

Living the Divine Principle. Inside the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in Britain / Vivre le Principe Divin. L'Eglise de l'Unification du Révérend Moon en Grande-Bretagne.

In: Archives des sciences sociales des religions. N. 45/1, 1978. pp. 75-93.

Citer ce document / Cite this document :

Barker Eileen. Living the Divine Principle. Inside the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in Britain / Vivre le Principe Divin. L'Eglise de l'Unification du Révérend Moon en Grande-Bretagne. In: Archives des sciences sociales des religions. N. 45/1, 1978. pp. 75-93.

doi : 10.3406/assr.1978.2143

http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/assr_0335-5985_1978_num_45_1_2143

LIVING THE DIVINE PRINCIPLE

Inside the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church in Britain

Comment une croyance fondée sur des principes théologiques contribue-t-elle à assurer la permanence d'une communauté religieuse ? L'A. essaie de répondre à cette question à partir de la doctrine du « Principe Divin », tel qu'il fut révélé au Rév. Moon, et de son impact sur les membres de « l'Eglise de l'Unification » en Grande-Bretagne.

La question de savoir ce qui retient les fidèles britanniques dans la secte pose des problèmes à deux niveaux : celui des motivations de l'adhésion personnelle et celui de l'interprétation sociologique de la cohésion du groupe. La réponse de l'A. repose sur les résultats d'une recherche effectuée en 1976-77, sous la forme de l'observation participante, au sein des diverses communautés anglaises de l'Eglise de l'Unification.

This paper (1) attempts to show how a theological belief contributes to the continuance of a religious community. The theology is "The Divine Principle" as revealed to the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and the religious community is the current British membership of the Unification Church.

I. — THE PROBLEM

The basic question to which the paper is addressed is "Why do people stay in the Unification Church? How can they?"

(1) This study is being supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council of Great Britain to whom I wish to extend my thanks.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those members of the Unification Church who have allowed me to live with them and to question them with what to most people would surely seem to be extraordinary impertinence.

To ask such a question presupposes there are problems involved in understanding continuing membership. These can be defined at two levels: the personal and the sociological; firstly, how could it "make sense" for an individual to stay in the Church? and secondly, how is it possible for the group to continue to cohere?

a) *The problem concerning the individual*

The pertinence of the first question will be recognized by those who have heard about the Unification Church through the mass media. It would on the face of it seem incomprehensible that anyone should wish to give up his material possessions and abandon his career to sell literature or flowers on the street, that he should be willing to work for sixteen or more hours a day, receive no pay, have no holidays, that he should be prepared to be sent to the opposite end of the world at a moment's notice and forced to fast or do degrading jobs for minor misdemeanours or for no apparent reason at all. He will have no say in where he lives or with whom nor in whether or not he can sleep with his wife. Indeed his wife will be chosen for him and may well turn out to be someone whom he had never even met a couple of days before the mass marriage ceremony and someone who could come from a completely different race or culture. To all intents and purposes he will have severed relationships with his family and former friends and will be prepared to submit absolutely and unconditionally to the authority structure of the Church. His life will be pledged to a Korean multimillionaire who lives in the lap of luxury in the United States and who has highly dubious connections with the Korean C.I.A.

Only two possible explanations can be offered by the media which put forward descriptions of such amazing commitment. It is apparently obvious that no sensible, sane, intelligent person would join, let alone stay in, the Church. The individuals concerned must either have been "lacking something" in the first place (they must have been psychotic or in some way inadequate) or, alternatively, they have been rendered inadequate by some dastardly process which changes nice, decent, intelligent people into brainwashed zombies who are incapable of making their own decisions about their present or future lives.

These two "explanations" (those of initial or induced inability to make free, rational choices) have often been applied to conversion processes in the past, but while there have undoubtedly been cases where psychosis or brainwashing might account for membership of a religious group, and while it would be a foolhardy sociologist who would rule out a suggested explanation as having *any* causal relevance, it would, I believe, be downright incorrect to invoke either psychological inadequacy or brainwashing to account for anything but the most insignificant determination of membership. Unless of course one were to tautologically redefine psychological inadequacy or brainwashing as that which results in Unification Church membership. Such tautologies do in fact often exist and frequently one suspects such explanations indicate little beyond the fact that those who proffer them do so because they themselves have a need to make understandable or acceptable something which they either cannot or do not wish to understand or accept in any other terms.

I have argued elsewhere (2) that the process of joining the Unification Church involves conversion and commitment rather than brainwashing. For some the distinction between conversion and brainwashing will be an arbitrary cut off point along a continuum between free will and determinism — themselves concepts which are almost impossible to define satisfactorily. For others it will reflect an evaluation of the moral content of a socialisation process. I employed the crude rule of thumb distinction that in brainwashing the old is removed and the new put in the vacuum that is left, while in conversion something new is taken up and the old belief system or way of life is *thereby* displaced. Furthermore with brainwashing there is the implication that the individual is powerless to actively choose the new ideology — he passively accepts it, while with conversion he is convinced he can choose and will select those aspects of the new system which have a resonance with something that belongs to his previous personality. This does not mean that there may not be pressure on him to choose, nor that what he chooses under one set of conditions need be what he would choose under another set. But my argument is that converts to the Unification Church are

