



The Federation of Families for World Peace / Belgium Founded by Rev. Moon A harmful sectarian organization ?

Judge for yourself !

The movement of Reverend Moon is well-known in public opinion on account of his collective marriages, his business sense, and anti-cult publications or reports that have been circulating for years in Europe. What is it in reality? *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int.* consulted the encyclopedia in four volumes of **Religions of the World**, published by J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann, 2002, ABC-CLIO Inc., ISBN 1-57607-233-1, and carried out its investigation in Belgium. The author of this profile of the movement interviewed its leaders in Belgium and took its investigation to South Korea as well.

The movement on the international scene : its history and doctrine in brief

The Unification Movement (UM) refers to a messianic religious and social movement led by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon (b. 1920). It consists of a complex network of religious, media, industrial, commercial, cultural, and educational enterprises worldwide. Many of these organizations, such as *The Washington Times* and the University of Bridgeport, function independently and include only a few individuals who accept the messianic teachings of the movement. Nevertheless, all of these entities are in one way or another identified with the Reverend Moon.

The Unification Church (UC)—formally, the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC)—stands at the center of the movement. It was founded May 1, 1954, in Seoul, Korea, but was not legally recognized by the government of the Republic of (South) Korea until 1963. Highly conversionistic, the UC sent its first missionaries to Japan and the United States in 1958 and 1959. The movement was largely dormant in the United States during the 1960s and had only three hundred or so members in 1971. However, there was more dynamism in Japan, and in the early 1970s, the Reverend Moon decided to concentrate the resources of the movement in America. He conducted a series of evangelistic tours that substantively increased the church's membership and visibility. By 1974, UM sources claimed that members in the United States had increased tenfold to three thousand. The movement filled New York's Madison Square Garden for a highly publicized speech by the Reverend Moon on "The New Future of Christianity" in late 1974. He later spoke to large audiences at New York's Yankee Stadium (1975) and the Washington Monument (1976).

In 1975, the church sent out missionaries to 120 nations but still focused much of its activity in the United States. With the close of the evangelistic campaigns, the UM proliferated a variety of nonprofit and business organizations that extended well beyond the confines of the church. By the early 1970s, the Reverend Moon had



initiated an International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS) that brought together numerous scientific luminaries annually. The movement also funded the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA), which in 21992 gained a controlling interest in the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The movement operated Sung Hwa, later Sun Moon, University, in Korea, as well as the Little Angels Art School. It also established the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Washington, D.C. Unification Theological Seminary (est. 1975) served as the base for a broad-ranging ecumenical program, and during the mid-1970s the movement established its first two metropolitan daily newspapers, *Sekai Nippo* (1975) in Tokyo and *The News World* (1976) in New York City. The movement expended millions in founding *The Washington Times* (1983), which became its flagship media enterprise. In 1989 it established a major daily, *Segye Ilbo*, in Korea, and in 1996 it set up *Tiempos Del Mundo*, a Latin American hemispheric daily, in Buenos Aires. The movement's business operations in Korea—including its major holding, Tong-il Industries—were reported to have net assets worth nearly \$200 million. The movement focused on maritime ventures in the United States, purchasing shipbuilding yards and fish-processing plants in Norfolk, Virginia; Bayou La Batre, Alabama; Gloucester, Massachusetts; and Kodiak, Alaska, during the late 1970s and 1980s.

Apart from these undertakings, the UM was known for its fervent anti-Communist activities. It set up chapters and training centers for "Victory Over Communism" in Korea and strenuously opposed Marxist advances on Japanese college campuses during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It funded Radio of Free Asia and the Freedom Leadership Foundation (FLF) in the United States during the same period. In 1973-1974, the Reverend Moon initiated a highly publicized National Prayer and Fast for the Watergate Crisis (NPFWC) in support of President Nixon, and he circulated an "Answer to Watergate" in most of the nation's major newspapers. During the 1980s the movement attempted to arm the West ideologically through various organizational affiliates, most notably CAUSA (Confédération des Associations pour l'Unification des Sociétés Américaines), which sponsored high-tech multimedia conferences for conservative leaders and clergy throughout the Americas. *The Washington Times* played an important role and was reportedly the newspaper of choice in the Reagan White House. At the same time, the movement took advantage of perestroika by assiduously cultivating contacts in the Communist world. The Reverend Moon invited Soviet journalists to participate in Annual World Media Conferences and, importantly, invested heavily in mainland China. These initiatives and others gained the Reverend Moon private audiences with Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev (1990) and North Korean premier Kim Il Sung (1991).

