

Why Many Dedicated Unificationists are Saying No to the CBMR: Challenges to the Discourse

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The *Chambomo Ron* (CBMR), translated from Korean as “True Parents Discourse”, is a series of lectures being disseminated throughout the FFWPU (known widely as *Unification Church*) worldwide. Depending on who is presenting it, it can have alternative names such as “Discourse on True Mother’s Revelations”. The CBMR is a new explanation of the nature of God, True Parents (TP) and the messianic role, asserted by its lecturers to have come directly from Mother Moon (Hak Ja Han Moon), also known as True Mother (TM). There are significant differences to the teachings of Father Moon (Sun Myung Moon), known as True Father (TF), whose mission to return the world back to God (resulting in the creation of the entire Unification Movement (UM) – including FFWPU and other affiliated initiatives such as UPF, WFWP etc) started after he received revelations from Jesus at the age of fifteen. For this reason, after almost one year of making rounds in the continent, it has created an atmosphere of doubt, confusion and tension¹. Responses have varied: some have seemed to accept it straight away with or without understanding it; some seem to have refused it outright²; and some seem to still be trying to figure out how to reconcile the contradictory messages^{3,4}.

In the first place, the idea of making a community discourse out of a sensitive topic is an excellent initiative as it can be an opportunity to increase engagement and ownership. Access to diverse perspectives also helps improve the quality of the conclusions drawn out from the discussions. Such information can be useful to national and international leadership who may refer to them for decisions affecting the day-to-day life of Unificationists (blessed families including members and leaders). Done well, it helps the organisation foster trust and transparency. However, the ongoing discourse has not achieved this so far. Hence, this paper aims to support the FFWPU in improving the environment of its discourse so that blessed families will be able to hear God’s voice more clearly in their hearts and in conversation with each other.

The paper identifies five reasons for why the CBMR is not being received well in the United Kingdom (UK) and offers seven recommendations for how the FFWPU communities in this region can move forward whilst avoiding fragmentation. Although the scope is limited to the UK, those living in other countries are welcome to refer to the material⁵ and compare it to how their communities are responding to the discourse.

1 Identifying challenges to the reception of the Chambomo Ron

There are two main areas to study why the CBMR is not being received well (1) the details of its contents and (2) the environment in which it arrives. Environment means the culture of the movement, the culture of the world, the preparations prior to it being disseminated, and members’ reactions to it. To maintain focus, this paper will limit commentary on the content of the CBMR and will focus on analysing the environmental challenges to receiving it. A commentary on the contents of the CBMR will follow in due course.

1.1 Conflict in how the CBMR is promoted and its intended outcome

In Europe where parliamentary debates and community consultations are commonplace, before decisions are made, discussions are what automatically comes to mind when the word ‘discourse’ is

¹First introduced in Europe in 20/03/2024. See <https://vimeo.com/925710418>

² See <https://esgdmedia.com/statement-on-new-theology/> ESGD is a small but established organisation that has a wide range of support internationally.

³<https://familyfedcommunity.org.uk/our-river-south-pastor-reflects-on-the-impact-of-this-weekends-events/>

⁴https://1drv.ms/b/c/fb591ff0d05bf59c/EQ13zvoRa-9DtDu3Ur21pmcBaGpXrphaKCE_X1sdsVH7DA?e=4%3aysGRZa&sharingv2=true&fromShare=true&at=9

⁵Readers are welcome to translate the paper to their own language using AI tools if they find it useful and/or relevant.

mentioned. This expectation is confirmed when, in a message given on 6 October 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland, EUME regional president Michael Balcomb stated that CBMR is “wrongly called ‘The TP Theology’”. He clarified that “CBMR means ‘discourse’.... A “discourse” means there's meant to be discussion, give and take, debate. It also means that it's not finalised or settled because it's a discourse. And out of our conversation, new things may emerge and a new understanding.”⁶

However, although the CBMR is promoted as a discourse, it is not delivered as such. When presented with the CBMR the expectation is that we are being consulted, as if to ask something like, “Here are True Mother’s revelations. What do you think of them? Please reflect on them and comment on their veracity to help TM reflect on whether her interpretations of her revelations are adequate.” However, many get a rude awakening when they hear the content and rather than asking engagement for the sake of developing the material, it is commanding acceptance that this is now our new spiritual truth. One first generation put it bluntly, “It has been made clear that there is no discourse possible. We can discuss until we are hoarse and blue in the face, but TM’s revelation is TM’s revelation, and she isn’t open to revising it.” The discrepancy between what is expected and what is delivered creates frustration in the audience. If acceptance was the goal from the start, calling it a ‘discourse’ makes the whole process seem like a charade. Perhaps to avoid confusion, ‘The New TP Theology’ may have been a better title.

