

Sects and Cults

The Unification Church (the Moonies)

Is the Unification Church a Calvinistic type of Christian Church? "Yes", said Dr. Herbert Richardson, a Presbyterian professor at St. Michael's Roman Catholic College, Toronto, and a faculty member of the Moonies' Seminary, Barrytown, New York.

Richardson stated in a Toronto Star interview: "I happen to think the Unification Church is a Calvinistic type of Christian Church. I am not a member of it, but Christianity is not confined to the older doctrines."

"No", said the Commission of Faith and Order of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA when the Unification Church applied for membership with the Council of Churches of the City of New York.

Is the Unification Church a Church? What makes this Church so controversial? To answer these questions, let us take a close look at the Unification's founder, his movement and beliefs.

Moonie-evangelical dialogues have been held. But these interfaith efforts have not led the Moonies any closer to the Christian camp. Evangelicals have repeatedly maintained, after intensive talks, that Unification theology falls outside their definition of Christianity.

The Founder

Mr. Moon was born to Presbyterian family in North Korea in 1920. His parents named him Yong Myung Moon. In the late 1940s, he changed his name to Sun Myung Moon, meaning "shining sun and moon". In 1936 Moon claimed that Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision while praying on a Korean mountainside. The Lord told Moon that he had a great mission to accomplish and assured that He, Jesus, would assist him.

During one of his visits to the US, he was interviewed by Al Capp for a proposed television show. He was asked by Mr. Capp, through the interpreter, if Mr. Kim (the interpreter) was present when Jesus spoke to him. Mr. Moon answered that he wasn't. Capp asked again: "Then Jesus spoke to you in Korean?" "Yes", replied Moon, "but with a slight Hebrew accent."

After completion of high school in Korea, Moon studied electrical engineering at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan. In 1944, before graduating from the University, Moon returned to Korea, married and in the same year he left his pregnant wife in Seoul to preach in North Korea.

His theology developed, after his revelation experience, in an unorthodox direction. He "discovered" a series of prophetic principles that included "knowledge of the spiritual and physical nature of the universe; the process and meaning of history; the inner

meanings of the parables and symbols of the Bible and the pure purpose of all religions." His theology, along with some of his activities, led to Moon's excommunication from the Presbyterian Church in 1948.

Moon was arrested and imprisoned by North Korean authorities and experienced great sufferings. Moon and his supporters claim that his arrest was due to his strong Christian and anti-communist stance. Many in Korea believe that he was arrested because of his ritual sex practices with members of his movement.

Moon was released from prison in the winter of 1950, when South Korea soldiers advanced into North Korea. In 1954, the self-ordained "Reverend" Moon instituted the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSAUWC) or the Unification Church. In Korea it is known as the Tong-il Church. 1954 was also the year that Moon's first wife divorced him.

Growth and Recruitment

The Unification Church claims headquarters in over 40 countries, including some 120 centres in the US. The actual membership figure is difficult to determine. The usual figure given is between 1 and 2.5 million worldwide. A more reasonable figure would be 500,000 worldwide. But the movement's influence is totally out of proportion to its membership.

Moon has gathered an estimated 15,000 followers in North America. By the summer of 1976 the Unification Church had gained 2,000 followers in England and about the same number in Holland. The movement was popularized in France by an hour-long interview on national television.

It concentrates especially on West Germany as Moon believes that "Germany is the backbone of Europe". Its evangelistic methods have been called into question by many concerned Europeans. In May, 1976, Peter Rose, M.P. from Manchester, reported the Unification Church to the House of Commons: "Its sophisticated brainwashing techniques, its efforts to split youngsters from their families and give up their worldly goods are equally a danger to health and a matter of concern."

The Unification Church is highly organized and aggressive in propagating its beliefs. It has used even unscrupulous practices as means to gain new members. Deception is justified by its leaders. This is called "Heavenly Deception".

Moon, in a talk to his followers, has said: "You must be able to manipulate those people." Moonies have tried to infiltrate Christian churches in their recruiting efforts. Their method of evangelism has been dubbed as "church witnessing".

In a 1971 newsletter, meant to be read only by their own people, the Moonies admitted: "Many have referred to our witnessing in churches as 'fishing in someone else's pond.' We have been accused, and sometimes rightly so, of separating the fringe members. "

Moonies will neither identify themselves immediately nor explain their beliefs on the spot. In streets, at Toronto's Eaton Centre, in airports such as Gander and Edmonton, on campuses, perpetually smiling young Moonies speak about the betterment of mankind, the need for high moral standards, invite contacts to dinner and an introductory talk at their local centre.

When prospective recruits arrive at the Unification quarters, they are immediately overwhelmed by the personal attention showered upon them. Hands are held and patted. This recruiting method is called "love bombing". While at the centre, the prospective recruit is never left alone, kept engaged in hours of non-stop activity and no time is allowed for reflection.