“shown something which, in the light of their past experiences, they have become convinced is better than what they already had. They are not (except to a very limited extent through comparison with the new and better) shown that what they *had* was wrong. Indeed one of the most effective aspects of the Unification Theology is that it builds *on* Christianity as a bridge to the further revelation of *The Divine Principle*. Just as Jesus and the New Testament helped us to grow in understanding on the basis of the Old Testament, so, it is claimed, does the Rev. Moon help us to a better understanding of the Old and New Testaments. Genesis, the history of the Jewish people and the mission of Jesus, interpreted in the light of the knowledge which was revealed to Rev. Moon provides a clear and coherent account of the created world, the nature of God, the cause of sin, the present threat of communism and the coming of the Lord of the Second Advent. It also provides a theological underpinning for a way of life where people can relate to each other in a deep, spiritual and God-centred way, where husbands and wives can come together in God-centred unions providing the foundation for God-centred societies and, eventually, a God-centred world which will realize God’s original plan when He created the Garden of Eden” (3).

The conversion process involves far more factors than the acceptance of the Divine Principle (e.g. social interaction with the group is frequently, though by no means always, a more important variable), but there can be little doubt that the provision of a comprehensive and comprehensible theology is *one* of the phenomena which must be taken into account if we

(2) E. BARKER, “Conversion into the Reverend Moon’s Unification Church in Britain”. Paper presented to the British Sociological Association’s Sociology of Religion Group at the London School of Economics, September 1977.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

wish to understand Unification Church membership. The theology offers the individual a meaning and a direction to his life and it offers him hope of realization of personal fulfillment in his relationships with both God and his fellow men.

b) *The problem concerning the group*

The second concern in asking the question "How can people stay in the Unification Church?" is not so much to make individual membership rational and comprehensible as to look at the ways in which the members live together as a group. Here we have the familiar sociological questions relating to problems of internal power structures, to the control of interpersonal relationships, to coping with the outside world and to maintaining a "deviant plausibility structure" (4). As full members of the Church live a closed communal life there are the particular problems faced by community living and of particular interest is the way in which a religious community can provide a "sacred canopy" (5) which can, in a Durkheimian (6) fashion, function to overcome some of the difficulties facing secular communities (7). It will be argued that the Unification theology operates in such a way that it has positive functions for the maintenance of the group structure through the legitimation of authority and provision of a *Weltanschauung* which clearly categorizes and defines persons and boundaries of permissible behaviour and delineates group and individual goals. The group has a purpose defined and authorized by the divinely revealed theology which gives it the divine authority to define the purpose of each individual's actions and indeed life.

II. — THEOLOGY AS AN INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

There is a noticeable reluctance among some sociologists to consider theology very seriously as an independent variable in their attempts to explain religious phenomena (8). Theology, when it is mentioned, may be designated a merely epiphenomenal position and ignored in so far as

(4) The concept comes from P. BERGER, T. LUCKMAN, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Allen Lane, London 1967.

(5) The U.S. Title of BERGER's, *The Social Reality of Religion*, Faber & Faber, London 1969.

(6) See E. DURKHEIM, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1915.

(7) See, for a good discussion of the difficulties of holding secular communities together, P. ABRAMS, A. McCULLOCH, *Communes, Sociology & Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1976.

(8) A vocal exception is to be found in R. GILL, *Social Context of Theology*, Alden Press, Oxford 1975, and *Theology and Social Structure*, Mowbrays, Oxford 1977.

explanatory accounts are concerned. More often it is found to have some sort of "fit" with posited psychological or social-structural "needs" which, it is assumed, have to be fulfilled at a particular place or time. This may be elaborated into a theory which employs a version of Weber's concept of elective affinity.

In this paper I am trying to do no more nor less than to indicate some of the ways in which Unification theology can be seen as acting as an independent variable as *part of* the on-going process of life in the Unification Church; how, once the Divine Principle is accepted, it contributes to and plays a role in the network of causal chains which operate at both the micro- and macro-levels of the Church. To do this is only to pull one thread from the tapestry of complicated and interwoven interactions between beliefs and actions, persons and organizational structures, lines of communication and perspectives of reality, etc.

No claim is being made that the Divine Principle provides a sufficient reason for the existence of the Church, nor am I implying that an acceptance of the theology does not in itself require an explanation. Not everyone who hears the Principle becomes a member and not all members continue to accept its truth. It does not always work. Indeed Lofland's study shows that the theology by itself certainly was not an attractive motivating force in the early days of the American Church (9). It must also be stressed that the Divine Principle (like most theologies) can be, and has been, interpreted in different ways in different times and different places for different reasons and with different results (10).

To avoid any possible misunderstanding it might also be pointed out that to accord a theology a role as an independent variable is in no way to pronounce on its truth or falsity. Such methodological agnosticism will not be received happily by Church members who believe God, Satan and the Spirit World are key variables. Nor will it please the Church's opponents who wish only to insist that conspiracy, deception, manipulation and, occasionally, the anti-Christ are the key variables. Either side may be right but it is hardly important for this study which, to repeat, is merely concerned with trying to highlight the way in which the beliefs contribute to an understanding of our problem. Some of the consequences of belief in Unification theology can be recognized as common to many theologies, but the particular bundle or set of beliefs to be described here is peculiar to the Divine Principle.

III. — METHOD OF RESEARCH

I first became acquainted with the Unification Church in 1974 through my research into science and religion. After some time I asked for per-

(9) J. LOFLAND, *Doomsday Cult*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966.

