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RELIGION'S ROLE IN PROMOTING FAMILY AND GLOBAL FAMILY

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by Andrew Wilson

Any assessment of religion's role in relation to the hope of global family must be decidedly mixed. On the one hand, most of the world's religions promote a vision of global harmony, called by such names as the *œcumene*, the *ummah* and the Kingdom of God. Their founders were men with broad visions of peace and humanitarianism. If believers would only be true to the spirit and faith of the founder, it is said, they could establish a peaceful world.

All the major religions teach to love one's enemy¹ and to respect other religions.² Therefore, there are sufficient grounds within the major religious traditions for regarding fighting among religions as a sin. The New Testament teaches that intra-Christian conflict blasphemes God and denies the unity of Christ's body.³ Likewise, inter-religious conflict can be understood as a blot on the divine Unity.⁴ The trend towards tolerance and appreciation of other faiths is growing amongst religious people everywhere.

On the other hand, religious wars and conflicts have plagued most of human history, often frustrating the very hopes of religious people for peace. In this context, we can speak of what Hans Kung calls the "ambivalence" of religion, with its positive points counterbalanced by a "chronicle of scandal": intolerance, fanaticism and bizarre phenomena.⁵ This is a manifestation of fallen human nature and our imperfect comprehension of the unity of all being in God. There was a stage in history when exclusivism was necessary to preserve the purity of the revelation and the Way against the encroachments of the secular world; for example, when God demanded of the Israelites that they exterminate the Canaanites in order that their idolatrous customs not become a snare to them,⁶ or when Ezra demanded that the Jews put away their foreign wives and marry only within their own people.⁷ Now, however, we are at a more advanced stage, when the world's people are

called to the work of unification. When mankind has the power to unleash weapons of mass destruction or to radically damage the environment, the only route to human survival is to realize global unity.

It can be shown that in the 20th century there has been a radical change in the world's religious situation; yet the assessment of this change is also a mixed one. On the one hand, the movement for interreligious dialogue and cooperation has done much to break down the barriers which formerly kept religions perpetually suspicious of and at odds with one another. This is a cause for hope. On the other hand, many of the institutional mainstays of interreligious dialogue have become moribund. Moreover, the religions themselves have been weakened by internal divisions (e.g. into liberals and fundamentalists) and by the secular acids of modernity.

Religion and the Family

The problem of modernity as well as the conflict between mainstream believers and fundamentalists is particularly sharp around the issue of "family values." In the West, mainline churches are ridden with conflicts over such issues as the ordination of women priests and the solemnizing of homosexual unions. Liberal churchmen who advocate accommodating to modern forms of alternative family and ministering to their needs are fiercely opposed by conservatives who are unwilling to sanction what is traditionally regarded as living in sin. In Islamic countries, fundamentalists have seized upon the issue of the veiling of women; for them, skimpy women's fashions symbolize everything about modern life that is corrupt and contrary to Islam. As mainstream religious institutions weaken in their commitment to traditional family values, fundamentalist groups grow in numbers and in their zeal to purge society of corruption. Thus it appears that the question of the family has become the central conundrum for religion. This same question is

also at the root of the religious and cultural conflicts plaguing our world. The health of the family has become a cipher for the condition of the greater human family.

As a fundamental postulate, I believe that progress towards global family is directly related to the harmony and prosperity of our individual families. According to Unification Thought, “human relationships in society are a projection of the relationships among family members at home.”⁸ Reverend Moon calls the family “the school of love.” The family molds our character as children and gives us basic norms to live by. As we function in the larger world of work and take on larger social responsibilities, we still draw on the lessons first learned in the family. Thus the Reverend Moon has said, “The true perfection of the individual, family, society, and environment has its root in the realization of true love within a family.”⁹ Therefore, we will consider the individual family and the global family together.

What is the role of religion in forming and sustaining the family? Of course, marriage customarily begins with a religious ceremony, invoking the blessings of God on the couple. Vows are taken as a solemn pledge before God. Religious teachings, when practiced, provide the couple with spiritual resources and an ethical backbone that can help them weather the storms that inevitably break out in a marriage. Families who attend church regularly also give their young people a good start: their teenagers are less likely to engage in crime, drop out of school or be sexually promiscuous.¹⁰ However, as we shall discuss below, the most important responsibility of religion in the family is to guide people to experience true love. Happiness in marriage grows when the couple lives in such a way that God’s true love ever infuses their union.

How might religion form and sustain a global family? As a result of a century of interreligious dialogues,¹¹ the world has reached the point where in 1986, Pope John Paul II could invite the leaders of the major religions of the world to pray together at Assisi. If the leaders of the world’s religions would regularly and strenuously use their considerable influence for peace, those

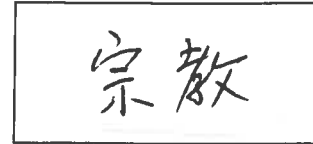
who would use violence to advance their political agendas would find themselves stripped of moral authority. We have not quite achieved this scenario, but it is likely that a future generation of more enlightened religious leaders will. Reverend Moon has exhorted religious leaders to “take the lead in ending the world’s corruption and wrongdoing” and to “work constructively for the sake of interreligious harmony and world peace.”¹² A united federation of religious leaders, as Reverend Moon is developing through the Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace, has the potential to serve as the “conscience of the world.” When religious leaders set an example of service to the poor and self-sacrifice for the sake of others, they will influence political, business and educational leaders to do the same.

The fact that religions have serious difficulties in fulfilling both of these support functions, for the family and for the global family, should lead us to examine the matter more deeply.

