

# CULTS

– Sunday School Notes –

## 6 Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Church

The cults that we have discussed so far are very close to orthodox Christianity in the sense that they are easily mistaken as “the real thing” by those who do not know the Word of God very well. We will now come to those cults that mix in elements from other religions and make claims that are simply absurd from the Christian perspective. Nevertheless, they find enough followers, particularly among those who feel spiritually needy but are quite distant from the Christian faith. They promise them a spiritual solution to their problem, inner healing, and true fellowship – and all this sounds so much more believable than the preaching of the many lifeless Christian churches. They are usually backed up by a powerful organizational structure with a lot of financial support, and a strong public presence – particularly on the World Wide Web, which they use to recruit new members.

Today, we want to talk about Sun Myung Moon’s *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity*, briefly called the *Unification Church* or sometimes simply the *Moonies*. They claim that

*We now have the means to heal all modern-day human problems, exalt every human soul, and bring the kingdom of God within the reach of every man.*

According to Reverend Sun Myung Moon, a title he gave to himself when he founded his church in 1954, this all-embracing claim is based on new revelations from God which were given to him in order to “*complete the task of establishing God’s kingdom on earth and bringing piece to mankind*”. Briefly told, this new revelation teaches that ever since the fall, God has been trying to rectify his creation but has not succeeded. He has worked through chosen champions, but none of them found acceptance among men. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and even Jesus Christ – they all failed. So it became necessary for the Messiah to return to earth again as *Lord of the Second Advent* and to find his perfect bride. They will become the *true parents*, the first couple that through God’s power is able to lead a sinless life, to bring forth children with no original sin, and thus to re-establish the true lineage of God on earth. All humankind can be engrafted into this lineage by receiving the blessing of God through the *true parents*, and thus the kingdom of God on earth will be restored.

These claims, which I have taken directly from the original web pages of the *Unification Church*, are in sharp contrast to our understanding of the Word of God. But the *Unification Church* states that our rather literal interpretation of the Word of God is wrong and that all its doctrines are actually taught by the Bible – we only have to understand the *divine principles* behind its figurative language.

## 6.1 History

The teachings of the *Unification Church* are strongly tied to the personal history of its founder, Sun Myung Moon. On Easter morning 1935, he claims, Jesus Christ appeared to him and asked him to complete the mission that he had begun 2000 years ago. Moon, who was 15 at the time, began studying the Bible and many other religious teachings to find out what Jesus had left undone on earth.

In 1945 he organized his findings into what later became known as the *Divine Principle* and began to preach publicly in North Korea. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested by the Communist regime for “disturbing the social order” and sentenced to forced labor. In 1950, during the Korean War, he was rescued by United Nations forces and subsequently began preaching again.

In 1954 he officially established his new church in Seoul, calling it the *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity*. His church attracted many followers from a Christian women’s university in South Korea. This stirred up newspaper reports about sex orgies in the Church and about Moon’s own marital affairs. Rumors of this nature overshadow the *Unification Church* until this day, although there has never been a definite proof for them.

In 1960 Moon was married to his current wife, Hak Ja Han. The *Unification Church* teaches that this union marked the beginning of the restoration of humankind. By God’s power, Moon and his wife were made able to lead a sinless life and thus established the position of *True Parents*. Consequently their nine children are the first human beings without original sin. Moon calls himself “*Father of the Universe*” and his followers see him as a messianic leader who deserves undivided obedience.

When Moon moved to the United States in 1971, his Church attracted many young Americans who struggled with spiritual emptiness and readily accepted Moon’s teachings which seemed to be so close to the twisted understanding of spirituality in the seventies. His church grew quickly and Moon himself became very popular. He was invited to the White House and was given opportunity to address members of the US Congress. Soon “*Moonies*” were seen selling flowers and candy in almost all public places. This, in fact, turned out to be the main source of income for the *Unification Church* and subsequently attracted the IRS, which indicted him for evading income taxes. Moon served another sentence in prison, but was later set free after a Senate subcommittee investigated his case.

