

WORLD RELIGIONS

The Unification and Unitarian Cults

Lesson #22

For this lesson we will look at two cults, the Unification cult and the Unitarian cult. While most websites and even Christian resources refer to these groups as the “Unification Church” or “Unitarian Church,” they have nothing to do with the church of Jesus Christ. They are outside the pale of Christianity. Like all cults they use the Bible, borrow Christian jargon, and often refer to themselves as belonging to a “church,” but they are not part of the “church,” technically speaking, for they deny cardinal doctrines and promote heresies that make them anti-Christian, and hence are demonic. This is not to say that there are no nice people within these cults or that everyone involved in these false religions believes the most extreme views. Most do not. All are deceived to one degree or another. Since we are covering two different false religions in this study, we will not be able to go into depth on either of them. The goal is to introduce you to the general size, history and teachings of each cult, so that you will not be led astray and so that you might better evangelize those who have been deceived.

I. GROWTH AND STATISTICS OF THE UNIFICATION CULT

- A. The Unification cult has large land holdings, especially in New York and California. Each member works to make money for the cult. With money coming in, tax exempt status, and free volunteer workers, they are able to expand and maintain their holdings. Moon purchased the Hotel New Yorker and owned *The Washington Times*, until 2010 when it was sold to an Asian conglomerate of which the Unification Church is still part owner.¹ Though Unification websites portray Moon as humble and self-sacrificing for his followers,² Moon lives in a huge 25-room mansion, on a 350-acre estate, in the lap of luxury³ and flies around in luxury helicopters.⁴

- B. Members of the Unification cult, often referred to as “Moonies,” work tirelessly, because they believe that men are not saved by the power of God alone, but by their works in addition to God’s power. This motivates

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Washington_Times

²http://www.reverendsunmyungmoon.org/life_dayly_life.html

³Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 169.

⁴http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun_Myung_Moon

the followers of Moon to engage in making money for the cult by selling candy or flowers or by receiving donations often under the guise of being a “college student” or supporting some other sectarian cause.

- C. Many “front” organizations are used to collect money and donations for Moon with names such as “Project Unity,” “One World Crusade,” “New Education Development,” “International Cultural Foundation,” “The Collegiate Association for Research of Principles,” “International Federation for Victory over Communism,” etc.⁵ Thus, it is through these apparently secular, political, humanitarian, and educational institutions that Moon collects huge amounts of money from people who have no idea they are supporting a cult.

- D. *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* says, “The Unification Church (UC) is a multi-billion dollar worldwide enterprise with, allegedly, an incredible number (700 to 900) of front organizations. (This must be some kind of record.) Critics have charged that with all these front organizations, whatever the UC is involved in, the ultimate purpose was to help Moon achieve his long-term goal of ruling the world as the Lord of the Second Advent. Indeed, our own study of the UC history and theology supports this allegation.⁶

II. HISTORY OF THE UNIFICATION CULT

- A. The Unification Church or The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, Inc.’s history is similar to other cults we have studied so far. James A. Beverley, in his work *Religions A-Z*, summarizes the history of the Unification cult with these words:

The Unification Church is one of the best-known and most controversial new religious movements. It is led by Sun Myung Moon, a native of Korea. Moon was born on January 6, 1920. Unificationists believe that Jesus appeared to Moon on April 17, 1935, and that Moon was asked to fulfill the mission of Jesus. . .

⁵Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 169.

⁶John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene: Harvest House), 450.

Moon officially launched the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity in 1954. In 1959 Young Oon Kim, one of the most important Unification theologians, was sent to the United States of America. . .

The United States government charged Moon with income tax evasion on October 15, 1981. . . the Korean leader was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months in prison. . .

Moon's followers were elated with Moon's meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev on April 11, 1990, and with North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in November 1991. These strategic meetings were viewed as evidence of Moon's supremacy over Communism. Moon took credit both for the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and for the victory of the Allied forces in the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

In 1998 Nansook Hong, Moon's former daughter-in-law, published a devastating memoir about life inside the church. Titled *In the Shadow of the Moons*, Hong accused her ex-husband, Hyo Jin Moon, of adultery, drug addiction, and physical and emotional abuse. Further, she claimed that Sun Myung Moon had an illegitimate child who was raised by another Unification family.⁷

- B. Irvine Robertson, in his work *What the Cults Believe*, summarizes the history of Moon's life and the Unification cult with these words:

Sun Myung Moon was born in Korea on January 6, 1920. With his family members, he was "converted" to Christianity at the age of ten. On Easter morning 1936, while deep in prayer, he had a vision. Jesus appeared to him and told him that he had been chosen to complete the mission He had started two thousand years ago. . .