Wealth

Starting a new religion appears to be a profitable business. In 1974 the Unification Church's budget in the US alone was \$11 million not including church centre expenses. John Weldon, a lecturer and writer on new religious movements, comments about the Unification Church's financial strength in the US: "In the carefully guarded 120 Day Training Manual it states that many workers make \$200 - \$500 a day (\$30 - \$70 is considered poor) through selling goods and asking for donations. If only 3,000 members made \$200/day, 5 days a week, in one year they would have made \$156 million. In fact it appears that the real reason Moon has centred his organization and efforts in America is because in other countries even if you work hard from morning to night, in one month we can get \$200. That's all. We can make \$200 in one day in America."

The way money is raised doesn't appear important, the amount alone counts. The Moonies' 120 Day Training Manual states: "Who can dominate the creation and give it the highest joy? Father (i.e. Moon). Every creation will dash to Father. Father has qualifications to have dominion over everything. Only when the creations are in his hand are creations the happiest. Do you like to make green bills happy? Why don't you make them happy? So many green bills are crying. Have you ever heard them crying? Not yet? You must hear. They are destined to go to Father. This is our responsibility!"

A former Moonie reported that he had once raised \$1,600 in cash in one day on the streets of San Francisco by selling flowers and candy. Commenting on the gullibility of the American public, he said: "I could have told them I was raising money for Bozo the clown, and people would still give money."

Mr. Moon's converts say that their leader has no choice but to be wealthy. For example: "The limousine came by itself, Father never asked for it at all; the limousine came with a speed of 200 miles per hour and said if Father didn't receive it, it would kill him; so Father received it."

Mr. Moon's financial holdings are enormous. He is the head of a multi-million dollar network of industries in Korea, including the Tong 11 Industry Company, the I1 Hwa

Pharmaceutical Company, the I1 Shin Stoneworks Company and the Ton Wha Titanium Company.

His followers purchased for him in 1972 a lush 22 acre estate in Tarrytown, N.Y., for \$850,000. This property includes a luxurious mansion for Moon.

In Holland, a former holiday resort was bought in Bergen (N.H.) It is now called "Huize Glory", Friendly Road 1. According to Josh Freed, an author and Montreal journalist, the Moonies own a 42 room mansion in Toronto's Kensington Market District, and houses in Ottawa and Montreal. A 95-acre property near Peterborough's Rice Lake has been obtained and is being turned into a training centre. The Canadian branch of the Unification Church reported assets in 1979 of \$951,612 and fund-raising revenue of \$743,273.

Carroll Stoner and Jo Anne Parker, authors of *All God's Children: The Cult Experience - Salvation or Slavery?*, conclude: "There is no question that Sun Moon lives a life of affluence. His young followers who live severe lives of self denial, deny their master nothing. Moon has a fifty-foot yacht cruiser, the New Hope, for fishing and leisure. His school-age children attend exclusive, and expensive, private schools. There is some question, however, whether all of Moon's luxuries are indeed owned by his church. And not all his followers live in the abject poverty that has come to typify the existence of a Moonie. The top Moon aides live in sumptuous style while the masses of his followers sleep huddled together in sleeping bags on the floors of rooms that are barren of all furniture, or in unheated vans."

Libel suits

Several cults and sects have resorted to court action to protect their image from outside criticism. Scientology has been in numerous legal entanglements as well as the Hare Krishna movement. The Unification Church has also entered the legal fray. In 1980, Emmy van Overeem of the Dutch weekly, *Elseviers Magazine*, interviewed an ex-Moonie, who revealed various techniques used by the cult to isolate members from the outside world and to lead them to total submission to Sun Myung Moon's authority. The Dutch Moonie leader asked the court to sentence *Elsevier* to publish a rectification of the story - written by the cult.

In England the Unification Church lost the longest and most expensive libel suit in British legal history. It was ordered to pay the cost estimated at more than \$1.5 million. The leader of the Unification Church in Britain has claimed damages against the *London Daily Mail* for a 1978 article that accused the cult of brainwashing converts and breaking up families. The jury unanimously decided that the *Daily Mail* was justified in its accusations.

Why do evangelicals consider Moon's teaching non Christian? A test of orthodoxy is always one's view of the Bible and Christ.

The basis for authority

The ultimate source of authority for the Unification Church is not the Bible. Although the Bible is used by the Moonies, it has been supplanted by Moon's teachings. The Bible is seen as a fallible, human witness.

Moon emphasizes that "the Bible is not the truth itself, but a textbook teaching the truth." The Bible is inadequate for modern man. The Bible was sufficient for teaching the truth to people 2000 years ago - "people whose spiritual and intellectual standard was very low" - it is not sufficient to meet the needs of man today. Moon's writings are needed to meet modern man's spiritual and intellectual needs.