1.2 Culture within the FFWPU

The analysis below will illustrate how the culture within the FFWPU has developed over many decades to stifle the reception of new spiritual ideas such as the CBMR.

1.2.1 Development of political correctness

One issue that severely limits the quality and development of any discourse is political correctness (PC) – the act of avoiding language and actions that could be offensive to others.

Within the movement, this existed before the CBMR. For those who were high-ranking leaders in 2008, expressing any sense of empathy for Hyun Jin (Preston/ H1) after he was replaced in leadership would have put their role in the UM at risk. In 2015, after Hyung Jin (Sean/ H2) publicly declared separation from TM’s ministry to form Sanctuary Church, any comments on the situation had to be carefully worded lest they were assumed to be supportive of Sanctuary. Comments such as “There might be some truth in what he said,” makes one worthy of admonishment, even when pre-empted with “No-one should speak to their mother like that.”

Today, it seems that the PC culture has worsened. One cannot simply say, for example, that “TF founded the FFWPU”; no, one *has* to say “TP founded the FFWPU”. One cannot give a message and focus on or use solely TF’s words as one’s loyalty to TM will be questioned. There’s a strange feeling in the room, “Why is the speaker not acknowledging the current prime leader who is alive?” Imagine your own parents. If you were to say, “I love my father,” does that mean you don’t love your mother? So why does one’s love for TM have to be questioned any time her name is omitted?

Furthermore, the existing social taboo where we could not critique TF or TM has worsened. More recently, this has extended to the taboo of not being able to critique or criticise anything that TM has done, is doing or teaching. A direct example is the CBMR which is claimed to have come directly from TM, and therefore God. This is significant because the CBMR contains assertions that TF failed in significant areas of his mission. It also seems to put TM in a higher position, ‘the central pillar of the providence’ as a first ‘only begotten’ figure, rather than a mere ‘returning’ figure like TF. Educators of the CBMR need to appreciate the significance in the gap between what they are asking members to believe versus what members currently believe. The gap is so large that it stirs up a lot of strong emotions in members, such as anger, frustration and confusion. Although these feelings may be intense,

⁶ <https://www.tparents.org/Library/Unification/Talks2/Holdhus/Holdhus-241014.pdf>

they should not necessarily be perceived as a negative response. In fact, this can indicate that TF was genuinely loved by these people, who are protective of him because they feel he is being attacked.

The problem is that as a community, if we reinforce PC by putting social pressure on those who speak their minds, we prevent ourselves and others from hypothesising freely. When we do this, we create in ourselves mental obstacles that, if there are too many, makes thinking so hard that it becomes better to be passive and simply rely on ‘faith’. Even if our conclusion became a unanimous “True Mother *was* right all along!” or that “The CBMR *is* the completed word of God,” how can we be confident that this is true when there are areas we have not thought about and explored? Rather than suppressing them, we should be grateful that there are some among us who are brave enough to ask the difficult things that no one dares to ask. If it cannot withstand questioning by a few thousand members, what are the odds that the world, with its numerous intelligent and discerning people, will accept it?

1.2.2 Feeling forced to accept ‘now’

The pressure to accept the CBMR immediately is a significant challenge to its dissemination. A first-generation Cheon Bo member expressed the conflict felt by many who have remained loyal to TP, and TM after TF’s death, stating, ‘There might be truth in the CBMR, but it is hard to receive when it feels like it’s being forced right into our faces and we are threatened to accept it right now, or else we will be causing division or we will be seen as not faithful enough.’

