

The Unification Church and the Reverend Moon

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"I am a thinker, I am your brain. When you join the effort with me, you can do everything in utter obedience to me. Because what I am doing is not done at random but what I am doing is under God's command."--Sun Myung Moon

An acquaintance of mine who was in town for the bicentennial celebration told me about a strange encounter he had. He said he was walking down a street near Independence Hall when a young man dressed in the fashion of the 18th century with knee breeches and a three-cornered hat suddenly jumped in his path and held out a flower.

"Please," the young man said with a smile, "have a flower."

My friend said that he reached out his hand and nearly accepted, but sensed a gimmick. He replied warily, "Ah, I'm not so crazy about flowers."

"Well, could you make a donation?"

"A donation to what?" asked my friend.

"For the flower."

"But I don't want it."

"Make a donation anyway," insisted the young man.

My friend reported that at this point he quickly side-stepped the young man and sought escape. But the young man caught up to him. The young man held a red flower up against my friend's shirt pocket, saying, "It would look very nice." My friend paid him no attention and continued walking and the flower-

bearer eventually abandoned my friend without ever explaining who he was or what the donation was for.

Even if asked, the young man would not have said who he represented. His Church instructed him against it. If pressed to explain the destination of the money, the young man would have lied, according to Church instructions. The Church is the Unification Church, its head, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

Moon's followers are instructed that because of the unfavorable publicity the Church has received in the media, they should deny any personal link to Rev. Moon. Said one former member of the Church, Peter Tipograph, 23, "The Church taught that the outside world was 'satanic' and that it was all right to use lies and deceit to sell goods on the streets to support the Church."¹ For these deceitful tactics the Unification Church has been severely criticized in the media. It has also been rumored that the Church is a front organization for the government of South Korea.

To support this accusation, critics point out that some of Rev. Moon's closest advisors were once, and may still be, employed by the South Korean CIA

and military establishment. U.S. federal investigators are presently involved in an inquiry into the activities of Moon's chief aide, a former military attache to Washington, Pak Bo Hi. Pak, president of the Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation, has been accused of siphoning off funds from this tax-exempt organization and passing it along to Korean agents attempting to buy political influence.

Moon's economic empire is a conglomerate of corporations which includes, in South Korea, a weapons factory, a pharmaceutical company and a tea company. In the U.S., Moon's Unification Church has bought up valuable real estate in New York, and holds 44 percent of the total shares of stock in the Diplomat National Bank in Washington, D.C. Their 42,820 shares alone in the Diplomat National Bank are worth more than \$1 million.

The Washington Post recently reported that Moon's latest business venture, the Tong 11 Fishing Company, has developed a lucrative tuna business on the East Coast in Massachusetts.² The company exports the tuna to Japan, where a premium price is paid for the meat of giant, bluefin tuna. A major expansion of their commercial fishing operations in the U.S. is presently under consideration. A Tong 11 spokesman explained that, "Rev. Moon is looking at a number of things in the ocean. It has resources that can be used for the good of people, because of protein. And he's aware that the United States fishing industry is in a state of decline."

Moon's primary concern, he says, is not for his business interests, or America's fishing industry: he is primarily concerned with the state of moral decline in America. He contends that the evil of communism is sweeping ac-

ross America, and that it can be defeated by reviving the revolutionary spirit of America. America's vehicle for this revival, according to Moon's plan, will be his Bicentennial God Bless America Committee. Earlier last year in New York's Yankee Stadium, and in Washington, D.C. in September, Moon's Bicentennial God Bless America Committee sponsored "festivals" in which Moon delivered the keynote speeches. In his speech at New York, which was reprinted as a full page advertisement in newspapers across the country, Moon said that, "God anointed America with oil," and that "America must be God's champion."³

Moon warned, however, that, "Throughout all of America, Satan is becoming the master." This decline "will be the perfect opportunity for the evil of communism to overtake America."³ Therefore, he has gathered together the "noble sons and daughters" of America to wage battle against this evil. The main battleground for this Armageddon will be centered, Moon asserts, in Korea, along the 38th parallel which divides communist North Korea from the South. And these forces of good and evil will be spear-headed by the Messiah and Satan.

Moon does not say directly that he is the Messiah, but his associates coyly reveal that the Messiah was born in the year 1920 in Korea and that he may already be amongst us. Unsurprisingly, Moon was born in the year 1920 in Korea.

According to Moon, he possesses an impressive list of credentials for the post of Messiah. He claims that he has had visionary chats with Moses and the Buddha, among others, and that Jesus personally called upon him in a vision to carry out his unfinished work.

This work involves the world unification of all religions and nations, and to this end Moon founded the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity in 1954 in Seoul, South Korea. He first gained international notoriety when he performed two mass marriage ceremonies for some 430 couples in 1968 and 777 couples in 1970. The Unification Church claims that these international weddings symbolized the creation of world brotherhood. In publicity pictures distributed by the Church, the Rev. Moon is always shown at the head of this brotherhood.