Today, the *Unification Church* has about 100,000 members in the U.S.A. and about 3 million worldwide. But reports about abusive practices within Moon’s church have come up over and over again. Allegations about sexual abuse were made as well, particularly by those who visited his camps in South East Asia. Although these reports need to be weighed carefully, we can almost be sure that the *Unification Church* abuses its members as far as their labor, finances, and spiritual needs are concerned.

## 6.2 Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

From a Christian's perspective, the teachings of the *Unification Church* have become more and more absurd. In 1992, Sun Myung Moon openly proclaimed to be the *Lord of the Second Advent*, the return of *Messiah*. He is the true owner of this world, so he said in 1997, and salvation can only come to those who are engrafted into *his* lineage. This also means that learning Korean will be mandatory for everyone to be saved, because this is the language of the *True Parents*. Those who reject Sun Myung Moon will perish, and this is why America has been declining. The “*one nation under God*” will cease because God's final purpose is “*one world under God*” and this can only be established in the lineage of the *True Parents*, that is Moon and his wife.

It is hard to understand how anyone in the world can believe such boastful claims of a man who provides no evidence for his teachings. The reason for that may be the slow evolution of Moon's teachings, which caused people to gradually accept everything said by Sun Myung Moon. If one accepts Moon's way of interpreting the Bible, his claim that there must be a second Messiah coming to earth is not so absurd anymore. If a naive observer then looks at Sun Myung Moon's life, the “persecution for God's sake” and his “unfailing willingness to serve”, he may in fact accept that Sun Myung Moon could be God's chosen instrument. From then on he believes everything that “Reverend Moon” says.

So, let us look at his teachings and uncover the flaws that have led so many people astray. How does Moon justify the claims he makes.

### 6.2.1 Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Although Sun Myung Moon's church aims at the Unification of World Christianity, the Christian Bible is not the only source of authority. In fact, the Bible is subject to a new interpretation as laid out in Sun Myung Moon's *Divine Principle*. On 536 pages, this book presents a “*set of principles, based on the patterns which Reverend Moon found in the Bible during his years of search*”. Without these principles, it is said, the Bible cannot be understood correctly. So the *Divine Principle* has become the true source of authority for the *Unification Church*.

One of the principles given by Sun Myung Moon is that the Bible often needs to be understood symbolically instead of literally. He writes, for instance, that “*we cannot believe that God would implant in Adam and Eve a desire to rebel against him and destroy themselves for the sake of a piece of fruit. So the fruit must signify something far more important than a tasty apple or pear*”. So, because the common sense in the 20th century cannot grasp anymore the meaning of trust and the severeness of breaking even a “simple” promise, the most straightforward interpretation of the fall is to be brushed away. Moon replaces it by an interpretation that makes far less sense to me: “*the sin of Adam and Eve must have involved a sexual act*”, that is “*Adam and Eve engaged in a premarital sexual relationship and thus they fell.*”

For the uninformed reader, this argument may seem plausible because it is built on the traditions and value systems of the late 20th century, which hypocritically distinguishes “small sins” – that is what society tolerates – from the “big sins” which we find morally unacceptable. But God doesn’t have a scale for the graveness of sins. Adultery and premature sex is not worse in God’s eyes than lies and broken promises – these are all sins and unacceptable for God. Besides, Moon is even wrong about the “premarital”. God had already blessed the union of Adam and Even in **Genesis 1:28** – and that did not happen after the fall. And how shall a human being have physical intercourse with Satan, a spirit being?

So Moon’s *Divine Principle*, which he supports by many writings of eastern religions, is actually a very human one, and he uses it to establish interpretations of the Bible that have nothing to do with the true meaning of the Word of God. Whenever you bring a verse that proves some of his teachings wrong he can simply “re-interpret it symbolically” and change its meaning to whatever he likes. In **2.Peter 1:16** the Apostle Peter writes

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Apparently Sun Myung Moon does just the opposite in order to build up his own name.

### 6.2.2 God & Man

*God himself told me that the most basic and central truth of his universe is that God is the Father and we are his children*

God is the creator of all things, the absolute reality, eternally self-existent, transcendent of time and space. So far Moon’s doctrines are orthodox. But before creating the universe, he writes (*DP 24*), God was *incomplete*. He existed only as *internal masculine subject* and needed to create an external feminine subject to become complete. God cannot exist without man and man cannot exist without God. Thus man is “*as important in value as as God himself*”. This concept of God is strongly related to the constant interplay between the Yang and Yin in the *Taoist* religion, which apparently influenced Moon a lot.