Educators and proponents of the CBMR need to understand that while they claim that it is founded on many of TF’s teachings, such as the ideal of the family with God at the centre, many members perceive the CBMR to be significantly different from The Divine Principle (DP) lectures they initially embraced. For many, this represents a significant overhaul of their entire value system. This kind of fundamental change takes time to process—months, if not years. Therefore, it is more effective to give people as much time and space that they need to rationally think through and understand the CBMR, rather than pressuring them.

1.2.3 Asking for absolute obedience to an unfinished teaching

Some proponents of the CBMR encourage others to give their ‘absolute obedience’ to it. In the cultural understanding, this means total obedience even when one does not have the full picture. This is difficult to achieve because different CBMR educators are contradicting each other’s statements⁷. Also, when questioned they are told that ‘it is not finished yet’. This is not helpful as it makes people doubt their own questions. It makes them feel that they cannot make confident judgements as they have little idea of how much of the finished product they have. Neither helps in creating an environment where members can focus on processing what are already challenging ideas. This is different to the DP which, despite admitting that it is not the complete truth yet, has arguments cohesive enough that one can already read and engage with it on its own merit.

1.2.4 Excommunications and exclusions

When discussions of an idea are not to the liking of its proponents, it is tempting to try to exercise control by excluding people with opposing (or seemingly opposing) opinions who are perceived to be obstructive. How the small organisation of ESGD has been treated is a case in point. Despite independently providing programmes for blessed children to address the gap in spiritual education in the region, their dissent resulted in a ban on the use of a FFWPU-owned training centre in Slovakia which they have rented for almost 20 years⁸. A month later, they were given an ultimatum by Shin Chul, a 25-year-old grandchild of TP.⁹ The young man threatened that all it takes is “an official statement from Korea”, adding that for not agreeing, they will be causing a schism comparative to Sanctuary Church.

⁷ See <https://youtu.be/6d360VJxKeU>, <https://youtu.be/BBv9nPH8jCw>, <https://youtu.be/T1pE0FrCdMQ>

⁸ The decision was made by the Slovak national leader and a small circle of supporters. After pressure was exerted by a significant proportion of the Slovak community and ESGD alumni and supporters worldwide, this decision was overturned.

⁹ 19 Jan 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GiDavyUlKzM&t=29s&ab_channel=HWDYKYMYT Following this he wrote an letter reaffirming his message “The truth is the movement on a whole has already accepted this teaching and we will go forward united under this

In addition to this, we see Demian Dunkley, regional president of FFWPU USA, talking in a Tribenet¹⁰ meeting to leaders and pastors in America. After warning the audience a few times to be careful of using their “own cleverness from the Completed Testament Age,” he bluntly tells them “...there’s no such thing as a leader in this movement if you don’t align yourself 100% with TM. You need to literally recuse yourself and not in some passive-aggressive way try to take other members with you. You’ve already seen that there’s two options, you either lead in Mother’s movement, or you form your own splinter group. And please let me know the name of your group so I can issue a memo from headquarters about it.”¹¹ From the rest of the video, one could think that a modern version of the Great Inquisition is coming for those with opposing beliefs. This shows that the current threat of excommunication for dissent is not just something an immature 25-year-old has mistakenly said. It seems to be internalised and endorsed by leaders at the very top of the hierarchy, and some will not hesitate to use it.

The culture of exclusion is not new in the FFWPU. Blessed families who have lived in South Korea have mentioned a blacklist which, although it was never made official, was drawn up to identify followers of Hyun Jin (Preston/ H1). Those listed were banned from paying their last respects in TF’s funeral, even those that caused no commotion¹². Recently we see a letter from the national leadership to stay away from a ‘Komaba group’, a group that was already excommunicated by local branches of FFWPU in Japan, back in c.2013. Although this time it was only a warning with comments of disapproval, with changes in leadership, we will never know how firm the next person will be to any form of dissent not just for those in leadership positions but members as well.

Although excommunications may seem like a quick and effective solution to disagreements and a protection of the larger membership, in the long-term they are counterproductive. They instil a culture of suppression as people fear the prospects of being excluded or marginalised and how this might affect their social interactions and standing in the community. Such an internal environment is *not* conducive to having a meaningful discourse where people can speak freely and openly.