By 1944 he had gained a following in North Korea. He was, however, badly treated by the Communist regime, and apparently he was rescued from execution by United Nations forces in 1950. Later that year he began to teach his Divine Principle. In 1954 he officially established his new church, calling it The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, or simply The Unification Church. There are shadows over certain reputed sex

⁷James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 245.

practices in the early days of the church, as there are over Moon's own marital affairs. However, in 1960 he was married to his present wife, who is either his fourth or second, depending on which report one believes. They have nine children.

"The union between Sun Myung Moon and Hak Ja Han is called 'The Marriage of the Lamb.' Moon is called 'the Father of the universe.' Consequently their [nine] children are considered to be sinless. Together, the parents and children are heralding the coming perfection of humanity."⁸

- C. Sexual scandals have been a regular part of Sun Myung Moon's life. He was imprisoned in North Korea in 1948 for supposedly anti-communist activities, but in reality he was imprisoned for his ritual sex practices with members of his movement in various communes. According to the statements of those involved in these "ritual acts," Moon told them that they would undergo "blood cleansing" by having sexual relations with him. In 1955 Moon was again arrested on morals charges involving sexually related religious "rites." The second time he escaped conviction. In 1954 Moon divorced his first wife, after being married ten years and six years later married 18 year old Hak Ja Han. A number of Koreans who were associated with Moon claim he had two other wives between his first wife and last wife.
- D. Moon is clearly an anti-Christ figure. Making bold claims about himself and Christianity such as:
1. "Our group is of higher dimensions than the established churches."
 2. "The Christianity which God has been using for 6,000 years is doomed."
 3. "God is now throwing Christianity away and is now establishing a new religion, and this new religion is Unification Church."
 4. Speaking of himself as a prophet he says, "I am the foremost one in the whole world."

⁸Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 82.

5. “Out of all the saints sent by God, I think I am the most successful one.”
6. “I have talked with many, many Masters, including Jesus, on questions of life and the universe. . . . They have subjected themselves to me in terms of wisdom. After winning the victory, they surrendered.”⁹
7. “As soon as a person believes in Jesus, Satan can invade his body.”¹⁰
8. “I have a right to forgive other’s sins.”¹¹
9. “One of my most important revelations is that Jesus did not come to die.”¹²

III. TEACHINGS OF THE UNIFICATION CULT

Like every other cult, the Unification cult draws from the Bible, uses biblical themes, speaks of biblical characters, but only to lend credibility to and draw people into false doctrine. Unification beliefs are a combination of various teachings. As we have seen so far, false teachers, having little or no respect for the Bible, are often syncretistic, combining multiple religious views into one new false religion. *Religions A-Z*, speaking of Unification beliefs, says, “The Unification Church utilizes Christian themes in its thought, but draws equally from the beliefs and practices of Korean folk religion.”¹³

A. Concerning Revelation

1. The Unification cult uses the Bible but only as far as it is interpreted correctly by Moon. It also uses Moon’s work *The Divine Principle*. Concerning this work Irvine Robertson says:

⁹All quotes above from Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and You* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1981), 170.

¹⁰Sun Myung Moon, *Master Speaks*, December 25th, 1974, 212.

¹¹*Master Speaks*, March/April, 1965 MS-3, 16.

¹²F. Sontag, *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*, 134, quoted by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (Eugene: Harvest House), 450.

¹³James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 246.

The Divine Principle is “a set of principles based on the patterns which Rev. Moon found in the Bible during his years of search.” (CC 120)¹⁴ It is a weighty volume of 536 pages, translated into English from Korean. In it are the basic doctrines of the Unification Church. Being considered only part of the new truth, it will be enhanced as expected “deeper parts of the truth will be continually revealed.”¹⁵

2. *Religions A-Z*, speaking about the source of revelation for the Unification cult, says:

Moon has placed great emphasis on direct revelation from the spirit world. This has included claims of supernatural messages from Moon’s deceased son, Heung Jin Nim, from Moon’s mother-in-law, from a deceased Unification scholar, and even from various religious and political leaders who have died. This list includes Buddha, Marx, Hitler, and dead U.S. presidents. These messages have been channeled mainly through two women in the Unification Church.¹⁶

3. The Unification cult uses their own “Bible” as a source of revelation called “Divine Principle,” as well as other writings by Moon. While Moonies claim to believe the Bible, they do not, they use it for their purposes but they don’t believe in it.