With the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and Soviet communism, the UM entered what it regarded as an era of messianic fulfilment, or what the Reverend Moon termed the "Completed Testament Age." The movement established innumerable Federations for World Peace and conducted high-profile sisterhood ceremonies between women from formerly enemy nations and peoples. However, the true gateways to the Completed Testament Age were massive International Holy Weddings over which the Rev. and Mrs. Moon officiated in 1992, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. The UM already had conducted record-breaking weddings for 1,800 couples (1975), 2,075



and 6,000 couples (1982), and 6,500 couples (1989). During the 1990s these numbers soared into the hundreds of thousands and even hundreds of millions as members under the auspices of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) campaigned worldwide to rededicate marriages and distributed holy wine, holy grape juice, and eventually holy candy on a mass basis (*). In addition to the globalization of the Blessing, the UM embarked upon an effort to reclaim a "restored and purified" Garden of Eden in the South American outback, acquiring vast tracts of land primarily in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sol after 1995.

All of these efforts were animated by the conviction that the Reverend and Mrs. Moon are "the True Parents of all humanity...the Savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah," a declaration that the Reverend Moon made publicly in 1992. This declaration brought to completion a series of experiences, which began on Easter morning, 1935, when the Reverend Moon was praying alone on a mountaintop and received what he understood to be "a special mission from Heaven through Jesus." Afterward, according to his testimony, he "spent years searching precisely how to bring salvation to humankind." In 1952 he completed a handwritten version of *Wolli Wonbon* (Original Text of the Principle). This was followed by *Wolli Haesul* (Explanation of the Principle, 1957) and *Wolli Kangron* (Exposition of the Principle, 1966), which has served as the movement's definitive theological and holy text. The latter was translated into English as *Divine Principle* (1973) or *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (1996), and Unificationists regard it as "the new expression of God's truth" that unlocks the secrets of the Bible. It contains chapters on the Creation, the Fall, the Consummation of Human History, the Advent of the Messiah, Resurrection, Predestination, Christology, and an elaborate account of dispensational history, which concludes that the messiah was born as a Korean between 1917 and 1930. The text interprets the human fall in sexual terms and maintains that the crucifixion of Jesus was not God's original will but the result of human ignorance and disbelief. After 1996, the Reverend Moon instituted *Hoon Dok Hae* (gathering for reading and learning), utilizing passages from his many volumes of sermons. Some condier *Hoon Dok Hae* to have displaced the Principle. Others view it as a complementary and more universal expression of the "Completed Testament Word."

The UM has not been subject to the apocalyptic configurations that have afflicted and destroyed other movements. Nevertheless, the broad scope and duration of negative reactions accompanying its emergence have rendered it one of the most controversial new religious movements of the latter twentieth century. The Communist regime in North Korea jailed Reverend Moon in 1948 for, among other things, "bringing disorder to society." The South Korean government jailed him for draft evasion in 1955, and unsubstantiated rumors of church sex orgies swirled in Korean society. During the 1960s, Japanese media referred to the Principle Movement as "the religion that makes parents weep," and in 1971 the practice of kidnapping and deprogramming began. During the 1970s, in the United States, the movement was widely regarded as a brainwashing cult that exploited members, known as "moonies," and that practiced "heavenly deception." Alternatively, the UM was depicted as a subversive group abridging the separation of church and state and



influencing U.S. policy on behalf of the Korean government. During the 1980s the U.S. government jailed the Reverend Moon on charges of tax evasion, and during the 1990s there were exposes and allegations levelled against his family. Similar patterns of response have been prevalent elsewhere, notably in Europe, the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Still, in the United States and many countries, the Unification Church has gained acceptance as a bona fide religion (**), related movement components operate as legal entities, and it has been able to extend constitutional protections to members.

