Speech by [Mother Moon](#) 7th January 2013 in Gapyeong, South Korea)



[Mother Moon](#) 4th Feb. 2020. Photo: [FFWPU](#)

Dr. Hwang refers to a further passage from [Mother Moon](#), from 15th July 2019,

"[God](#) created a man and a woman. What you need to know is that [God](#), our Creator, exists as [God](#) the Father and [God](#) the Mother, and that is the starting point of the creation of the heavens and the earth. [God](#) created our first ancestors as a man and a woman, in the divine image. This was the principle of creation by which our Creator made heaven and earth."



Exposition of the Divine Principle, published 1996.

The [Exposition of the Divine Principle](#) shows its roots in oriental philosophy with reference to the yang and yin of [God](#) that is manifested in all created beings, culminating in human beings as male and female.

The explanation of the pair system is basic [Divine Principle](#) that I believe we're all very familiar with. The yang and yin principle gives rise to gender distinctions in the

natural world.

Personally, I don't find the [Unification Thought](#) examples of this that are given, to be so helpful. So allow me to inject an explanation.

Masculinity is associated with yang qualities such as strength, assertiveness, and activity, while femininity is connected to yin qualities like receptivity, nurturing, and intuition.

It's important to note that these definitions, they're not fixed and can vary depending on cultural interpretations and individual perspectives within Oriental philosophy.

Now, Professor Hwang provides a quotation from [Father Moon](#) that describes this process in the following way,

"Why do we marry? It is to resemble the image of [God](#). [God](#) is a being with dual characteristics, possessing both an invisible male nature and an invisible female nature. In one body with dual characteristics, these characteristics are in complete harmony and unity. [God](#) is



[Father Moon](#). Photo:

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in complete harmony and unity. [God is Father Moon's](#) [FFWPU](#) note: a being that is whole and united. However, these complementary individual natures within [God](#) are different from each other. If the male and female characteristics of [God](#) were the same, then one would be an exact copy of the other. But they're different. Being male and female, they must become one, become like seeds, and return to the position of [God's](#) original nature." (A speech [Father Moon](#) gave 18th February 1998)

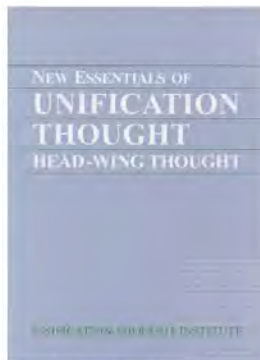
And Dr. Hwang has two more quotations from [Father Moon](#),

"We say that [God](#) is the masculine subject, don't we? [God](#) appears as a masculine subject, but also has a feminine aspect. [God](#) is masculine in the front, but just behind there is the feminine character. [God](#) created what can be divided into inside and outside, or into left and right, or as upper and lower. As this unfolds, what emerges is man and woman. Do you understand?" (A speech [Father Moon](#) gave 31st July 2000)

"If we go to the root of the universe, we come to [God](#), and we need to be aware that [God](#) has two natures, a masculine and a feminine nature." (A speech [Father Moon](#) gave 15th September 1995)

So the fact that [God](#) is a being who has a masculine aspect and a feminine aspect, is already well understood. [...]

Professor Hwang gives a complete definition [of [God's](#) masculinity and femininity], which does sound very much like [Unification Thought](#) to me. He says that [God](#) exists with a masculine aspect, having internal nature and external form of masculine yang- yin, and with a feminine aspect having internal nature and external form of feminine yang-yin. Therefore, [God](#) exists not only with a masculine aspect but also with a feminine aspect.



The latest version of [Unification Thought](#), published in 2006.

Hwang adds that this can be clarified inductively through all things of creation, which is, of course the argument that [Divine Principle](#) puts forward in line with that of St. Paul in Romans 1;20.

"Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made, so they're without excuse."

This exercise charts a course to the same conclusion as the [Divine Principle](#). It reveals [God](#) as a being of personality, which Yang-Yin philosophy alone falls short of doing, and [God](#) has both masculine and feminine personality.

[Father Moon](#) in his *Wolli Wonbon*, the original text that he completed in 1952, but which is yet to be published in English, apparently talks of man as the substantial entity of Heavenly Father and woman as the substantial entity of Heavenly Mother. It's interesting, isn't it, that these terms are used by [Father Moon](#) so early on.

Continued in [part 2](#), [part 3](#).

Featured image above: Dr. David Hanna lecturing in Oslo, Norway on 13th November 2022. Photo: Knut Holdhus

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