

## Las Vegas Church Spokesman Shares the Breaking News on Public Radio

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Although new to Nevada, Demian Dunkley, 38, more than held his own Wednesday in a free-ranging discussion of Unification Church beliefs and objectives during a live radio interview broadcast by KNPR Las Vegas, an affiliate of National Public Radio. Mr. Dunkley was joined by Rev. Staffan Berg, who was appointed Nevada State Pastor six months ago, and Steve Hassan, an avowed critic of new religious movements, who participated by phone from his home in Massachusetts. Dave Becker a frequent host of the program, “State of Nevada,” hosted the 35-minute program on Sept. 14, 2011,

Some questions targeted the unique aspects of Unification Church theology. “How does the Unification church differ from other Christian sects?” Becker asked.

Dunkley: “Fundamentally we are a family-centered church. We feel that that love between husband and wife, parents and children is the gateway to the heavenly kingdom. Resting on that and understanding that somehow man’s been lost from having a direct relationship with God, universal salvation is something that God is longing for, not salvation of individual groups, not one group over another. So if you can imagine, living in Heaven while family members are living in hell really is not a heavenly state. Also we believe that God has been a suffering God, because without humankind walking, talking, living with Him in that parent-child relationship in the world, one family under God, [the earth] has been a suffering place [for Him] to be.”

Rev. Staffan Berg, who is completing his doctorate in ministry at the Unification Theological Seminary, handled several questions related to the received view of the mission of Jesus. He explained the mission of Jesus by first relating the parallels between the prophet Elijah, and the mission of John the Baptist, who had the same mission of Elijah, but who foundered to the end of his life in confusion about it.

Becker noted that Rev. Hyung Jin Moon has said that his father wants to turn Las Vegas from a city of sinning into a city of giving, and asked Dunkley to explain why the Moon Family thinks that Las Vegas needs that change.

“Does anyone in Las Vegas disagree? I used to think that Las Vegas was simply the Strip. But I bought a house here myself about a month ago, and the people I have met are very different from what I had pictured,” Dunkley said, and went on to explain the city’s first-ever charity slot tournament sponsored by the Unification Church on May 21, 2011. Dunkley pointed to the fact that thousands of Rev. Moon’s

church members and thousands of his friends from other churches and sects had come to conferences in the city during the last two years, bringing with them more than \$30 million in consumer spending and real-estate purchases.



Becker invited the comments of former deprogrammer Steve Hassan, who inveighed against the Founder of the Unification Church and charged him with being a criminal and claimed the church used mind control as a technique of conversion. When asked how the evangelical efforts of Unificationists in Las Vegas differed from the door-to-door campaigns of young men in white shirts and talking about the Latter Day Saints, Hassan replied, “You’re asking someone who has studied hypnosis, brainwashing, and coercive conversion, and actually I have a big problem with the two-year missionary program of the Latter Day Saints.” Hassan promoted his own website for reference, called “Freedom of Mind.”

The concluding minutes of the interview held a surprise for Hassan and many others. Dunkley explained how his mother had separated from his father shortly after joining the Unification Church, and that his father had raised him to hate and fear the Unification Church for two decades.

“Everything you just heard from Steve, I heard that from my father,” Dunkley explained, adding, “but like Steve said, freedom of mind, when I was 23, I went with my father’s blessing to meet Rev. Moon and his church, and without my mother’s involvement in witnessing to me, I joined the Unification church,” he explained. Steve Hassan presented himself as a former member, turned critic; but Dunkley presented himself as a former critic, turned member. In the view of some, that personal story refuted Hassan’s claims of coercive conversion. Some called it an “ambush.”

Listener response to the program, including web posts of many Unificationists, gave Becker credit for a fair and balanced program. Dr. Tyler Hendricks, a former president of the Unification Church and a veteran of many interviews, told Unification Church that Dunkley “did a superlative job” of handling questions.