Man was created in order to fill the need of God to “*share, give, and take with someone in a reciprocal relationship*”. Being in the image of God, we are to live our life for others as well. “*Without this giving and taking between subject and object ... nothing endures for eternity*”. The kingdom of God will be here on earth, when there is God-involvement in every relationship.

According to Moon, this is the divine principle on which we have to base our life and our understanding of God’s word. The trinity is denied – there is only one God and the creation is his necessary counterpart. But the Bible nowhere mentions that God *needs* his creation. God is entirely self-sufficient. He doesn’t need us to be complete.

### 6.2.3 The Fall

Moon's divine principle also leads to an entirely different understanding of evil, the fall, redemption, salvation, and the role of Jesus Christ. According to Moon, *evil* is the emergence of selfishness in the world. Lucifer resented God's selfless love towards Adam and Eve and seduced Eve before God could complete his creation.

The fall, it is argued, was both *spiritual* and *physical*. The issue could not have been just a mere fruit – it must have been something more fundamental. And what can be a more fundamental act of selfishness than a sexual relation. So the *Unification Church* teaches that Eve had intercourse with Lucifer and “received certain elements from him”. Hoping to get rid of these, she seduced Adam, and passed them on to him as well. Thus sin entered the once perfect lineage created by God and instead the evil lineage of Satan was multiplied.

Ever since, God has been trying to rectify this situation. He needed to erase the evil from his creation and to re-create the world of goodness. He needed to restore the sinless lineage – to create *True Parents* who would live in perfect obedience and complete unselfishness and would thus be able to have children without original sin. This would then be the beginning of a new world order – the kingdom of God on earth. You need to twist the Word of God a lot to come to these doctrines. Moon, as I mentioned, emphasizes that the Bible uses a lot of symbolic language – which opens the door to every interpretation you like. He states that “the religions of this world have served as tool for God” to re-create the world of goodness. Thus the teachings of other religions are the means to unlock the secrets of the Word of God and Moon certainly borrows a lot from various eastern religions.

The Bible is very clear concerning the fall and there is no reason to assume that the description of the fall in **Genesis 3** should not be taken literally. Disobedience, however small, is sufficient to break the trust between God and man. Since the fall, no man except Jesus has ever been sinless: **There is none righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10, see also 1. John 1:8)**. No one will ever be able to have sinless children: the lineage of God will not be passed physically but only spiritually.

### 6.2.4 Jesus Christ

Moon's teachings about Jesus Christ in the *Divine Principle* are not always clear. He was God's champion, chosen to fulfill God's mission on earth. He achieved perfection and thus “*attained the purpose of creation*”. In the light of this, he may be called God, but he can by no means be called God Himself. In fact, “*as a man he was no different from us except that he was without original sin*”.

Jesus came to earth to become the *True Parent* of mankind. Adam had failed – Jesus should re-create the true lineage of God on earth, so that God could have fellowship again. He was to find his chosen bride, the second Eve, and to “*bring forth upon this earth his own sinless children. All mankind would have found life by grafting on to*

them”. But Jesus did not find acceptance as Messiah and was murdered on the cross. That – so Moon writes – was not his purpose. In fact, in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed desperately that this would not take place. He failed like many before him. Nevertheless, he did not die in vain. His body decayed. But he was resurrected spiritually and through faith in Christ we will experience *spiritual rebirth*. However, the cross is unable to remove our original sin as it cannot achieve physical salvation.

So Jesus will have to come again as the Third Adam, the Lord of the Second Advent. He will come in the flesh, suffer many things and be rejected. But some will recognize him and the Kingdom of God will gradually appear. He will find his true bride and become the true parent and thus bring physical salvation to man kind. All religions will be united under him.. On the basis of **Revelation 7:2–4** and **14:1** it has been revealed to Sun Myung Moon that “*Christ will be born in a country in the East – from the rising of the sun*” – that nation is Korea. The Korean people will become the Third Israel.