(10) A very marked change in interpretation has resulted from the Church's "heartistic revolution" which encouraged the relaxation of some of its former vigilance in favour of a more relaxed and "loving" outlook where "heart" is given dominance over, though not to the exclusion of, "head".

mission to study the Church from the "inside". Eventually, and uniquely, I was granted this permission on my own terms. The study proper started about Christmas 1976.

Just over 30 taped interviews (on a random sample basis) have been carried out. Interviews vary in time but are normally of between 5-8 hours duration (11 hours being the record). I have visited or stayed as a participant observer in most of the main British centres and have attended several workshops and study courses on the Divine Principle at various "levels" (i.e. for potential converts, for parents and for fully fledged members).

IV. — MEMBERSHIP OF BRITISH CHURCH

While I do not intend to describe the conversion process here, a sketch of the type of person who is likely to join the Church might be helpful for understanding the "staying in" process.

Methodologically (mainly because of lack of adequate control groups) it is difficult to be sure exactly where and with what degree of firmness one can draw the boundaries to the pool of potential converts. Nonetheless, although these can only be known *ex post facto*, there do seem to be certain factors — or rather clusters of factors — by which the pool is circumscribed. It is, for example, extremely unlikely that a successful advertising executive in his late 40's would join the movement, while a young man in his early 20's from a middle-class Christian background who has done quite well at school and started, possibly completed, a degree or some sort of further training, would be far more susceptible. But the pool does also contain working class candidates and a few middle aged people (who are however likely to be introduced to the movement by their children). It is a feature of the British Family that the sex ratio is 2:1 in favour of men but this is not repeated in other countries.

While there is certainly no one factor which by itself is sufficient to endow someone with "pool membership", one could risk the statement that it was, in practically every case, a necessary condition that at some stage in his life the pool member would have believed in God. His parents are likely to have been at least nominally Christian, probably Catholic or Church of England, or possibly Non-conformist, one parent perhaps being more religious than the other. It is likely, however, that he will have become disillusioned with institutional religion and may have been looking for some philosophy or for a group of people who are sincere enough to actually live what they believe. Although he may have long hair, be taking drugs or consuming large quantities of alcohol and sleeping around, it is probable that he is aware his relationships with other people are devoid of any real depth and he may well be experiencing a sense of anomie so far as his social environment is concerned. He is feeling the lack of order and definition. He has no clear direction to his life. Belief in God may not be articulated but he is likely to be asking religious questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What is the point to all this? Where can I find a meaning to life? It is also quite likely that although he enjoys material comfort it is not one of his major concerns; he is indeed likely to shudder at the thought of a steady 9-5 job and settling down to married

life in a nice little house. He (or she) could however have an extremely idealistic view of marriage with "the right person" and may well be deeply concerned about the plight of the world. It is possible he or she is doing or wants to do some sort of service job such as teaching, social work or nursing.

Potential converts are not necessarily suffering from either objective or subjective deprivation. They might but will not necessarily have suffered any particularly traumatic experience, nor need they have undergone unusually long periods of tension. It is possible they would have had religious experiences such as visions or sudden "spiritual insights", but this is by no means essential. They are *unlikely* to be marginal or psychologically inadequate persons in any commonly recognizable sense. They may well have had a large circle of friends — or at least acquaintances, although again they may have been fairly isolated individuals.

The British Family comprises around 300 members. Normally there would be just about 200 in this country with the other 100 serving overseas (in America, Europe, Japan, or South Korea). There are also several Associate Members who, while accepting the theology and declaring themselves sympathetic to the Church, do not live as full time members in one of the centres.

Nearly 80% of the members are aged between 19 and 30. There are no full time members under the age of 18 — except of course those whose parents are members. The Church only really started in Britain in the late 60's. By the end of 1971 just under 40 of the present members had joined; since then there has been a fairly steady acceleration in growth. Roughly half the membership has been in the Family three or more years. There are about three dozen centres in Britain. The largest of these, a London HQ and a farm in Wiltshire, can both accommodate about 40 people — more if necessary. Several of the smallest centres have only one pioneer, other established ones have between half a dozen and a dozen members.

V. — THE DIVINE PRINCIPLE (11)

The theology is complicated. It is based on "The Divine Principle" which was revealed to Rev. Sun Myung Moon in Korea during the late 40's and early 50's. It would be impossible to do justice to its complexity here but it is important for the argument that some of it be understood.

The Principle of Creation explains how everything is composed of complementary aspects — positive and negative or male and female — and it is through "give-and-take action" between complementary associations that existence is possible. As everything is created in God's image, God

(11) *The Divine Principle*, 2nd edition, Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, Thornton Heath, 1973.

also has this dual character—a male and a female aspect. God created man so that He could exist in a complementary association and experience the love involved in a perfect give-and-take relationship with man. However before this was possible man had to pass through the necessary stages to reach maturity. When the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, had done this they were to have been blessed by God in marriage and would then have had children born of this God-centred union. Unfortunately God entrusted the archangel Lucifer to help bring Adam and Eve to maturity but Lucifer grew jealous of God's love for Adam and he tempted Eve to have an illicit sexual relationship with him. Eve then seduced Adam. The relationship was thus not the God-centred one which God had planned, but Lucifer-centred, and the children of the union were Fallen children who throughout history have had to undergo an inner struggle between the forces of good and evil which they had thus inherited.

