

The National Council of Churches charges that the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon is not a Christian Church - CBS Radio Interview and Report

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Following is a CBS Radio News press release, and the transcript of a segment of CBS' "World of Religion," aired on over 250 stations nationwide.

In June of this year, the National Council of Churches charged that the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon was not a Christian Church according to the standards of the National Council and its Commission on Faith and Order.

In an exclusive report on CBS News' *"The World of Religion,"* anchored by CBS News Correspondent Dallas Townsend, and broadcast this weekend on the CBS Radio Network, Dr. Herbert W. Richardson, a lecturer on the faculty of the Unification Church Seminary at Barrytown, N.Y., and a professor of Theology at the University of Toronto, formally replied to the charges....

For the purpose of the broadcast, the charges made in the National Councils' report were enunciated by Sister Agnes Cunningham, author of the report and Professor of Theology at St. Mary of the Lakes Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois.

Dallas Townsend: The World of Religion. I'm Dallas Townsend, CBS News, reporting on the CBS Radio Network.

In an exclusive interview with CBS News, a spokesman for the Unification Church said its members believe in the Trinity, in God incarnate and in the Christian message. Its goal is to make Christianity willing to seek and unite with all religions. Dr. Herbert Richardson, a Presbyterian minister and formerly on the faculty of the Harvard Divinity School, presented the Unification Church position to World of Religion.

Dr. Richardson is currently Professor of Theology at the University of Toronto and he identifies with the Unification movement. The charges against the Unification Church came in the report prepared by the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches. For the purposes of this broadcast World of Religion talked to Sister Agnes Cunningham, author of the report and a Theology Professor from St. Mary-of-the-Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. She presents the Commission's argument that the Unification Church is not Christian. The points that she makes are answered, in turn, by Professor Richardson.

Sister Agnes Cunningham: In Unification Thought the authority of the Bible is challenged by the fact that other revelations are seen to supersede this Christian revelation. The revelations given, as we read in the introduction to divine principles to Reverend Moon himself, and other revelations and Korean documents, specify certain things that are to be held as going beyond what can be found in the Christian Bible.

Dr. Herbert Richardson: A statement like Professor Cunningham has just made illustrates the difficulty that arises when a theological commission tries to describe the beliefs of another religious group without sitting down and talking with the members of that religious group. If she had sat down and talked with any of the fifty or so students in the graduating class this year from the Unification Theological Seminary, I'm quite confident, because I asked them this question myself, that they would have said, "You've completely misunderstood our belief," the revelation in Divine Principle, in fact, is perfectly consistent with scripture and has means to corroborate it." I've heard Dr. Young Kim, who is author theologian of the Unification Church, say, "Reverend Moon is a man who reads only one book, the Bible, and Moon's teachings about the Bible no more supersede the authority of the Bible than do the Pope's." Professor Cunningham is a Catholic and she believes that the Pope has to make certain decisions about what the Christian faith is, and she believes that the Pope decides on the basis of the authority of scripture. But it isn't as if he never says anything that isn't found in the Bible. He tries to apply the Bible to new situations, and that's exactly what Reverend Moon tries to do. And if Catholics are Christians, then surely so is the Unification Church.

There are teachings in scripture that have to be developed. One has to try to see the more profound meaning in scripture. In that sense there is a development, but it's not a development in the sense of new revelation. It's a development in the area of new interpretations, new applications.

Sister Cunningham: According to Unification Thought Jesus is represented as having been the first Christ, but a Christ whose work was ineffective and incomplete because he failed in his mission. So the work of redemption that Jesus accomplished is not effective, does not free the human race from sinfulness and does not place it in that position that is promised to those who do accept and believe in the Christ of the Second Advent, or the Lord of the Second Advent.



Dr. Richardson: Now you just heard Professor Cunningham talk about a first Christ, as if somehow the Unification Church talked about there being a first Christ and then a second Christ. That's a misunderstanding. And you also heard her say that the language of the Unification Church talks about the Lord of the Second Advent. There's a difference between talking about a second Christ and a second coming. And the notion of a second coming, a second advent is not an idea that the Unification Church has thought up, it's an idea that is at the heart of the Christian faith. The Unification Church talks about the second coming of Christ speaking, really, in the words of the; Lord's Prayer which say this: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." Now, in the words of the Lord's Prayer, God's will is already done in heaven. Christ has triumphed. Jesus is Lord of all, he rules in the heavenly sphere. We wish that God's will would be done on earth, and with the second coming, God's will is going to be done on earth. So the Unification Church is essentially preaching the Lord's Prayer, that God's kingdom is going to be established, physically, that we have to look forward to it and that we have to work to try to establish that kingdom.