The UM's organizational structure is charismatic, with the Reverend Moon exercising authority over the movement's direction and major operations. Immediate supervision is delegated to trusted elders, mainly Koreans and some Japanese, who form a spiritual hierarchy extending from senior to new members. The Unification Church has incorporated numerous national churches and maintains missions in more than one hundred nations. However, leadership is often rotated and membership dispersed to forestall premature institutionalisation. The literally hundreds of UM-related nonprofit and commercial organizations have led some to describe the UM as a religious multinational. For many years, the Unification Church maintained a World Mission Center in midtown Manhattan. However, the UM's international headquarters generally have been wherever the Reverend Moon resides. During the 1970s and 1980s, that was Irvington, New York. During the 1990s, he resided for substantial periods in South America and Korea. The movement has constructed a substantial religious shrine north of Seoul at Chungpyung Lake Training Center, where the Reverend Moon frequently went for prayer and meditation. The site, which includes a "heavenly palace" with seating for several thousand as well as sacred trees and healing springs, is understood to be the meeting place of heaven and earth.

Reliable membership totals are difficult to ascertain. During the 1970s, both the movement and its critics exaggerated its size, claiming between two and three million adherents worldwide. During the 1980s observers tended to downplay the movement's numbers, given a levelling off of conversions in the West. However, this was compensated by growth elsewhere. The number of marriage ceremony participants is the most reliable indicator of UM membership totals. Since 1960 the Reverend Moon has "blessed" approximately 100,000 church couples, suggesting an adult UM membership population approaching 200,000. The UM would appear poised to build on these totals, given the favourable age, sex, and geographical distribution of its members and its encouragement of large families.

Notes of HRWF Int.

(*) During the summer of 2003, the author of this study attended a ceremony of collective marriages blessed by Reverend Moon in South Korea. Official statistics then reported the number of 400 million benedictions. It is necessary to point out, though, that couples married in other religions (sometimes for a long time) have also been blessed by Moon without any adherence to the movement.

(**) **In Spain**, on February 15, 2001, the constitutional court made a historical decision in

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**Human Rights Without Frontiers Int.**

Avenue Winston Churchill 11/33, 1180 Brussels, Belgium

Phone 32 2 3456145 – Fax: 32 2 3437491

www.hrwf.net - email : info@hrwf.net

favor of the Unification Church, by seven votes to four. It granted the Church the right to freedom of religion, noted the absence of any illegal activity in Spain, declared null and void all prior unfavourable decisions and ordered the Church's official registration in the Registry of Religious Entities at the Ministry of Justice.

In Germany, a decision of the Administrative Tribunal of Rhineland-Palatinate, dated September 13, 2000, declared : « The teachings of Sun Myung Moon, such as have been defended and diffused by the complainant (the Unification Church) constitutes a religion...The teachings defended by the complainant constitute a vision of the world in its globality as well as of the origin and goal of humanity based on a transcendent reality. The complainant is therefore a community of faith in the sense of Article 4 of the German Constitution...»

In Great Britain, in 1984, the Procurer General questioned the registration of two charitable organizations of the Unification Church in the « Register of Charities ». A file of 14,000 pages was assembled to attempt to prove that the movement was of a totalitarian and oppressive nature, that it divided families, that it dispensed secret teachings and that it had political goals. These allegations could not be proved, and the Church received damages of 1.8 million pounds. The judicial decision stated notably that *"As a consequence, organizations (of the Unification Church) are in a conclusive fashion presumed to be charitable and therefore in the public interest, conforming to the Charities Act of 1960, section 5, and are judged worthy of being charitable organizations contributing to the advancement of religion. The status of the religion of Unification as a bona fide religion has never been questioned in the course of debates and was reaffirmed (...)."*



Profile

1. Hierarchical structure of the movement

In Belgium, the movement of Rev. Moon was first of all created in the form of a non-profit organization in October 1974 under the name of the *Association pour l'Unification du Christianisme Mondial (AUCM)* (Association for the Unification of World Christianity). Several more specific associations were created in the first half of the 1990s: Association des anniversaires (Association of Birthdays), Femmes de vision (Women of Vision), etc. In June 1997, the movement reorganized under a new non-profit organization called the *Fédération des Familles pour la Paix Mondiale (FFPM)* (Federation of Families for World Peace). Currently, it comprises 30-40 members in Belgium and is directed by a three-person board of directors. Its sole place of worship and meeting is to be found in Anderlecht.

International structure of the movement of Rev. Moon:

- Reverend Moon, founder and head of the movement (South Korea).
- World Center of Missions (South Korea)
- Continental branches: Asia, America, Europe, Africa, South Sea Islands. The seat of the European branch is in Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and its president is of South Korean nationality.
- Each continental branch is structured in regions. Europe comprises nine regions. Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Liechtenstein and Switzerland are in the same region; the director is based in Switzerland.