Throughout history God has been trying to help man restore his original nature and reach the stage of a perfect, blessed marriage so that he can partake in a loving give-and-take relationship with God. After a long period of preparation and setbacks which had to be overcome God sent Jesus to complete the restoration. But Jesus' mission failed; he was not recognised as the Messiah (largely through the fault of John the Baptist) and was murdered before he could get married and have children born of a truly God-centred union. A careful study of history shows parallels between the developments since the time of Jesus and those developments which led up to the time of Jesus and thus reveals that the present time is one when it could be possible to finally overcome Satan and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

The three points in this oversimplified introduction to Unification theology that I want to bring out as most important in providing ideological underpinning for life in the Family are the millenarian hope, the dualism, and the concept of restoration.

VI. — THE MILLENIUM

The feeling of urgency generated by the belief that the New Age is at hand, yet must still be worked for, provides a continual incentive to commit one's whole life to whatever is asked of one in the name of God. The individual is proud to be contributing and feels he has a tremendous responsibility to do all in his power to help. Should he start to slacken the pace or to think about other things too much he is likely to suffer pangs of guilt.

For the individual this means his life takes on a meaning and has a direction. He is here for a purpose. There is a clear goal towards which he can work and instead of aimlessly wondering how to "do good", he knows where he is and that he is contributing towards the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. He may not be clear on the details of what the New Age will look like but he knows it will be a New Age so long as he and others like him are prepared to do what has to be done. Gone are the confusing options of an uncommitted life. Gone is the helpless feeling of "drift" as one wonders what the point of it all is. When one is working

towards the imminent realization of a God-centred world one does not want holidays or indeed to waste any time at all. Every second is crucial and relaxation is only permissible, or indeed desirable, when it takes a functional form and helps in the building up of spiritual and physical resources for the great battle with Satan. The belief that one is privileged to be not only living but also involved in such an important period of history provides encouragement when demands seem to become particularly severe. "It is necessary at the moment, but it won't be for long" is an oft repeated phrase.

That man has a crucial role to play is plainly revealed in the cosmology and vindicated by the order and lawfulness revealed by modern science. God will not achieve His ends by violating His own Divine Principles of creation. Although He sets up the conditions for the restoration as best He can, He is constrained by His own cosmic rules. Were He to restore the world merely by an act of His will He could claim no victory over Satan. It is up to man to play his role through his understanding of the Principles. Within the constraints of history and the forces which act upon him, each man has freedom and hence responsibility.

VII. — DUALISM

One can detect two kinds of dualism in Unification Theology: one of complementarity (which is somewhat like the Yin and Yang relationship in Taoist cosmology) and one of competing opposites.

Ideally there should be perfect harmony or give-and-take between positive and negative, male and female, mind and body, or heart and head, etc. Harmony and wholeness or *unity* are important concepts for the Church members and a belief in the necessity to "unite" has obvious positive functions for any group. One of the ways in which this is exhibited is in justifying the following of a leader, even when one suspects he is in the wrong. The pragmatic argument is that if a wrong action is carried out then the group will learn from its mistakes and can then do the right action. If everyone were to do just what he himself considered correct it would become impossible to ever have the strength of a group which had learned by its mistakes.

It would be wrong however to think that this *just* involves an acceptance that one person always has dominance over another person in any relationship. While it is true that, to use Unification terminology, the person in the "subject position" is in a dominant position over the person in the "object position", it is also insisted upon that this has to be seen as part of a give-and-take relationship on both sides. One member, trying to make me understand that to talk of one sided power was incorrect, admitted that while perhaps a few years ago the theology might have been interpreted (perhaps at that time necessarily) in such a way, members were now understanding more fully that a proper subject/object relationship was one where there was complete complementarity and harmony.

"In the atom presumably there aren't arguments between the nucleus and the electrons about who does what (...) the idea of one having priority over the other is daft because the thing is a *whole* and it's the *relationship* which makes the entity".

It is realized that pure, naked power relationships can lead to resentment and while it is recognized that occasionally those in a leadership role do misuse their position (it is after all still a fallen world), it is also emphasized that those in a subject position ought, if anything, to be *more* giving and loving than those in the object position. The power one submits to is that of a greater love.

Male and female are regarded as complementary but definitely different. Although women are often placed in leadership positions for certain purposes, the male is seen as being by *nature* in the "subject" position or dominant position. Together male and female can unite to make the most important unit of society—the family. By a series of Russian boxes of unification one works outwards to nations and the world. As mentioned above, individual responsibility is an important feature of the theology. This is in no way lessened by talk about changing the world at the macro-level. To change the world it is men's hearts, not the system, which must be changed. Blame is never allocated to structures. It is man's motives which should be to lead a God-centred life. Each individual should strive to live in uniting and complementary give-and-take relationships both at the horizontal level (as between brothers) and at the vertical level (as between man and God, or parent and child).

But as well as the "soft dualism" of complementarity, Unification theology also exhibits an almost Manichean dualism of the competing forces of good and evil. I say "almost Manichean" because in Unification theology the forces of good and evil have not got an eternal character. An original goodness was "upset" and resulted in what is called evil. This having happened however, history can be interpreted as the struggle between God and Satan reflected in the struggle between good and bad nations, between good and bad men, and the forces of good and bad within each one of us.