Some of the sources for Moon's teachings are the Master Speaks, Divine Principle and Its Application, the 120 Day Training Manual, New Hope News newsletters and *The Way of the World*, a monthly magazine. All but the last are for "insiders" only.

The basic authority for the Unification Church is the book, *Lectures on Basic Doctrine* (Wul lee Kang Non). The English edition is called *Divine Principle*. It is described as "encompassing the profound thought of the Orient and based upon Christian beliefs and ideology."

Moon abuses the Bible to advance his own purposes. When the Biblical teachings do not square with his own, they are either ignored or distorted to appear to fit Moon's idea anyway. Not the knowledge of the Bible, but the knowledge of *Divine Principle* is the key to acquiring "new truth", which illuminates all problems of "life and the universe". Such claims to the necessity of extra biblical revelation are typical of sects and cults and cannot be permitted by the Christian Church.

Jesus Christ

What does the Unification Church think about Jesus Christ? The cross of Christ is not central in its teachings. Jesus' crucifixion was something God never intended. God meant Jesus to marry the perfect mate and establish, "God's family" on earth. Christ never had the opportunity to marry or to be a "true parent" and in this way restore mankind through gradual transmission of his blood through his offspring.

With the crucifixion, Christ's mission failed, though His death still counts for the spiritual salvation of man. Yet, despite this claim, Moon also states: "At the moment of crucifixion ... there was no redemption; there was no salvation; and there was no beginning, no beginning of Christianity. So there on the cross, salvation was not given." Moon also teaches that any person can have the same deity as Christ. In his book, *The Master Speakers*, he tells his followers: "You can compare yourself with Jesus Christ and feel you can be greater than Jesus Himself."

Members of the Unification Church believe that Rev. Moon is the Messiah. A Korean professor of sociology, who was a follower of Moon in his early years of developing the

Unification Church writes: "Moon, therefore, is superior to Jesus Christ, because he fulfilled the mission which Jesus could not accomplish. Jesus is no longer one of the Trinity; the Holy Son, because of his failure in his original mission. But Moon, SunMyung in the Tong-il Church has taken his place. Thus Moon is not only the founder of the Church but also he is the Messiah of the Second Advent, one of the Trinity, a living God." The Unification Church's view of Jesus Christ is drastic and even blasphemous departure from Biblical teaching.

Creation and fall

If Christ has failed in fulfilling God's mission for the salvation of man, we must ask: Who is man? What was his original sin? God created Adam and Eve as brother and sister, intended them to mature spiritually, attain perfection, become husband and wife. They were to establish God's kingdom on earth through their sinless offspring. However, Satan, in his jealousy of God's love for them, physically seduced Eve (the spiritual fall of man). Eve then had intercourse with Adam (the physical fall of man). Since the Fall the stain of Satan's blood has been transmitted to all the descendants of Adam and Eve and brought about the corruption of both the physical and spiritual life of all men. So man's fall is not seen as the eating of the fruit from the forbidden tree in response to the subtle temptation of Satan, but rather as an immoral sex act - the act of adultery. Moon wrote in *Divine Principle*: "the root of man's sin stems from adultery."

Salvation

How can fallen man be saved? Jesus was never meant to die on the cross for the redemption of sinners. The people of Israel, who didn't understand Jesus' mission, killed him. Satan invaded Jesus' body. This teaching means that physical redemption was impossible through Jesus. Jesus was raised from the dead, but His body is now only a spiritual one. This is the reason why Jesus can only bring about spiritual and not physical salvation.

Jack Sparks, in *The Mind Benders*, states: "... just as Adam had his counterpart in Eve, Jesus had His spiritually in the Holy Spirit, who was also sent by God. Jesus became the spiritual True Father of mankind, representing the Tree of Life. The Holy Spirit became the spiritual True Mother of mankind, representing the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil."

Who can bring complete physical redemption to mankind? Moon and his wife, called "Mother of Universe". In 1960 Moon married an eighteen-year-old high school girl, a very young age to be married, by Korean standards. They are the new true parents, the perfected couple who came to take the place of Adam and Eve. Two children born to the Moons are believed to be without original sin. To belong to the true family of God under the "true parents" is of great religious importance to every member of the Unification Church. By its membership one receives the pure blood and the stain of the blood of Satan is washed away.

Not Christ, but Moon, took upon himself the responsibility for our sins. In the 120 Day Training Manual we find this shocking comparison of Moon's torture by the communists with Christ's suffering and death for our salvation.