The careful observer will not fail to notice that the description of the Lord of the Second Advent fits Sun Myung Moon very well. His followers have always viewed him as the promised Messiah, the perfect and sinless father, the True Parent through whom they can be born anew, the only one authorized by God to forgive sins. But the claim to Messiahship has not been made publicly until 1992. On August 24, 1992 Sun Myung Moon made the following statement during his inauguration address for his World Culture and Sports Festival in Seoul

*.. we are the savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah.*

He has repeated this claim over and over again since then. The *Unification Church* now openly teaches that Sun Myung Moon is the new Messiah and that He and his wife are the *True Parents* of mankind. They are both sinless and their nine children are the first children born without original sin.

In the *Divine Principle*, Moon gives a lot of scriptural evidences for his teachings, again twisting the meaning of the Word of God by interpreting it symbolically. He was careful not to proclaim himself openly as Messiah for a long time. But now he states to have achieved what Jesus did not achieve. This almost makes him superior to Jesus in the eyes of his followers. It makes me wonder, why there was so little public outrage among Christians when Moon proclaimed Messiahship.

There are many bible passages that clearly prove Sun Myung Moon’s teachings about Jesus wrong. In **Luke 24:44–48** Jesus explains that it was necessary for him to die on the cross and rise again. **Luke 24:36–39** and **Acts 2:29–31** are proof for the physical resurrection of Christ. **Acts 1:9–11** makes clear that Jesus will come again from heaven and not be born on earth again. Salvation is found in *no one else* but Jesus (**Acts 4:12**, **Romans 10:9**) and there will be no Lord of the Second Advent. So Sun Myung Moon’s doctrines are in sharp contradiction to the Word of God. **Colossians 2:8** and **Galatians 1:8** tell us what God thinks about such teachings.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the *principles of this world* rather than on Christ.

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

### 6.2.5 The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the feminine counterpart of God. She is not a person but a form of energy derived from God. She is the *True Mother* who will give rebirth to fallen children as children of goodness. (*DP 215*)

### 6.2.6 Salvation

Salvation is a complex subject for the *Unification Church*. Since Jesus died before accomplishing his mission, faith in Jesus Christ will only provide spiritual, but not physical salvation. Christ's coming as Lord of the Second Advent will complete His unfinished work. When "*the True Father and the True Mother become one, God will come down and become one with them on earth*" He will create the central persons through whom mankind can receive spiritual life. By "*accepting the True Parents, obeying them and following them 'more than my own life' and by doing what the Messiah requires with great faith*" a person's original sin will be eliminated and he will eventually become perfect.

"*Restoration cannot be fulfilled by God's power alone, but is to be fulfilled by man's joint action with God*". This clearly is salvation by works with no assurance, or – to be precise – by complete submission under Moon who can abuse his followers as much as he likes. This makes the *Unification Church* is a personality cult. Sun Myung Moon is the absolute authority of the Church in every respect. His followers have to work extremely hard for him if they want to have a chance for salvation.

Marriage is believed to be essential for salvation as well. Only the male and female together can represent God totally. In order to be saved, one has to be matched, married, and blessed by the *True Parents* in a ceremony in which one becomes symbolically part of his family – the true, pure, and sinless lineage of the Messiah. Over the years Sun Myung Moon has performed many mass wedding ceremonies for the members of his church – many of the couples hardly knew or had ever seen each other before. Former members also report that the marriage ceremony involved strange secret rituals that had the purpose to "indemnify" for the sin of Adam and Eve. There were also rumors about sexual abuse in this context but they have not been confirmed.

These doctrines have nothing to do with the Word of God. **Ephesians 2:8–9** says

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Salvation is *only* by faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot work your way into heaven, and no sanctified ceremony will bring you there.

### 6.2.7 Things to come

Moon teaches that “*our body, once it is dissolved into dust, cannot be resurrected into its original state. It is not necessary for a spirit man to resume his flesh when there is a spirit world, where he is supposed to go and live forever*”. In brief – *there is no physical resurrection*. Jesus was resurrected only as a spirit being and so will we.