2. Recruitment of new members

At the time of implantation of the movement in Belgium, the members spread their message through personal contacts on the streets and in markets. They were then mainly young people. These pioneers became adults; currently, they have families and occupations, which makes them less available to devote themselves to the movement's expansion through specific activities. New members enter into the movement attracted by personal testimonies in their socio-professional milieu as well as by the Internet site.

3. Entrance in the movement

It is necessary to be of majority age or to have the consent of one's parents in order to become a member. At the time of formal adhesion to the movement, a brief form is filled out by the member. This is filed into the archives of the movement and remains in Belgium. Youth are encouraged to serve as volunteers for the movement in Belgium or abroad, for a year, preferably after their secondary school education.



4. Adhesion to the movement and to another religion

Adhesion to the movement does not exclude belonging to another religion. The movement has, however, its own theology, which could be incompatible with other religions.

5. Financial obligations of members

Members are encouraged to pay a tithe (10% of their income) to the Belgian branch of the movement, according to their possibilities, but there are no coercive measures or hierarchical controls to enforce this. Like other national branches, the Belgian branch transfers each year 10% of its budget to the European Secretariat to finance its functioning, and this branch in its turn transfers 10% of its budget to the [World Center of Missions](#), in South Korea.

6. Voluntary departure from the movement

This is done by sending a letter of resignation, or the member can put an end to his relations with the movement in an informal manner. There are no impediments created against this step. No pressure is exercised in order to reintegrate the individual into the movement.

7. Procedure for exclusion of a member, a priest, a bishop, or the supreme leader

There is none. No exclusion from the Belgian branch has been pronounced to this day.

8. Social and family relations

The doctrine of the movement does not push members to break off relations with their family, but completely to the contrary, since this is at the heart of its philosophy. "There was nevertheless an era where the Unification Church committed errors; during this era, the expression 'induced rupture with the environment of origin' was probably fitting. It has been, however, more than fifteen years since the Unification Church understood that a strategy of separation between the members and their families was harmful not only to relations with society and to their public image, but also to the well-being of members, and thus to their effectiveness in missionary activity. Good relations with families have been rather encouraged, even if in certain families relationships remain difficult." (Pour en finir avec les sectes, Notes sur l'Eglise de l'Unification et le rapport, Massimo Introvigne, Cesnur, pp 261-265).

Since the birth of the movement, Rev. Moon has distinguished himself with the practice of the blessing of collective marriages (purposely interracial as much as possible to promote the advent of a new humanity without barriers between human beings) of which the spouses chosen by him. This spectacular



practice, consisting of matching and marrying thousands of young men and women in the course of a unique ceremony has often been criticized by detractors of the movement, but it is never imposed. Some Belgian members have chosen to marry in this way, others chose their spouses in complete freedom. In the several days preceding the nuptial blessing, the spousal candidates chosen by Moon always have the possibility of renouncing their marriage. The nuptial blessings of Moon do not have any civil effect without a civil marriage.

The renunciation of sexual relations during the 40 days maximum after the marriage is encouraged. By this abstinence, newly married couples indicate that they are ready to consecrate themselves to God first, to humanity, to the others and finally only to themselves. Their mission is to love each other in faithfulness, to mutually respect each other, to practice love towards others, to teach their children sexual abstinence before marriage, to help all families to serve this ideal of life. Since the mid-1990s, Rev. Moon has not chosen the partners himself. He has delegated his power to the parents, to adults and elders of communities to propose marriage candidates that seem to them the most appropriate.

Divorces are not frequent in the movement.

In Belgium, children frequent public or private schools.

9. The movement and medicine

The doctrine of the movement does not run counter to the right of the faithful to consult and to be treated by doctors or to be operated on. No medical treatment is banned in itself. Parents are responsible for the health of their children.

10. Information for members on the financial management of the movement

Information about national financial management is dealt with at the time of the general assembly of the non-profit, as required by law.

11. Religious activities

Members are encouraged to

- Participate in Sunday worship (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.) and in meetings in the middle of the week (Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.) to study the divine principles, the Scriptures, the Bible (TOB, Bible of Jerusalem)
- To testify of their faith and their beliefs before other people
- To participate in seminars for a day, a weekend, or a week.