B. Concerning God

1. The Trinity is denied.
2. The Holy Spirit is a female aspect of God, a female spirit.
3. God is the creator and exists because of the reciprocal relationship between positive and negative energy. This teaching is borrowed from the “Yin and Yang” philosophy and the book *I Ching* of the Taoist religion.

¹⁴Sun Myung Moon, *Christianity in Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1974), p. ix. As designated by Irvine Robertson in *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991).

¹⁵Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 83.

¹⁶James A. Beverley, *Religions A-Z* (Nashville, Tenn.: T. Nelson, 2005), 246.

4. Before creation God was incomplete and could not exist without a relationship with man just as man cannot exist without God.
5. God is masculine and creation is feminine.
6. God is the universal father of all mankind.

C. Concerning Jesus Christ

1. Jesus was not sent to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Moon has said, "The death of Jesus was neither his will nor his fault.... [It was] murder, and his body was taken by Satan."¹⁷
2. Jesus' goal was to find the true Eve in order that with her they might become the True Parents and have sinless children in order to restore humanity.
3. Jesus is the product of a sexual relationship between Mary and Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. Mary never told Joseph about the real father of Jesus and this gave rise to myths about the virgin birth.
4. Jesus failed in his mission to find the true Eve and so God has now raised up Sun Myung Moon as the new Adam, Messiah, and Lord of the Second Advent. Moon has stated, "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."¹⁸
5. After the Second Advent, heaven on earth will be literally achieved when Jesus Christ will again come to earth, not in the clouds with glory, but born again of a woman. He will be the third Adam and will, with His wife, become True Parents, and have sinless children. Moon is the third Adam and together with his wife they are the True Parents which is why their children are supposedly "sinless."
6. Jesus is really no different from us, except that He was without original sin from the Fall. Jesus was divine like we are divine, created in God's image but He was not God.

¹⁷Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 81-82.

¹⁸Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 81.

7. The fact that Jesus was tempted by Satan, asked His Father for help, and was crucified by evil men proves He was not God. However, Jesus, by attaining to the ultimate purpose of man, attained to deity, though He is not God Himself.
8. Jesus was not physically resurrected. In fact, there is no resurrection. People who fail to achieve their purpose in life, and attain to perfection, must come back (be reincarnated), and try again. This is why Elijah, having failed the first time, had to come back as John the Baptist.

D. Concerning Creation, Man and the Fall

1. God created the world of goodness to last forever, pouring all of His goodness into man.
2. Satan, jealous of God's relationship with Adam and Eve, seduced Eve and had sexual relations with her. Satan contaminated Eve who in an attempt to get rid of that contamination had relations with Adam and corrupted Adam in the process. This is why all of their descendants are corrupted.
3. Since the Fall, God has been trying to restore creation through chosen men who practiced self-denial like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus. Yet they all failed.

E. Concerning Salvation

1. Since the Fall, God has been trying to rectify the broken relationship between Himself and His creation. He has tried many times but has repeatedly failed. Yet in Moon, and his most recent wife, "the True Parents" who have produced sinless children, God has a chance of making all things right again. Robertson says:

God's work has been that of restoration. In seeking to destroy the world of evil and re-create the world of goodness, He needs tools. "The religions of the world have served as these tools for God." Christianity is the "most progressive religion because it teaches sacrificial love and duty in supreme form". . . The Lord of the Second Advent,

who will come as the central figure of Christianity, will accomplish the ultimate purpose of all the religions.¹⁹

2. Moon's work, *The Divine Principle*, defines salvation in these terms:

As it is written (1 Cor. 12:3), when we come to believe in Jesus as the Savior through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we receive the love of the spiritual True Parents, coming from the give and take action between Jesus, the spiritual True Father, and the Holy Spirit, the spiritual True Mother. Then, through this love, new life is infused into those who believe in Christ, and each is reborn into a new spiritual self. This is called "spiritual rebirth."²⁰

3. Fallen mankind attains salvation when they are restored to perfection by their own works and the providence of God. Their perfection is attained in three stages. Up until the time of Jesus men attained the first stage by keeping the Law of Moses. After Jesus they attain the second stage, which allows them to go to paradise, through faith in the gospel. The third and highest stage is attained when the Christ is present, living on earth (now, in the person of Moon) and men believe in him and serve the Lord of the Second Advent (Moon).²¹

Unitarian Cult

The Unitarian cult is more of a worldview than an organized body of followers. Unitarian views have been espoused by heretics throughout the ages. The term "unitarian" can apply to any number of religious groups. There is a liberal Christian theological position called Unitarianism which denies the Trinity, among other cardinal doctrines. Socinianism, a heretical deviation from Christianity, is a theological persuasion that fits under the banner of Unitarianism. There is the "Unitarian Universalism" movement that unites under the axiom of "the free and responsible search for truth." People often refer to Unitarian Universalist churches, but they have nothing to do with the church and aren't even remotely Christian. What they all have in

¹⁹Irvine Robertson, *What the Cults Believe* (Chicago IL: Moody Press, 1991), 86.