Moon has attempted to increase his popularity with the American public through an extensive media campaign. He has displayed a keen sense of opportunism in allowing himself to be photographed next to people with whom he'd like to be associated. Some years ago Moon succeeded in having his picture taken with President Dwight Eisenhower, and more recently with Hubert Humphrey, Edward Kennedy, Strom Thurmond and James Buckley, and he uses these pictures in publicity releases to associate himself with political figures.

In recent years, Moon has also waged a campaign to associate himself with members of the scientific community. Beginning in 1972 in New York, the Unification Church has sponsored the annual International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences. The second, third, and fourth annual conferences were held in Tokyo, London, and again in New York.

An article in the *New York Times Magazine* reported that for the 1975 New York conference held at the Waldorf Astoria, "The letters of invitation--offering to pay all expenses,

plus \$3,000 for co-chairmen--failed to mention that the affair was sponsored by the Unification Church or that Sun Moon would give the opening address. When they learned of Moon's involvement, many of those invited--Buckminster Fuller, Norman Cousins and several others who had agreed to serve as advisors for the conference--withdrew."⁴ Another who withdrew, Amitai Etzioni, the prestigious sociologist from Columbia University, remarked that, "The conference sponsors have tried to inject Moon into everything and of course we do not share his views."⁵

However, the Conference did proceed, and Moon scheduled his fifth annual International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences for November 1976 in Washington, D.C. The conference, sponsored by a Moon front, the International Cultural Foundation, was held on the subject of "The Search for Absolute Values: Harmony Among the Sciences."⁶

Apparently, there must be a solid block of scientists and scholars who deem it important that a scientific conference be held under any sponsorship, so long as science benefits. But as Etzioni indicated, there is a question about who the real beneficiary of a Moon-sponsored science conference is--Moon or the scientists.

In addition to scientific gatherings, Moon forces have made forays into the U.S. Congress and state legislatures in an attempt to win endorsements from elected officials. Public officials were approached by members of the Unification Church with the same ethnic character as the person they were trying to win over. The Church's political strategy is embodied in Moon's pamphlet,

"Master Speaks." In it Moon advises sending "three pretty girls" to talk to each member of the U.S. Senate. However, in politics, as in science, Moon has not encountered great success.⁷

The organization's greatest political inroads were initially made in the New York State Legislature where they received 12 endorsements in support of the group's patriotic activities. In retrospect, though, after the "patriotic" girls' motives were unmasked, many of the 12 legislators said that it was a mistake to have endorsed their activities.

However, Rev. Moon is not fazed by politicians who refuse to lend support. Moon commented that, "If we find among the Senators and Congressmen no one really usable for our purposes, we can make Senators and Congressmen out of our members."⁸

The membership of the Unification Church in America has been estimated at over 7,000 members, hardly enough to form a political base. But the membership is almost certain to rise worldwide. In Japan the Unification Church claims over 210,000 members, in West Germany 6,000, and in South Korea, Moon's home country, the Church enjoys the support not only of a large popular following, but of the government as well. The Moon organization has announced that it will next focus on Europe, where Moon intends to send hundreds of his American believers to convert Europeans. Moon anticipates a similar degree of success in Europe as he achieved in the U.S.

Until the early seventies there were only a small number of Moon converts in the U.S. However, after Moon moved to the U.S. with his wife and eight children in 1973 the organization rapidly expanded. The reason for their

growth, argues Thomas Robbins of Queens College, New York, is that America was, in a sense, "ripe" for Moon.⁹

Robbins claims that there was a "deterioration in civil religiosity" in America. Possibly due to Vietnam, or Watergate, or detente, suggests Robbins, the decline of American civil religion disrupted "the whole fabric of American life." Robbins asserts that the Unification Church "represents an attempt to legitimate a secondary group ministering to communal deprivation in collectivist terms. It does so by appealing to the ideology traditionally used for legitimating social integration, the American civil religion."

It is not specifically Robbins' task to explain why the deterioration occurred. He only points out that Moon is moving into that religious vacuum with an organizational machine perfectly geared to the civil-religious foundations already laid. The Unification Church seeks to fulfill the needs of young people not only by offering religion, but by offering a special communal life-style.

Many parents assert that their children were attracted to religious cults because they needed to escape from their worries and problems. As adolescents they faced a time of major upheaval in which the thought and behavioral patterns of the child were exchanged for those of an adult in society. In short, parents contend that it is a time of vulnerability for the child, and that the structured behavioral patterns in a commune would appeal to one's need for security.

Esther Alexander of Munroe Falls, Ohio, whose husband became active in "deprogramming" cult members after their nephew joined the Children of

God sect, has noticed that college people "drift into fanatical cults most readily in periods when their lives are coming unstuck."¹⁰

She explained further that, "The cults get a lot of kids at exam time. I've heard this same story from young men and women over and over again. They were depressed and anxious about the exams, afraid they were flunking, so they went away with some mystical group and kind of escaped from the world. Most of these cults, the evangelist ones and also the Eastern-mystical ones, preach exactly what a troubled young person wants to hear: It isn't important to pass exams and get a good job, and so on. The only important thing is to save your soul or find peace." This same vulnerability applies, she claims, to people having painful experiences with sex or drugs.

