

Testimonies from the Clergy

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Kurt Johnson

I joined the Unification Church family after having previously established my life in an Anglican (Episcopal) religious order as a monk and as a systematic biologist (the field in which I had received my professional training). Since I believe that the followers of Rev. Sun Myung Moon are making a unique contribution in expressing the true nature of the standards that Jesus taught, I would like to comment on the kinds of ideals and standards I found among them which eventually led me to join them.

Living in the community of the Order of the Holy Cross, my major work outside religious duties was as a research associate with two natural history museums and the Entomology Department at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, producing scientific articles on the classification, ecology, and evolution of insects.

At that time my contact with Rev. Moon's movement had only been through news media reports and "talk" within Church circles. The Unification Church was well-known for having many young members, purportedly of little

theological background, who followed Rev. Moon's teachings as a rule of life, and his interpretation of the Bible. Thus, I was rather reluctant to respond to the greetings of young members on the streets in New York City.

However, one day I was met by a rather amazing person and "enticed" by ~ free sandwich into a conversation. I was also given a copy of Divine Principle. This friendly relationship with family members continued until finally, by the expression of love and freedom in the whole "manner of being" shown by Unification Church members, I was moved to open up Rev. Moon's books and read them (a task I have since found few clergymen willing to do).

In his book New Hope (Twelve Talks by Sun Myung Moon), I was disturbingly touched by this man's heart, ideal, and goals for a worldwide community whose active ideal would be to serve the whole. Also, in reading Divine Principle, I realized that Rev. Moon was emphasizing the critical point which to me stood out as the usual cause of failures in the organized churches.

Rev. Moon stressed (like St. Paul) that Jesus' death had given man a clear responsibility -- not just to unconditionally accept his love and grace, but to go out and produce the fruits of this gift for all mankind. It was that type of life ("There is no freedom without actual results") which could show all men that Jesus was the Christ.

Of course, some people in the organized Church knew this too, but there was no way, no "principle," no concerted effort by which the goal and the means to the goal could be clearly seen. There is a gap between the present role of the churches and the standard Jesus spoke of when he cured ten lepers and only two responded to the gift unselfishly.

Furthermore, Rev. Moon saw clearly that history was at a critical point for man, needing a radical new expression of the fruits of Christ as a relevant way of life for man. Rev. Moon was interested in meeting this world with men and women striving to be tailored into the full manhood and stature of Christ.

I was also motivated from the intellectual point of view, since the components of the Unification Principle comprise a system of abstract thinking which presents comprehensive insights into science, psychology, and world religions centered on Christianity.

These I felt had critical validity. Similarly, the theological insights of Rev. Moon were not only uniquely new, but accurate and timely. They were deep-cutting in their insight.

Here also was a clear expression of the responsibility Christians must assume in dispelling the subtle fallacy in Marxism and Maoism-that ultimate moral authority can lie with men. As a Christian, and as a leftist in my university days, I was painfully aware of the stature of Communism as a theology (an a-theology) which offered enough of the truth to be convincing but contained a trap: since there is no moral authority but men, when the "chips are down," anything goes. In fact, I had been reconverted to Christianity on the rebound from such realizations.

In Divine Principle I could see the values of the West stated in a comprehensive ideology, based on a unique Christian view of man through which truly good people could grow. In a word, the whole collage of truth in Divine Principle became a miracle for me.

After I came to these conclusions, and others concerning Rev. Moon, I decided to speak out for him within the Church. After several months I was forbidden to speak of him (by my superiors who in good heart were suspicious of the theology). After about a year, as I continued to bring insights gained from Rev. Moon's writings and speeches into conversations, I was asked to leave my position. After a brief respite to gather my senses I went to hear Rev. Moon speak (I had never seen him before). I was sure then that I had been led to this and that everything had been worth it. So I moved in with the Unified Family.



Shawn Byrne

I was a priest in the Roman Catholic Church for eleven years. Ordained in Dublin, Ireland, in June 1963, I worked as a priest in Dublin until April 1974 when I heard the Divine Principle. Within three weeks I had left my work as a priest and joined the Unification movement. How did it happen?