But “*spirit men who passed away to the spirit world without having perfected themselves must come again and fulfill the responsibility they left unaccomplished in their physical life*”. In this case, the earthly man is the “second coming” of the spirit man. John the Baptist, for instance, had to accomplish the mission Elijah had left unaccomplished. In other words – the *Unification Church* teaches *reincarnation* as it is taught by many eastern religions.

These teachings are embedded into an elaborate hierarchy of attainment, by which men will achieve entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven on earth*. Fallen man must be raised to a proper relationship with God and go through three stages of perfection: a *form-spirit stage*, a *life-spirit stage*, and a *divine-spirit stage*. Until the time of Jesus, men attained the form-spirit stage by obedience to the law. Since the cross, men attained the life-spirit stage through faith in Jesus Christ. During the time of the Lord of the Second Advent, “*spirit men can attain the divine-spirit stage of perfect restoration by believing and serving the Lord of the Second Advent*.”

But a spirit can raise his level by intercommunicating with men on earth. By an active give and take between spirit and body the divine-spirit stage can be attained and the Kingdom of Heaven reached. “*The ultimate purpose of God is to save all mankind*” (DP 190). Hell is only a temporary condition and is in the world. The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is as yet vacant. It will be opened by the Lord of the Second Advent through the “*marriage of the lamb*”, that is his wedding with the Second Eve. This will re-establish the good lineage into which all mankind will eventually be engrafted. According to Moon, this event has happened by now.

Then men will live in communion with God and there will be God-involvement in every relationship. Thus the give and take between subject and object, the perfect relationship will be maintained – and God will be completely fulfilled in His creation.

The influence of eastern religions in all these teachings is obvious. Reincarnation, stages of perfection, and mutual dependence between God and man, – all this is nowhere taught in the Bible. It is appointed unto men to die once, and after this there will be judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**), where the dead will be judged according to their actions (**Revelation 20:12**). There is no second chance to improve your stage after death and the eternal fire is certainly a reality.



### 6.3 Special Aspects

In addition to teaching severely twisted doctrines under the mantle of Christianity, the *Unification Church* has become known for a variety of abusive practices, because – as former members report – the end justifies all means that eventually “*serve God’s purposes*”, probably a twisted interpretation of **Luke 16:8–9**.

So it is o.k. to use deception in order to gain a donation or workshop attendance from members of Christian churches. It is acceptable to use brutality to “separate Satan” from a member that appears not to be fully devoted to Sun Myung Moon.

Members are expected to give all they have and are to the Church. It is reported that some “Moonies” work 22 hours a day and fast several weeks in order to pay for their sin. All this, they are told, all this is nothing compared to what “Father”, that is Moon, does and one should feel indebted to “father” Moon.

Because of the strong discipline and commitment to the *Unification Church*, a member’s life is centered entirely around the church. It is the source of their religion, as well as their cultural, social, and other support systems. Consequently, they will find it very difficult to leave the organization if they become disillusioned by the *Unification Church*. Now to a certain extent this is true for Christian Churches as well. We aim at commitment and a strong fellowship. But the degree of dependence in the *Unification Church* is another dimension, although it the alleged brainwashing of members has not been confirmed. Most people who have tried to leave the *Unification Church* came out unharmed, although very disappointed. They need our help.

It is also not clear how the *Unification Church* handles the money that comes in by donations and through the hard work of its members. The money does not flow back into the local groups and the few leaders of the Church are certainly able to lead a better life than most members. Allegations that the *Unification Church* is a business organization under the cover of religion – like for instance *Scientology* – have not been confirmed yet although the Church had been observed by the IRS. The handling of finances in the *Unification Church* is certainly a malpractice but this has happened in various evangelical organizations as well.

### 6.4 Summary

The presence of much biblical and Christian terminology in the *Unification Church* has led casual observers to conclude that Moon’s church is just another variant of Christianity. But its doctrines and practices are clearly heretical and Moon’s claim of Messiahship is simply outrageous. But we should not get worried. God’s answer to all this is already written down in **(2.Peter 2:1–3)**

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on

themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.