James T. Wooten of the *New York Times* reports that for some of the cults, like the Children of God, the communal life-style is the essence of the religious experience.¹¹ Members of the Children of God, writes Wooten, "believe the universe is on its last legs and...have left family, friends and society behind in their retreat to isolated communes." There, they hope "to resume the ascetic, communal life style they believe to be patterned after the earliest disciples of the Christian faith." Wooten writes that the Children of God "had its origins among a small group of conservatives within the Jesus Movement, a nationwide Fundamentalist movement among youth." (Other offshoots of the Jesus Movement include the Love Family, Body of Christ, and Love Israel.)

The life-style in one of these isolated, religious communities is highly structured. In a Moon community, converts to the Unification Church are required to participate in group activities and are given no time for privacy. They are allowed only 5-6 hours of sleep at night and are awakened at 7 A.M. for calisthenics and song sessions. The daytime program includes 4-5 hours of lectures, interspersed with prayer meetings, exercise sessions, group discussions, and clean-up chores. Small, unchaperoned, conversational groups are prohibited. Newspapers from the outside world are prohibited, and anyone wishing to make a telephone call must do so in the presence of an authoritative member of the community.

Pre-marital sex is prohibited, but recruits are subjected to "love-bombing,"¹² a technique of group support and reinforcement which consists of constant smiling, friendly patting, and handholding. While the recruits are bombarded with this "love" they are being bombarded, as well, by the Unification Church ideology. Their activities are woven together by a common thread: songs are sung about the Messiah; prayers are said for his inevitable Coming; lectures are given to illuminate His purpose. Moon's book, *The Divine Principle*, is required reading.

This book specifies the rules and regulations governing all forms of interpersonal behavior, even casual social interaction. "As a result," says Robbins, "the social behavior of Moon followers has a somewhat mechanical and stereotypical quality."⁹

For some concerned parents of mem-

bers, and former members themselves, Robbins' explanation for the "mechanical" behavior of Moon followers is not simply a result of obeying rules. Many have described the Moon methods as a form of brainwashing, and accused the Unification Church of practicing mind control. One former member, Mr. Paul Engel, said, "I left, but if I had stayed in the Church much longer, I know that I would have been unable to make this or any other decision myself. This was inevitable because I know my mind was brainwashed, hypnotized, and under the control of 'Reverend' Moon and the Church.... I was in the process of becoming a total obedient, non-thinking robot."¹³

Despite accusations of brainwashing and involuntary confinement charged of religious sects, no legal action can be undertaken because of the Constitution's First Amendment, which protects an individual's freedom of religion. However, Children of God, Inc., a non-profit Texas entity, was denied a Federal tax exemption as a religious institution in 1972, and some months ago, when it was reported that the Unification Church's holdings were well into the millions, the Internal Revenue Service announced that it was going to review the Unification Church's status as a tax-exempt religious institution. But nothing was ever announced about the results of that review. Presumably, they still enjoy their tax-exempt status as a religious organization.

Although the courts are powerless to act against the religious sects, the same cannot be said about the parents whose children have abandoned home, school, and their past lives to join these groups. The parents' movement grew out of a

series of incidents in which parents attempted to rescue, or abduct, depending upon your point of view, members of the sects by force.

These "abduction" stories seem to revolve around the activities of Ted Patrick, a former community relations worker with Gov. Ronald Reagan. Patrick has set up a "deprogramming" operation in San Diego, California, to help parents recover children who are minors from the sects. Patrick justifies his abduction work on the ground that he is liberating people from mind-control religions. On that point, he is supported by law.

Although Patrick was brought to court in New York in 1973 on the charge of unlawful imprisonment of a person he was attempting to deprogram, the jury acquitted him. The acquittal was based "on a section of the penal law allowing parents of a minor to use physical, but not deadly, force on the off-spring if they 'reasonably' believe this is necessary to maintain discipline or promote his welfare."¹⁴ The jury believed that Patrick, together with the parents of the complainant, were justified in seizing him because they "reasonably" believed he faced psychological harm through the indoctrination of the New Testament Missionary Fellowship, a Christian fundamentalist group.

Despite the outcome of this judicial decision, several questions remain. What exactly is a mind-control religion when the adherents voluntarily let their minds be subjected to its tenets? And does the right of free, religious worship cease when a minor chooses a faith of which the parents strongly disapprove?

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Dictionary defines brainwashing as "the forcible application of prolonged and intensive indoctrination sometimes including mental torture in an attempt to induce someone to give up basic political, social, or religious beliefs and attitudes and to accept contrasting regimented ideas." The claim could perhaps be made that converts to the Unification Church "give up basic political, social, or religious beliefs and attitudes," but whether this occurred because of "mental torture" is a moot point. It is equally difficult to determine at what point religious education

ceases and becomes "prolonged and intensive indoctrination."

Only on one point, it seems, are the supporters and critics of Moon in agreement--that Moon has some sort of master plan. Each group, however, differs as to its interpretation of Moon's plan. As viewed by Unification Church members, Moon is indeed not acting at "random," but obeying "God's command." To critics, however, Moon's plan is a devious strategy of the Unification Church to consolidate power and wealth under a religious guise.

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