Sister Cunningham: In regard to the teaching of the Unification Church, Jesus Christ is not, in the Unification Thought, to be seen as the Lord of the Second Advent. Therefore, Jesus Christ will not come again in the second, final coming to judge the world as Christians have always taught and held. The second coming of Christ is the coming of another personage who is to have been born in the nation of Korea, who is to have been reared in that tradition, who is to have received the special gifts and graces and revelations which make it possible for him, then, to bring' a final revelation, as it is called, and a final salvation to all peoples including Christians, no matter what those peoples have previously believed. · It becomes clear that Reverend Moon is looked upon as the Lord of the Second Advent.

Dr. Richardson: St. Paul, in the beginning of his ministry, was looking forward to Jesus coming back, physically, and on a cloud. All of history would stop, it would be an end time and there are what are called the apocalyptic, dramatic pictures of angels coming down from heaven to stop history. But St. Paul, and especially St. John, as time went on began to realize that the return of Jesus was going to be a spiritual return. Jesus would come back in the spirit. Many theologians argue that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in fact, is a way that the early church tried to speak about the second coming as being Jesus' coming back spiritually. One of the points that is of most importance in terms of the Unification movement is precisely the fact that the traditional classical Christian churches have never faced the question about how Jesus Christ is going to come again. How is he going to manifest himself? There is no dogma on that question and the Unification Church is very clear on this point. The second coming of Jesus, the Christ, is going to involve his spiritually relating himself to human beings in such a way that he will dwell in their hearts. And he will not only dwell in their hearts in the sense in an inward way, but the external form of their lives will recapitulate, that is re-enact, and carry on in the world through their bodies his mission. That's the doctrine of the Unification Church.

The notion of second coming in the Unification Church is this. When I asked "Reverend Moon, are you the Messiah?" he said, "Professor Richardson, I'm going to answer that question, but first we have to know what the Messiah is. The Messiah is somebody who tries with all of his heart to build the kingdom of God on earth. I try to be the Messiah and you should try to be the Messiah and we should all try to be

the Messiah." I don't think that that doctrine is anything other than fundamentally orthodox and fundamentally Christian.

Sister Cunningham: In Divine Principle, great stress is placed on the role that is to be played by various nations and peoples in working through to the point where the Lord of the Second Advent is able to bring salvation and redemption to the entire human race. There is in the pages that refer to this section a clear attribution to specific nations and peoples of either satanic or heavenly powers, depending on the role those nations have played in the history of the world. There's quite an overview of historical events in this particular section of Divine Principles and it all pretty well leads to the confrontation between the forces of Communism and the forces of democracy. In Divine Principles there is an arbitrary assignment of good and evil to specific nations, specific peoples in a way that seems not at all in keeping, as we read it, with the Christian position and the Christian understanding of the role of God in history.



Dr. Richardson: The Unification Church believes in the Divine Principle and teaches that all persons and all nations will finally be saved. In fact, that is a point of some difference from traditional Christianity, which has had its doctrine of hell that had to be preserved in order to say that some people wouldn't really be saved. Unification Church teaches the doctrine of universal salvation, that God's Will will eventually be fulfilled for all persons and all nations and therefore the consequence of this is, in fact, that the Unification Church does not teach that there are persons or there are nations which are in some ultimate sense demonic: that is, incapable of salvation. It's precisely because of the commitment of Divine Principle and the Unification Church to the idea of establishing God's kingdom on earth that, in fact, it does make judgments. And one of the judgments, it is certainly true, that the Unification Church is willing to make in our day is the judgment that in Communism one sees a politically organized movement which is against God's purpose for the world. But when in the Unification Church this is said, it is not said as if Communist nations and Communist people are condemned by God to go to hell. It's said as a way of urging us to try to preach, teach and turn the hearts of people who don't yet know and have faith in God and live in His kingdom, to turn their hearts in that direction.

Townsend: Professor Richardson was then asked to state briefly the beliefs and goal of the Unification Church.

Dr. Richardson: I think that the Unification Church is an authentic Christian church. In fact, it believes in the trinity, it believes that God is fully present in Jesus Christ and that he is God/ man; it believes in the authority of the scripture, it believes in the integrity of the family. It believes in the impossibility of salvation without grace, it believes in the universality of the Christian message. These are all fundamentally Christian affirmations. Unification Church members make these affirmations. My belief is that the Unification Church does represent a new emphasis in Christianity. The goal of the Unification Church is not just to be a Christian church, but it is to try to make Christianity be willing to seek to unite with all of the religions of the world.