1.3 Culture in the geographical region

At least one reason why the CBMR has not been accepted in the UK is cultural differences. The Western world, of which it is a part, was transformed by the Enlightenment and Reformation into relatively egalitarian societies, at least by global standards. The freedom to think, to formulate arguments, and to connect with God directly are core considerations in how Westerners discover what is true. Furthermore, the CBMR comes into the wider cultural developments afflicting The West, such as the compelled speech movement of gender ideology, which have heightened our sensitivity to anything that tries to mandate a way of thinking and speaking.

In contrast the CBMR comes from Korean culture, which like other Eastern cultures, is much more hierarchical with strong emphasis in respect for authority.¹³ This difference means that people in Eastern cultures are more likely to respect and follow leaders and their teachings regardless of what they think about those teachings than those living in Western cultures.

1.4 Differences in our understanding of verticality

The term ‘vertical alignment’¹⁴ is an important word in the FFWPU. There are two different interpretations of this phrase.

The first interpretation means to connect to a person, a ‘central figure’, who is so named because he/she is connected to a leader higher up, who is connected to one even higher up and so forth until the

new direction no matter what. Therefore if they as a community cannot accept this, it is difficult to move forward together, because in the end we are a faith based community and if they cannot accept this whether we like it or not we cannot coexist.”

¹⁰ Tribenet’ is a network of blessed families in the USA working as tribal messiahs in their communities.

¹¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxpQqB1heZY&ab_channel=OneBCFamily

¹² One person’s testimony found here: <https://www.tparents.org/Moon-Talks/HyunJinMoon-12/HyunJinMoon-120919.pdf>

¹³ I do not mean here to suggest that one is simply better than the other, but that they are different.

¹⁴ Sometimes referred to as ‘vertical connection’, ‘vertical relationship’ or ‘vertical love’.

penultimate leader in the chain is connected to TP, who is connected to God. This is the cultural understanding which allows the organisation to maintain order and control of its many activities. Many are happy to both endorse and live their lives in this way. It provides a sense of security and unity with God.

A literature review of TF's teachings (including the DP¹⁵) reveals a different understanding of the phrase 'vertical alignment'¹⁶, one in which there is consistent reference to human being's direct parent-child relationship with God¹⁷. Often, it is described in the backdrop of the 'four-position foundation' which the DP refers to as God's original ideal. Related to the individual he talks about how mind-body unity is the foundation of vertical connection, explaining that "the mind is the mediator between the body and God". Related to the family he states that parents are the mediator between God and their children. United in love, they become the channel of God's love for their children to grow into maturity, until one day they also become parents in their own families. Further analysis of TF's words indicates that as messiah, TP are the principal mediators in the Completed Testament Age, and they are to be the *last* mediators¹⁸. Subsequently, blessed couples are supposed to inherit their 'true parenthood' by following the restoration course they exemplified, through the principles of 'true love' (~unconditional love) and 'natural subjugation' (to win people's hearts through showing one's sincere love, effort and perseverance) of archangelic figures in their lives. In doing so they undergo the same transformation of heart and grow into maturity to lead their key circles of influence, as 'family and tribal messiahs'. As blessed parents grow to become true parents in their own right, with a deeper understanding of their responsibilities and relationship with God, manifested in their relationships within their families and communities, the need for a clergy—an archangelic spiritual structure—should fade away.

This second interpretation endorses the ideas of complete spiritual freedom, becoming owners of Cheon Il Guk and co-creators with God. This is contrary to the first interpretation of 'vertical alignment' which is to do with control and dependency on spiritual mediators outside of the family unit. Even prior to the DP, the Bible told us that some people had a direct connection with God, such as Abraham or Moses who talked to and even dared to argue with God¹⁹. Thus, for some Unificationists who fully grasp this understanding, in the quest for truth, it is just as acceptable to question and even argue with TP and God Himself. This allows them to ask what may seem to others are heretical questions such as, "Is the messiah in service of the truth, or is the truth in service of the messiah?"