According to Mary Douglas in her *Natural Symbols* (12) we would expect such a cosmology to be found in a social organization which exhibits strong group control with such correlates as strong body control and whether or not one has membership of the group being an important defining characteristic for the individual. This is indeed the case with the Unification Church. Members always walk purposefully rather than meander, the men are clean shaven with short hair, the girls' hair is either short or else neatly tied back. Clothes are "Principled", presenting a neat appearance which is as unprovocative as possible to the opposite sex. Relationships between boys and girls are very carefully defined as those between brothers and sisters (or parents and children). It was illicit sex that was responsible for man's fallen nature and all the troubles of the world, so obviously sexual relationships are only to be enjoyed within a blessed marriage. (Married couples entering the Church do not sleep together until they have reached a stage when they are ready to be blessed in true marriage by Rev. Moon. This is unlikely to happen before they have been in the Family for several years).

(12) M. DOUGLAS, *Natural Symbols*, Barrie & Rockliff, London 1970.

The inside/outside perception of the world is very marked, and this too has obvious functions for retaining internal solidarity (13). Although most members spend a large proportion of their time "campaigning" (that is selling pamphlets, flowers and such like) on the streets or in pubs, the majority have very little "depth" contact with members of the outside world. The Church leaders are now making efforts to persuade the younger members to have more contact with their parents, but the members themselves are frequently reluctant or unable to communicate with "outsiders" who "can't—or won't—understand" what they are doing or why they do it. "When I go home we can talk about the dog but that's about it" I was told by one girl. "If I try to tell them about the Principle they just argue or get embarrassed and change the subject back to the weather or something". Parents on their side might complain that their children do nothing but sleep because they are so exhausted and then want to get back to get on with their work, being unable to concentrate on television or unwilling to go out to meet old friends. For a few members the break with their family is complete—often they feel because their parents would not listen to them but have just slammed the door in their faces. Some parents have become quite positive about their children's membership but even they, if they are to see their sons or daughters with any frequency, will have to go to the Centre rather than wait for their children to come to them, for the overwhelming ethos is that there is so much work to be done, there is such an urgency to do it now, and it can only be done within the Unified Family.

Considering the reception that the Church has had in the media from other religious groups, it is not altogether surprising that members look on certain sections of the "outside" with some hostility. But they also see that ordinary people lead dull materialistic lives, that pornography and filth are rife, people are uncaring, superficial and untrustworthy, moral standards are almost completely absent in art, culture, politics, business, etc. Everyone is either in some kind of individualistic rat race or else has sunk into lethargic apathy. Inside the Family on the other hand people are working up to 18 hours a day for God, they are caring and loving, they can be trusted, they have high moral standards and are concerned not only for their brothers and sisters in the Family but also for the whole world. The difference is obvious. Inside the Family may not be exactly a safe and comfortable back-to-the-womb cosiness but at least one knows one is on the side of God with others of a similar persuasion, while outside the forces of Satan, especially in the form of communism and pornography, are rampant.

Other religious correlates that Mary Douglas would expect such as the importance of a personal relationship with God and non-ritualistic forms of worship are present, as is the belief that sin is primarily the result of a wrong motive rather than a bad consequence (a Kantian as opposed to a Utilitarian ethic) but there are problems with this and certainly I would not have said that the theology blurs and devalues

(13) See K. WOLFF, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, Free Press, Toronto 1950, and L. COSER, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Free Press, Toronto 1956.

logical discriminations as she would expect. On the contrary one of the most impressive aspects of the Divine Principle is the value it places on logic.

VIII. — RESTORATION

If we turn now to the concept of restoration there are two further concepts I wish to consider—again in relationship to describing the ideological underpinning of life in the Family. The first of these is the concept of indemnity and the second that of the blessed marriage.

The restoration of the world to a state where God's original plan can be realized is the religious and social goal of the Unification Church. It is for this that the members are working. Unification Theology provides for certain "bridges" by which members can hope to bring about the restoration. First there is the person of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. It was to him that the Divine Principle, the guide by which men could understand the world as it is and as it should be, was revealed. He also provides a messianic example of a perfect God-centred life. By his marriage to his present wife in 1960 he laid the foundation for the restoration that Jesus, through his untimely death, was prevented from laying. Although Reverend Moon himself makes no public claim to be the Messiah most members do undoubtedly accept him as the Lord of the Second Advent. (The Church's concept of Messiah is a special one which is of a kind of "office" and sometimes members will deny their belief that Reverend Moon is the Messiah because, they say, it leads to considerable misunderstanding by those who do not know the Divine Principle). For British people joining the church, Reverend Moon does not seem to exert any immediate charismatic authority. Feelings towards him do however develop from a reserved gratitude for the revelation of Divine Principle to a very strong love. It might perhaps be described as a process of "growth charisma" which, not unnaturally, is accelerated by any personal contact. His influence is not so much a direct one (although his is the ultimate voice of authority in all matters) as an indirect one. His speeches are of course read carefully and avidly by the followers but in the day to day living of the British community it is the rational-legal authority in the hands of the national leaders which is legitimated by Reverend Moon as a focal figure rather than any charismatic authority of Reverend Moon himself which is most apparent (14).