12. Communal life

At the time of implantation of the movement in the 1970s, the members at the time experimented with communal living within a framework of seeking true



brotherly love. Currently, they no longer practice this way of life and live in families well-integrated in society.

13. List of allegations concerning the dangerous character of the movement

- A. Mental manipulation
- B. Reverend Moon makes a great deal of money off the backs of his members
- C. Bad treatment of members: overwork, deprivation of sleep, malnourishment
- D. Incitation to suicide
- E. Lack of freedom to choose spouse
- F. Practice of lying in the interest of the movement
- G. Trouble with the public order
- H. Reverend Moon did time in prison

14. Official position of the movement regarding allegations

On the subject of the allegations listed above, the position of the movement in Belgium, collected at the time of several interviews of persons in charge, is the following :

« A. No judicial decision in Belgium has supported the accusation of mental control or abuse of the state of weakness of a person.

B. Reverend Moon works in business (fishing societies, naval construction, sale of ginseng, of machine tools, etc.) in order to finance his movement and its humanitarian activities. Certain corporations fully belong to the movement, others not. The sole financial support to the movement asked of members is a tithe (See Point 5 for more details). It is not required of members to donate their goods to Reverend Moon or to the movement.

C. This accusation is without foundation in Belgium. Reverend Moon encourages members to work hard to sacrifice themselves for the Kingdom of God and peace in the world, to study and to deepen their knowledge of the teachings. This applies equally to those that submit themselves to a certain spiritual discipline, that they don't become slaves to material or excessive physical needs, such as an excess of food, sleep, and of sexual desires. In the past, slips occurred on account of the zeal and lack of training of certain adepts. Rev. Moon has corrected these errors.

D. Suicide is forbidden in the teachings of the movement. There have not been either any cases of people who wanted to end their days because they entered the movement.

E. See Point 8.

F. In the past, there were abuses on the part of certain overly zealous adepts.

G. The German authorities have forbidden Rev. Moon access to their territory because, in their eyes, he represents a potential danger to public order. In virtue of the Accords of Schengen, the signatory countries have done the same."

H. In 1984, Rev. Moon spent 13 months in prison for fiscal fraud concerning an amount of \$7,800 USD.



15. Lawsuits against the movement or against members of the clergy in Belgium on the base of one of the allegations listed in point 13. Convictions.

None.

16. Complaints of members of the movement of intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions, and limits on the exercise of their liberties before the publication of the Parliamentary Reports on Cults.

There existed a mistrust and a rampant intolerance in civil society with regard to this new religious movement of Asian origin (Korea). This attitude regarding the movement in its country of origin has been reflected notably in negative newspaper articles carrying information that was insufficiently analysed and contextualized as well as unfounded accusations, which reinforced the prejudices vis-à-vis the Belgian branch.

17. Complaints of members of the movement of intolerance, discrimination on the basis of their convictions and limits on the exercise of their liberties after the publication of the Parliamentary Reports on Cults.

The state of the spirit behind the Parliamentary Report on Cults has persisted and increased. An aggravating element was provided by the Parliamentary Report on Cults and by the campaign, "Guru, beware of you!" implemented by the French Community of Belgium: massive distribution of flyers with, among others, a photo of collective marriages blessed by Moon, dissemination in schools and elsewhere of a brochure presenting the movement as a cult and showing a full-page photo of a collective marriage. The entrance onto the scene of state institutions in the battle against cults has therefore damaged the image of the Belgian branch of the movement without any accusation founded on specifics that could be brought forward. The leaders of the movement in Belgium mention loss of employment and impossibility of renting a conference room in a hotel as a result of their presence on the Parliamentary list of movements suspected of being harmful sectarian organizations.

18. Lawsuits instituted by the movement. Results.

Not applicable.

19. The movement and human rights

The movement, in Belgium and abroad, encourages its members to respect human rights and to fight for their promotion. The members of the movement can join existing organizations and campaign in numerous associations of the Unification Church. The defense of freedom of religion and belief as well as humanitarian aid (aid to victims of natural catastrophes, of floods, earthquakes, of the attack of September 11, etc.) are notably taken charge of by international NGOs existing within the movement. Exterior projects in these matters are also



financed by the movement.

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This profile will be updated with new and pertinent information brought to the knowledge of and checked by *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int.*

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