From life-long *hoon dok haes* we are probably familiar with many aspects of the second understanding; and yet we live our lives immersed in the FFWPU culture created by the first. The effects of this dissonance are further amplified when faced with radically new ideas like the CBMR. Many want to follow our 'central figure' – at the same time, some are not convinced logically or intuitively feel that perhaps God or their conscience is saying something else. Thus, before we can even answer whether the CBMR is true or not, a lot of important questions need to be raised. Is our understanding of concepts that maintain our status quo such as 'central figure' correct? If not, how did we get it wrong? Why didn't TP do anything about it? If it is correct, why do we feel conflicted?

2 Recommendations

Below is a list of recommendations for blessed families to promote productive active discourse while retaining unity.

¹⁵ EDP p24, 81, 82, 97 (3 times), 142, 169, 348, 362, 363, 410

¹⁶ Or 'vertical relationship', 'vertical connection', 'vertical love'.

¹⁷ There are 2 other major use of the word 'vertical' both in terms of restoration. These refer to (1) indemnity course accumulated over time across generations (EDPp187) (2) The 8 vertical stages of restoration to restore the rights of the elder son, the parents and the king (servants of servants, servants and so on, to God).

¹⁸ That is, after TF wins the right of the elder son (from archangelic figures in the 8 horizontal stages of restoration), the right of the parents and the right of Kingship.

¹⁹ Genesis 18:16-33 and Exodus 32:9-14

1. **Clarify the purpose of the CBMR and if needed, revise the terminology.** Communicate whether the CBMR is intended to be a genuine discourse with room for discussion, feedback, and development, or a definitive proclamation of spiritual truth that is not open to debate or revision.
2. **Nurture the community spirit through ups and downs.** Focus on building community relationships as the foundation for discourse. After this, creating discussion opportunities where people can share what they feel honestly and openly is important to prevent issues being swept under the carpet and growing into something unmanageable. Accept the chaos of disagreements, conflicts and the possibility that we may *not* have all the answers for everything.
3. **Create a space for positive engagement.** Remind ourselves of the elemental teachings that brought us together: *true, unconditional love*. Instead of fearmongering and threats of exclusion, to challenge ourselves by committing to the way of *natural subjugation* – moving people’s heart to persuasion through convincing arguments, service and exemplification.
4. **Give space and freedom to think.** Leadership needs to let go of the need for control and grant more autonomy to blessed families, trusting them to make decisions without judgement and pressure to: accept teachings immediately; showcase the quality of their faith; please God or TP; unite or else cause division within the community.
5. **Equal consideration.** If we are all to be *owners of Cheon Il Guk*, contributions to discussions (or any decision-making process) should be evaluated based on their quality and merit, rather than the hierarchical position of the person presenting them.
6. **Reflect on identity, values and vision.** Reflect on the FFWPU's identity and values, ensuring that culture and structure align with them. By thinking about these, perhaps we can re-orient ourselves to develop a more resilient and sustainable culture than the negative ones that have been described above.
7. **Re-examine original teachings.** Revisit original teachings and review our understanding of key concepts like central figure, vertical alignment, central families, absolute obedience etc. Have we understood them well enough? Before hurrying to forget the ‘old teachings’ (such as the Old Testament, restoration etc) as some leaders suggest, and accepting new ones such as the CBMR, we should take time to assess if we lose anything by dropping certain ideas. What do we gain instead? Are we then left with the right tools that helps us get to build the vision that we want to create?

3 Conclusion

Environmental challenges to the reception of the CBMR were identified and explained. From analysis it is apparent that the FFWPU presently does not embody the culture of heart or true love that it wants to convey to the world. This makes it difficult to have conversations on sensitive topics. Thus, recommendations were given to stimulate a collective self-awareness and prompt the development of a better environment within the FFWPU communities of the UK. Managing to discuss the CBMR without splintering is only the beginning. After this, continued efforts in building a good culture is of utmost importance, otherwise, FFWPU will continue its decline. Even if there is an increase in membership, its message to the world will not be taken seriously without the substance to back it.

Furthermore, FFWPU should review its understanding and application of its founding principles and reflect on key questions: (1) What message are we sending to wider society and future generations with how we are treating each other in the study of the CBMR? (2) What kind of society and culture do we want to create? (3) How do our structure, *modus operandi* and ‘completed’ teachings facilitate the development of this culture?