Another "bridge" for returning the world to its original state is encapsulated in the concept of "restoration through indemnity". Put with what is undoubtedly unfair crudeness, Unification Theology teaches that the restoration of the world to a pre-Fall state must be brought about by a

(14) For a description of a types of authority see M. WEBER, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Free Press, Toronto 1964.

kind of zero-sum cost analysis where conditions have to be set up which will compensate for wrongs done in the past. Members of the Unification Church have undertaken not only to pay for their own misdoings but also to compensate for the failure of other people. Restoration demands that the wrongs of the past must be reversed. Family members are set, or set themselves, conditions of indemnity which embrace various degrees of severity. But while it is obviously not very pleasant to, say, go without food for a short period or to perform some normally unpleasant task, or indeed to suffer any kind of psychic or physical hardship, the belief that one is thereby contributing to the restoration of the world does have its compensating attraction. It is also through performing indemnity conditions one can open up oneself to receiving divine truth. Indemnity may be a necessary but it certainly is not a sufficient road to salvation. Good works by themselves are not enough. One must also follow the messianic example and live a truly God-centred life; and the most fundamental of all God-centred relationships is to be realized in the blessed marriage.

IX. — MARRIAGE AND RELATIONS BETWEEN SEXES

The Church's practice which has perhaps produced more incredulity and expressions of shock and horror than any other is that of the blessed marriage. I must admit that when I first heard (some time before I started the study) that young men and women allowed themselves to be married in a mass ceremony to someone they might not even have known a couple of days beforehand, I was surprised and did wonder whether perhaps the brainwashing or psychosis explanations might not have something in them. However, after talking to Family members it did not take me long to see that far from this being a barbaric custom which could only have resulted from, or lead to, nothing but abject misery, marriage in the Unification Church had, from various points of view, some very positive aspects to it. It became clear that far from frightening people off the idea, the Blessing was a primary attraction inside the Family. Some members have even claimed that it was the motivating force for their joining the Movement in the first place.

One point which must be made clear is that although Reverend Moon certainly suggests partners, they always have the right to say they would rather not be blessed with that person and several people seem to have exercised that right. Also members can be asked some time before going to Korea for the ceremony whether they would like to marry particular people, or perhaps one of three or four possibilities. It does sometimes happen that they go to the "matching ceremony" expecting to be paired with one person and it is suggested they should marry another, but again it is always emphasised that should either of them have any doubts they can ask whether there is someone else they might marry, or else just not get blessed on that particular occasion.

The theological basis for marriage in the Church has already been touched on. The members believe that the God-centred family will form the basis for a God-centred nation and God-centred world into which children can be born free of the vicissitudes of Satanic power. But quite

apart from its role in the restoration of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the Blessing makes very good sense in its functions for the individual members and for the Family as a whole.

Stranger to modern eyes than the mass ceremony (1,800 couples were blessed on February 8th 1975) or even the fact that the marriages are not consummated for some time and often men are separated from their wives for a matter of years, is the fact that Church members do not normally choose their own partners. They trust God, through Reverend Moon, to know who the right person is for them. Some believe that there is only one person who is meant for them whom God will point out, while others believe that it will not matter particularly whom they marry so long as it is someone who shares their beliefs and their desire to have a God-centred, blessed marriage.

For several members relations with the opposite sex had presented a real problem before joining the Church. Some had felt unable to relate at any level at all, some only on a physical level and some, who had felt that they had formed the basis of a deep spiritual friendship had been badly hurt and disillusioned either by their partner's rejection or else by his or her apparent lack of understanding of the deep committed level which was being sought.

Occasionally members have come from unhappy homes but more commonly they describe their home background as normal to good. Frequently however they say that although the family seemed quite happy on the surface there was no sense of deep involvement in each other's problems or indeed in each other as people. While the marriages of some parents are described (usually quite sympathetically) as having reached a state of complete breakdown it is more usual to hear "my mother didn't really understand my father" or "they got on quite well together—they didn't argue very much—but they seemed to lead their own lives inside". No one thinks his or her parents have a perfect relationship although a few think it is probably as good as one can get in the "outside world".

Frequently the marriages of siblings or peers are referred to in ways that suggest a great deal of pity is felt for one or both of the partners. Marriage outside the Family is regarded as a snare, something which prevents young people from pursuing the more important matters of the world and possibly something from which unfortunates try to escape. The only married couples that are referred to with approval—except now it is more with wonder, awe and delight—are those few ones in the Family which have been blessed by Reverend Moon. Married couples joining the Church are recognised as having considerable difficulty as a couple for some time as they go through a process of preparation prior to their being blessed in true marriage.

Members are however idealistic about marriage. They do not seek a celibate, monastic life. Love is the most important thing and its physical expression in a God-centred relationship is seen as a positive gift from God to be enjoyed. It is indeed only through marriage that a man or woman can become complete by unifying in a give-and-take relationship, joining in a complementary association. Man becomes fulfilled only by uniting with a woman—though it must be a God-centred union.

Although the theological implications may not have been grasped by the new member, he is likely to have been aware that marriage is very important and he has probably suffered considerable anxiety about choosing

the right partner. Despair resolves into an immense relief when he realises that such a heavy burden of responsibility has been taken from his or her shoulders. Many have declared they do not want to exercise any choice when a partner is suggested to them, not just because they would not wish to hurt the other person's feelings, but also because now they have accepted that God knows best they do not wish to risk making a mistake on their own behalf—they know from past experiences how wrong they can be.

How then do members believe they will experience a special relationship with another, possibly unknown, human being? It is often pointed out that marriages in history and still in large areas of the East have traditionally been arranged by parents or brokers without necessarily considering the wishes of those most immediately concerned. There is no evidence that such arrangements do, on average, fare noticeably worse than those which are the result of romantic love.