"Therefore, instead of me being tortured, the sinless Messiah, Moon was tortured by Satan ... the bloody body of the only son on whom Heavenly Father was able to rely was now thrown out into cold, into darkness ... Father shed blood instead of me, instead of you, instead of us ... While I was committing sin, Father was shedding blood to cleanse my sin. Because he shed blood, he was qualified to give life to me."

With this in mind, one can understand the fierce devotion of the Moonies to their leader. They are literally willing to die for their Messiah. Moon is to his followers more than a man. He is their all in all.

The following gives an idea of the Unification Church members feelings for Moon: "His value is incredible and inestimable and immeasurable. He is greater than the universe. He is more precious than the universe. It is only he from whom sinless mankind can start. He is the only man in the universe whom by loving my sin is solved, by loving whom I can be born anew, by loving whom I can be given rebirth and new life. Therefore, the fact that we can attend him must be the most precious event in our lives... Therefore, through ... the offering of your mind, your body, your life, and the things you have, you can establish the foundation of faith ... Therefore, this attitude toward the Messiah is the essential attitude of the Unification Church toward Father."

The second coming

If Christ is not central, who then will be the Lord of the Second Coming? One doesn't have to guess. It is Mr. Moon. He calls himself "the Lord of the Second Advent." We are now living in the last days. Christ will not come in literal clouds, he will come by being born on earth as perfected man, both spiritually and physically.

"Where then will he be born? 'If Christ is to be born as a man in flesh on this earth, and not come again in a spiritual body, he will surely be born in a certain nation of God's elect In some place of God's predestination.'" Which is the "certain nation of God's elect?" Moon states: "The nation of the east where Christ will come again would be none other than Korea."

The stress in Moon's teaching on the second coming is on the material. In *Divine Principle* he says: "God's purpose of creation is to establish the Kingdom of heaven on earth." Jesus has achieved his mission: limited and "spiritual." The Lord of the Second Advent will achieve his "complete and universal restoration." Moon's vision of the kingdom is one of an "extremely pleasant social environment on earth."

Mass marriages

Marriage is a special blessing bestowed by the master (Moon). It is related to the idea of being joined to the True Parents, the Perfect Family and having perfect children. This marriage blessing seems to be the only rite in the Unification Church that resembles a sacrament. The young couples who have become partners in the mass marriage ceremonies where Moon has officiated are considered to be among the first to be restored to the status of the children of God. Through Moon's marriage blessings, church members believe themselves to be absolved of original sin. Moon recently conducted a mass wedding of some 2,000 couples during a ceremony in New York. Many of the participants were strangers until they met their intended spouses on the day of the ceremony. The church, says Moon, has married 5,300 couples since 1960. The engagements took place on New Year's Day, which is celebrated in the Unification Church as "God's Day."

Political Involvement

The Unification Church is fiercely anti-Communist and heavily involved in political activities. Moon's political interest is related to his view of the Second Coming. He and his followers are responsible for helping to bring about a "one-world religio-political system under the authority of the Lord of the Second Advent."

The Unification Church sees the battle against communism as its greatest task. In its battle against communism it has many front organizations, such as the International Federation for Victory over Communism, the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles, the Freedom Leadership Foundation, the World Freedom Institute, the American Youth for a Just Peace, the International Cultural Foundation and the One World Crusade.

Moon believes that the U.S. is a specially favoured nation in the sight of God, chosen to play an important role in the Unification Movement to oppose communism. In one of his talks to an American audience, Moon asked: "Have YOU ever thought which nation should be restored first? The leading nation (the United States)! If we restore your nation, one sixth of the globe will be restored." The U.S. will never be destroyed as it is inseparably linked with God's plan for the free world. "America is the centre of those God-fearing free world nations. America has been chosen as the defender of God. Moon supported President Nixon because of his ardently anti-Communist stance. Moon's political support didn't go unnoticed by Nixon. In a letter from the White House, dated Dec. 11, 1973, he said: "All the words of encouragement I received are deeply heartening to me, and I am particularly grateful for the prayers and goodwill that you and the members of the Unification Church have expressed at this time."

After Mr. Nixon resigned from the presidency, the followers of the Unification Church were asked about his downfall. The usual answer was: "Our Master, The Reverend Moon, urged President Nixon to hold onto his office and not resign. But President Nixon was not strong enough to hold his office."

How Christian are Sun Myung Moon's teachings? The answer is obvious: "Not at all!" His followers are motivated by fear. They believe that they must become sinless on their own: "... a man's perfection must be accomplished finally by his own effort without God's help..."

Moon's teachings are a strange mixture of the bizarre, the novel, Oriental philosophy, pseudo-Christianity, pantheistic theology and a wide variety of occult doctrines and practices. "Reverend" Moon's own words summarize his anti-Christian position: "God is now throwing Christianity away, and is now establishing a new religion, and this new religion is the Unification Church ... we have only one way."

Johan D. Tangelder
September, 1982