²⁰Sun Myung Moon, *The Divine Principle*, 216.

²¹Moon, *The Divine Principle*, 175.

common is that they deny the doctrine of the Trinity and most groups also deny biblical authority. Unitarianism then leads people to Humanism, and Humanism leads people to Evolution. The final lesson in this series will cover Humanism and Evolution. Because of this we will only briefly address the Unitarian Cult, in whatever form it may be found, and deal with its ultimate outcome in the final lesson of the series.

I. GROWTH AND STATISTICS OF THE UNITARIAN CULT

Because Unitarianism comes in so many forms and is so widely held in the world, if not by profession, by action, it is impossible to give the statistics of its growth and development. Though many, even in Bible believing churches, may claim to be Christians and affirm the teaching of the Bible, they live their lives like the most liberal of Unitarians, as if God does not exist, as if there is no hell or judgment to come, and might rightly be labeled “practical unitarians” in contradiction to what they may profess.

One of the earlier false teachers with unitarian views was a man named Socinus, who taught universalist doctrines in 1562. Since that time unitarians are often described as subscribing to the *Socinian Heresy*. It is certain that some unitarians came from the followers of Arius (256-336 AD), who denied the deity of Christ. Others came from the non-conformist churches and congregational churches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What I believe drives people to universalist views is their desire to be free from accountability, responsibility, and judgment before God, to be able to sin with impunity, not having to fear a judgment to come. Universalism denies the reality of sin, judgment, hell, and often God. Thus, the one who has convinced himself of these lies is able to sin with an easy conscience. Of course, this does not change reality and what is true, but it is one of Satan’s devices to make men more comfortable on their way to hell.

II. HISTORY OF THE UNIFICATION CULT

A. *Truth About World Views* says, “In many ways, the religious institutionalization of humanism (or naturalism) is the Unitarian worldview. The Unitarian worldview has its origins deep in early church history when many denied the triune nature of God. However, its modern form has its origin in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century New England. The theological descendants of the Puritans (the Congregationalists) denied

the doctrine of the Trinity. The official movement was founded in 1825 as the American Unitarian Association, which merged with the Universalists in 1961. The movement acknowledges that it is no longer a part of the Christian worldview."²²

- B. *Wikipedia* notes, "Unitarianism, both as a theology and as a denominational family of churches, was defined and developed within the Protestant Reformation, although a range of similar Christology may also be found among early Christianity. The term "Unitarian" first appeared as *unitaria religio* in a document of the Diet of Lécfalva, Transylvania on 25 October 1600, though it was not widely used in Transylvania until 1638, when the formal *recepta Unitaria Religio* was published. The Polish Brethren began as a grouping of Arians and Unitarians who split from the Polish Calvinist Church in 1565, though by 1580 the Unitarian views of Fausto Sozzini (hence the adjective Socinian) had become the majority. Sozzini's grandson, Andrzej Wiszowaty Sr. in 1665-1668 published *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum quos Unitarios vocant* (Library of the Polish Brethren who are called Unitarians, 4 vols. 1665–69). The name was introduced into English by the Socinian Henry Hedworth in 1673. Thereafter the term became common currency in English, though their detractors continued to label both Arian and Unitarian views as "Socinian."²³

III. TEACHINGS OF THE UNIFICATION CULT

David Read, in his book, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Answered Verse by Verse*, gives his testimony growing up in a Unification church and says:

My early religious training was in a big, white Unitarian church in rural New England, just south of Boston. I still remember the time when, in my boyish innocence, I expressed to the pastor my belief that God had actually parted the Red Sea to let Moses and the Israelites pass through. He turned to the assistant pastor and said with a laugh, "This boy has a lot to learn." As I grew older I did, in fact, learn what this church taught.

²²James P. Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews: A Biblical Understanding of Worldview Alternatives* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 23.

²³<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unitarianism>

Encountering their pamphlet, *What Unitarians Believe*, I read that “Some Unitarians believe in God, and some do not”—and quickly realized the ministers must have been among those who did not believe.