But the Family members have a far more positive answer which reflects their attempt to live their religious beliefs to the full. As I have said, perfect relationships are seen as God-centred. This means that they are not just direct, dyadic relationships but that, in an important respect, they are mediated through God. In trying to understand another person you do not just look for what you see as good or bad in them but you try to look from God's point of view. God loves everyone and God places a value on each individual, therefore you try to discover what it is that God values in the other person. This is the underlying tenet of personal relationships which the Church members try to put into practice in their day to day relationships and the ethos of the community life is centred around the belief that, although it is sometimes very difficult to get on with a particular individual, if you persevere long enough, looking for what God could value in him, then you will eventually discover something new and beautiful and of value to your own growth. It does not always work of course—sometimes members are separated by moving them to different centres until they have matured enough to try again—but it works frequently enough to convince the Family members that there is something in it. It is only when they have developed sufficiently in self understanding and ability to experience a God-centred relationship that they will be blessed in marriage. This is unlikely to be before they have been in the Family for several years. Some have to wait longer than others.

It is difficult to tell how successful the blessed marriages actually are. Some of the criteria for success that the outside world would wish to apply would be judged as irrelevant by the partners themselves. The couples are often separated—they point out that sailors are often separated from their wives for long periods because of their work—and if it is necessary that each of the partners should do work for God in different places then the separation is not a burden but one of joy in the knowledge that one's partner is doing what he or she should do. To wish he or she were with one is to stop being God-centred and become person-centred. Obviously there are occasions when the marriage is helped by a separation, but this is hardly unique to the Unification Church. The long periods that pass before marriages are consummated can be justified in the same way with the added argument that the partners need time to get to know each other spiritually first. One thing a Family member never has to worry about when separated from his spouse, I was frequently told, is that he or she will be tempted to be unfaithful. One's "brothers" and "sisters" can be completely trusted with one's spouse.

The strong differentiation between male and female means there is a clear internal division within the Family into two groups—brothers and sisters—and membership of one's sex group is a strong ascriptive, defining characteristic. But despite this, in fact probably because of this, developing the ability to relate to the opposite sex is probably in certain respects a lot easier inside the Family than outside. The belief in complementarity and its subsequent division of labour between the sexes means that men and women need one another. There is very little segregation apart from sleeping arrangements (in dormitories). By defining the relationship as being that between brothers and sisters you are relieved of such problems as worrying whether *they* are worrying whether you are going to ask them to marry you or expect you to sleep with them. Both know and know the other knows the cause of the Fall, so there is very little chance of misunderstanding. There is rarely an opportunity to be alone as an unobserved pair for long, though this is in response more to unwritten than explicit rules. It has of course sometimes happened that a boy and girl have left the Family to get married, but far more have entered the Family to avoid getting married. Although members will admit to occasionally having thought "I wouldn't mind getting blessed with him or her" they realise, or soon have it pointed out to them if their interest becomes too obvious, that they are centring on a person or perhaps on themselves too much rather than being God-centred.

X. — CONTROL AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The day to day control of relationships is fairly uninstitutionalized at any overt level, but members are never in danger of suffering from the anomie they may have experienced in the outside world. Regulation is the rule rather than regulations. The regulation is of the kind Bernstein has found to be associated with "personal" family control and "elaborated" speech (15). It is an internalized system of checks and constraints that is built up, not an external following of specific orders. There is usually a Family Night once a week when public criticism is undertaken and indemnity conditions or some of the less popular jobs may be allocated for the following week. Centre leaders may also publicly define the boundaries of deviance at meal times but many problems are discussed in small groups of three or four or else directly between two people who may be experiencing difficulties. It is considered important to face problems in personal relationships directly and openly rather than to bottle up feelings of irritation or resentment. In practice younger members are unlikely to complain too openly to their leaders but they will probably "have it out" with their status peers. If it is noticed that anyone seems to be withdrawing too much into himself then there will be someone whose personal responsibility it is to try to find out what the matter is and to clear it up, but the whole community accepts responsibility for each of its members and tends to be on the look out for others in trouble.

(15) See M. DOUGLAS, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2 for discussion.

It should not however be thought that members spend all their time being carefully socialized by others. Sometimes they will be sent out on missions by themselves—perhaps building up a new centre and having very little contact with other Family members except by telephone. Each member is given considerable responsibility both for his work and for other people and often finds he can do things he would have thought impossible to do before joining the Family. By being thrown in at the deep end with the assurance that he can do it if he trusts in God, the erstwhile introvert is told to go up to complete strangers in the street to ask them about their belief in God or to give a public lecture; the erstwhile city dweller will find himself having to discover how to milk a herd of cows; the erstwhile plumber finds himself in charge of running a large farm and a youth who was never even considered responsible enough to be a prefect at school is told to organize a large function involving hundreds of people. And they do it. Their internalized discipline and single mindedness of purpose gives them a strength which is continually reinforced by their amazement at what can be done when God is on their side.

The confidence that members experience in discovering capabilities within themselves which they had not expected existed is complemented by the signs of success which they see the Unification Church enjoying both nationally and on a world wide scale. Such success takes the form of a growing number of businesses, a daily newspaper in America, the International Cultural Foundation which sponsors impressive science conferences attended by Nobel laureates from around the world and several musical ensembles including the New York City Symphony and the Korean Folk Ballet; furthermore the property owned by the Church has grown considerably over the past few years. The amount of publicity which the Church has excited, while this has been mainly extremely negative, does indicate that the Church is considered important enough to devote considerable space and time to its activities and can be interpreted as meaning that the Church has succeeded sufficiently to get the forces of evil worried. It is indeed expected that in the final days of the restoration of the world, Satan will be doing all in his power to avert the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Progress and setback can, each in its own way, corroborate and confirm the truth of the Divine Principle.