I taught religion in a school in Dublin to thirteen to fifteen year-olds from 1963 to 1970. Year after year I tried to grasp more deeply, and express more accurately, the essence of Christianity. Still, I didn't seem to be getting the results I was hoping for. My attention switched to methods and approaches. Gradually I came to the conclusion that unless the whole of education was a Christian experience, unless tht: school and home provided an all-embracing Christian environment, unless human, religious and Christian values could be brought out in every subject and area, that religious education

would not achieve its purpose.

I concluded that, at the age of my students, formation was required rather than knowledge. But to achieve that, it was the teachers and parents who needed Christianity more than the students. Mercifully, perhaps, at that point my archbishop sent me to be chaplain in our national prison in Dublin. There I expected to meet hardened criminal types, and I did-but with a difference. I thought they would be very calculating, deliberate people. Instead I found them to be the weakest, most deprived people in society. Practically all of them came from bad homes or none at all. By the same token, nearly everyone was from a depressed, poverty-stricken part of the city or country. I realized that society at large, the people who tolerated or helped create such conditions, was the worst criminal. Prisons needed to be reformed. But, much more than that, society needed to be reformed, to be educated to care, to accept responsibility and to serve.

Having begun prison work in 1970, I left it in 1972. This time I was dispatched to a comfortable, middle-class parish in the suburbs. With three other priests I was responsible for two thousand families. Most of the children were teenagers or younger. Practically all adults and the great majority of the teenagers and young adults came to church on Sunday. There were lots of Christian schools there run by dedicated religious. The people were good. But there was little or no fire in them. They were passive rather than active, self-centered even in their religion rather than other-centered or God-centered. It was an inturned Church. It wasn't really fulfilling any purpose.

And this was the picture I saw all around me, throughout the country. The Church should serve the world and change it. But instead of that, it had the appearance of moving in circles, of not really going anywhere. It was a picture of frustration. How was the Church to be changed; how was it to break from its circular motion and move forward, becoming a real leavening force to change the world for the better? These were the questions that chased one another in my mind. I was interested in renewal, in ecumenism, in the charismatic prayer movement. Would these provide the answer?

Then in April 1974 I heard Divine Principle. It claimed to be a new revelation. Nonsense! It couldn't be! I only listened to it because I wanted to speak to the members. They impressed me. They were the kind of self-sacrificing, dedicated Christians I had been looking for, and could neither form nor find. Obviously, they were heretics. But what made them tick, then? Reluctantly, I listened to Divine Principle.



By the time I heard the end of it I knew I was in deep water... deep, deep water. This was a lot bigger than me. I decided it was either the greatest lie I had ever heard or else the greatest truth. It seemed more likely it was the greatest lie. But if so, how could I explain that its followers were my dream -- Christians, how explain that it answered all my questions about the Church and what was happening in the world?

It explained very clearly and simply what is meant by calling man the "image of God" (it did not forget women). It explained also the relationship between God, man and creation, as God meant it to be. It showed how God has been having great difficulty in restoring man because man does not sufficiently realize that God is helpless without man's cooperation. It showed clearly the purpose of creation, the nature of man's fall, the purpose of the coming of the Messiah, the deep meaning of history and the events and significance of our own time. It showed how man can actually achieve God's ideal for him. If it wasn't the truth, it was the best answer I had ever received. It showed the way forward for man.

Besides, I felt so good about it. It ran through my heart like a clear and singing stream. It gave hope. On the advice of family members I prayed about it. I even fasted for a few days, which was unusual for me. I took a week off and studied it more closely. My question was: what did God think of it? Was it His truth? More than my life was in the balance. I came to the conclusion that it was God's truth and that it revealed God's intention for our time. If that was so I wanted to be with the action.

Wasn't that what I had been looking for all along? So without more ado I told my archbishop, left my parish, and moved in with the Unified Family.