By the time I was fourteen years old, I had reached my own conclusion that religion was “the opium of the people,” a convenient thought for an adolescent who preferred not to have God watching him all the time. And when I went on to Harvard University, I found that atheism and agnosticism flourished there, too. So, between the Unitarian church and my Ivy League schooling, I seldom encountered any strong pressure to believe in God.²⁴

A. Concerning their Source of Authority

1. Source of authority is not the Bible, which is at best a classic piece of literature and a fallible recording of the evolution of Judaism.
2. *The Truth About World Views* says, “In short, Unitarians regard human reason as the sole authority for guidance and purpose in life. This world view is naturalistic humanism dressed up as a religion with buildings, pastors, and teaching centered on the power of human reason.”²⁵

B. Concerning God

1. God is not a triune God, in fact He is not a person, but most likely a force. One can be an atheist and still be a Unitarian.
2. God does not judge people for sin.

C. Concerning Jesus

1. Jesus was a mere man. He is considered by some to be a great teacher, but He is not God.

²⁴David A. Reed, *Jehovah's Witnesses: Answered Verse by Verse*, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 119.

²⁵James P. Eckman, *The Truth About Worldviews: A Biblical Understanding of Worldview Alternatives* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway Books, 2004), 23-24.

2. Jesus did not come to die on the cross to make atonement for people's sins and was never resurrected from the dead.

D. Concerning Salvation

1. Mankind must look to themselves for salvation. Salvation is nothing more than growing in character and enjoying a good life (i.e., being comfortable on your way to hell).
2. Salvation might also be understood as achieving excellent political structures or social peace.

E. Man and Sin

1. Man is the pinnacle of the evolutionary process and wisdom. People themselves are all potentially divine.
2. Sin is ignorance.
3. There was no Fall, Adam, or Eve. Satan is a myth.
4. Death is the great unknown or annihilationism. You die and it's over.
5. Heaven and hell are myths or states of mind in this life only.

F. Core beliefs and practices

1. Freedom, justice, tolerance, reason, pluralism or individualism, rationalism, subjectivism, and liberalism.
2. The Unitarian Universalist website states:

We believe that personal experience, conscience, and reason should be the final authorities in religion. In the end, religious authority lies not in a book, person, or institution, but in ourselves. We put religious insights to the test of our hearts and minds.

We uphold the free search for truth. We will not be bound by a statement of belief. We do not ask anyone to subscribe to a creed. We say ours is a noncreedal religion. Ours is a free faith.

We believe that religious wisdom is ever changing. Human understanding of life and death, the world and its mysteries, is never final. Revelation is continuous. We celebrate unfolding truths known to teachers, prophets, and sages throughout the ages.

We affirm the worth of all women and men. We believe people should be encouraged to think for themselves. We know people differ in their opinions and lifestyles, and we believe these differences generally should be honored.

We seek to act as a moral force in the world, believing that ethical living is the supreme witness of religion. The here and now and the effects our actions will have on future generations deeply concern us. We know that our relationships with one another, with diverse peoples, races, and nations, should be governed by justice, equity, and compassion.²⁶

IV. **WELL-KNOWN UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISTS**

To illustrate the pervasiveness of unitarian thought among the famous, a sampling is given below arranged in various categories. These answers came from this website: <http://www.famousuus.com/american.htm>

A. **American Politics**

1. John Adams
2. John Quincy Adams
3. Benjamin Franklin
4. Thomas Jefferson
5. Thomas Paine
6. Paul Revere

²⁶<http://www.uucocoa.org/whatwebelieve.htm>

7. Adlai Stevenson
8. William Howard Taft
9. Daniel Webster

B. Arts and Humanities

1. Louisa May Alcott
2. Charles Dickens
3. T. S. Eliot
4. Ralph Waldo Emerson
5. Edvard Grieg
6. Nathaniel Hawthorne
7. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. And Sr.
8. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
9. Paul Newman
10. Christopher Reeve
11. Henry David Thoreau
12. Frank Lloyd Wright

C. Science and Medicine

1. Alexander Graham Bell
2. Luther Burbank
3. Walter Channing
4. Charles Darwin
5. Isaac Newton
6. Florence Nightingale
7. Linus Pauling
8. Michael Servetus

The small sampling above shows that universalist views have been alive and well in all areas of society. Not all those listed above held the most extreme universalist views, but all of them denied the doctrine of the Trinity and to one degree or another the false doctrines that flow from the fatal error.