XI. — ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL AND GROUP SOLIDARITY

In the British Family there is a fairly flexible hierarchy once one goes down from the top few levels. At the top there is the leader and his wife and then there is a deputy leader. (These three are known by their surnames as a sign of respect — the rest are all called by first names). There are between fifteen and twenty people — mostly, but not exclusively, older members — who hold responsible positions all the time (leaders of large centres, top teachers and a few special jobs like P.R.O.) but there is also a large number of members who will be holding jobs of special temporary responsibility, thus X may be in the “subject position” vis-à-vis Y at one time or in relation to one particular project yet in an “object position” vis-à-vis Y at another time or at the same time with respect to some other undertaking.

There is certainly a very strong organizational structure but, below a fairly high level, this is fluid as regards personnel and particular offices, with considerable vertical mobility in both directions at levels such as that of leadership in campaign teams. It could be argued that such an absence of crystallization at the lower levels functions to prevent the formation of dissident groups. Similarly frequent mobility between jobs and centres has several latent functions for group solidarity reducing the likelihood of the growth of uncontrolled splinter groups (the leadership is in constant touch with all the centres through visits and telephoning). It is possible to separate individuals who have not yet developed the capacity to form the right kind of relationship, thus avoiding group disruption on the one hand and personal misery on the other. Furthermore the expectation, or arrival, of change and a new challenge can alleviate any feeling of falling into a rut or getting stale in one position. Sometimes of course members do stay in the same place for a long time and some are unhappy when they are moved but they can usually ask, with a fair hope of success, for a transfer.

There has been some indication above of the ways in which group solidarity can be seen to result from the Durkheimian functions of a religious community whose moral authority is vindicated by a transcendent authority through, in this case, the God-centred ethic. One can add to this the semi-institutionalized Family gatherings where group affirmation is heightened through members' providing their own entertainment (singing, Irish or Scottish dancing, specially written sketches, team games and quizzes). Before the main meals when members in a centre are gathered together songs are sung, usually to the accompaniment of a guitar, and a personal prayer or grace is offered. Not infrequently potential members are brought back to the centres for meals and lectures and such constant witnessing to others helps to define, as it illustrates, the happiness and solidarity of the group. Members gathering together for special services affirm their allegiance to God and Church and as individuals. By repeating their testimonies to other members and those to whom they are witnessing, they are reminded and celebrate the transformation in their lives that was wrought through their joining the Family.

XII. — CONCLUSION

In this paper the difficulties of life in the Unification Church have not been stressed. Of course these exist and on the whole members are refreshingly prepared to discuss most of them quite openly once they are assured that one is prepared to listen to the *whole* story from their point of view. While they might consider they are better off than "outsiders" they do not lack self criticism, nor do they lack awareness that they still have a lot to learn and that they continue to make mistakes in the process of learning.

Obviously space has prevented my presenting a complete picture, even in so far as I know it, but my main purpose has been to attempt a preliminary redress in the balance of commentaries by indicating (without resorting to explanations in terms of brainwashing or personal inadequacy) some of the ways in which the Unification Church can remain a viable

proposition. The argument has focussed mainly on the ways in which belief in a particular theology can underpin a life style which might otherwise seem incomprehensible. I have also tried to indicate ways in which the theology is used to support organisational control and group solidarity.

In summary it has been suggested that the member will initially have been a seeker, predisposed to accept a theology which involves dedicating his life to working for God and the world. The Unification theology provides an underpinning for the control and development of relationships within the Family through stressing the primacy of give-and-take complementarity and that the Fall was the result of an original sin of illicit love. Those in a leadership position have their authority legitimated by a messianic leader and by the acceptance of a cosmology which stresses the importance of unification. Group solidarity can, it was suggested, be increased by cross-cutting ties within the Family and by a dualism which emphasises a sharp division between the Family and a hostile world. Group solidarity is further enhanced by a shared communal life which offers constant companionship with like-minded believers, affirms a sense of belonging and offers the security of carefully delineated boundaries of permissive behaviour. Difficulties can be overcome by the conviction that one is working for God under conditions of considerable urgency, that sacrifice is a necessary part of the restoration process but that it will not be for ever, and if things appear to be going wrong it may well be because one's own attitude is wrong and not sufficiently sacrificial or God-centred.

Given certain assumptions and predispositions (which I do not happen to share) I do not find it all that difficult to see why it could make abundant sense for perfectly "normal" people to join and remain in the Unification Church. There is an almost uncanny absence of violation of logic in the theology and an unusual consistency between the beliefs and the way of life. Were one to be uncommitted to previous interpretations of the Bible yet prepared to accept the Scriptures as an authoritative source of Revelation; were one young and idealistic, disillusioned with an individualistic and materialistic way of life and seeking direction for ways in which one could improve the world and could develop a deep and spiritual relationship with God and with one's fellow humans — were this the case, one would not necessarily have to be brainwashed to accept the Divine Principle and to be a member of the Unification Church.

Eileen BARKER

London School of Economics