The Purpose of Religion

Religion includes such a broad array of beliefs, teachings and activities as to be notoriously difficult to define. Call it belief in God, and you overlook Buddhism and other non-theistic religions. Call it an experience of the holy (Otto) and you may leave out its ethical dimension. Whitehead called religion “what an individual does in his solitariness,” yet much of religion is communitarian. For Tillich, religion is attention to “ultimate concern,” a definition which might include such non-religious activities as politics and art. How can we begin to sketch in broad strokes the meaning and purpose of religion, at least as it concerns the family and the global family? I would apologize for including an etymological analysis of the word religion were it not such a useful heuristic device. By investigating several etymologies from both East and West, we can arrive at a rather comprehensive view of the purpose and content of religion.

The Chinese word meaning “religion” is written as two characters. The first character means *original* or *fundamental*; the second character means *a teaching*. Thus, the word means *the*



original or fundamental teaching. In this sense, religion is about ethics. As the “original teaching,” religious ethics are grounded in the fabric of the cosmos, or what in the West is called natural law. As such, ethics must be universal or capable of being universally agreed to. As the “fundamental teaching,” religion prescribes the Way, the mode of living which engenders harmony, wholeness, and peace—Hebrew *shalom*.

A deeper exegesis of these same Chinese characters analyzes the first character into two parts: the radical meaning *house* and the pictograph denoting an *altar for god*. Along with the second character, *teaching*, it means *the teaching which sets up an altar to god in the home*. In this sense, religion should bring God into the home, into the center of family life. The end of the New Testament speaks of a time when “the dwelling of God is with men.” (Rev 21:3) The presence of the Spirit promotes vitality and enthusiasm; its absence leaves one with mere duty. Furthermore, seen in this aspect, religion is about establishing community: communion with God and loving oneness in the family. Religious worship and religious duties are not private and individual, but take place in community and serve to build community. Religion, then, gives the universal principles for right living, specifically those by which we can create God-centered families and societies.

Next, we turn to the Western term “religion,” which has several purported Latin etymologies. In one view, it is derived from the verb *relegare* meaning *to re-read, to repeat*, and hence *to observe carefully*. It may thus refer to the diligent observance of divine precepts. Such an etymology is of limited value for our purposes; although it does appeal to certain Reformed theologians who use it negatively to contrast the Old Testament “religion” of human works with New Testament “faith” which comes through God’s initiative.¹³

More commonly, the word religion is derived from the verb *ligare*, meaning *to bind* or *to tie* with the prefix *re-* meaning *again*. Religion, then, means *to rebind with God*. This definition speaks to the human condition of brokenness and alienation and sin. From the miserable starting-point of fallenness and sin, God has been laboring to bring us back to Him, through conducting His providence and finally sending his Son. Likewise, we have our own part to play in restoring the original relationship with God. Had there been no fall, religion in this sense would not be necessary. But in reality, God has walked a thorny and arduous path to restore what is broken within us, and we fallen people likewise are called, for the sake of their own inner healing, to bear a cross and follow the example of God and Christ: “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35)

Earlier, we said that religion is founded upon natural law. Nevertheless, this aspect of religion seems like an unnatural burden; it teaches us to restrain our natural desires and deny ourselves. This is the element of rebinding or restoration. Reverend Moon has said that the universal purpose of religion is to subjugate the body which has been oppressing of the conscience, which is the dwelling-place of God.

What, then, does God intend to do through religion? He intends to discipline the body, and to weaken it relative to the mind. ...

To strengthen the power of the conscience, we must discipline the flesh. We must liberate our conscience, so that it can lead our body at will. We can then return to the bosom of God’s true love as original beings, free from sin.

If we ask what religion should do, the answer is that it should motivate our body to do everything it hates to do. What does the body hate most? To fast! To serve! To sacrifice!...¹⁴

Despite the painful effort required to subjugate the body, people are conscience-stricken if they don't follow religion because in their hearts they know they need its discipline and correction.

We have so far delineated two broad meanings of religion: one about the original principles of right living, the second about restoring the brokenness of the human condition. Next, let us investigate how they apply to the issues of family and the global family, beginning with the first meaning of religion as a universal ethic.

The Objective Basis of Universally Shared Values

When Reverend Moon first gave his daring call for “Absolute Values” at these ICUS conferences some 25 years ago, he was met with stony silence. It had become fashionable to claim, in the name of tolerance and later of Multiculturalism, that all ethics and value systems were relative and the product of culture. Basking in our affluent society's optimism about our technological future, we had the luxury of denigrating values and indulging in dreams of unfettered license—but no longer. America's soaring rates of divorce and illegitimacy have spawned a host of social ills, and the shards of these broken homes are unhappy, lonely people. Softly at first, but now with more insistence, educators and moralists are speaking about the universal ground of ethics, character and family.

Until recently, the mere fact that an ethic was promoted by religion was reason enough to reject its claim to universality. Religious diversity was adduced as an argument against a universal ethic. The only universal claims that could be trusted were the facts established by science. In a previous paper, I argued that one of the imperatives behind interfaith unity is to recover the authority of religious ethics from the status of opinion to the status of fact, from a culturally relative value to a principle inherent in the nature of things.¹⁵ At that time I called for a movement

to unify religious values which could challenge what had become a deeply ingrained prejudice of Western culture since the Enlightenment.

Now, barely five years later, there is already a growing number of ethicists and educators who are confident enough to proclaim that universal ethical values exist. They are receiving widespread support far beyond the religious community. James Covey, for example, has made a fortune conducting management seminars in which he promotes what he calls “True North Principles.” According to Covey, these are universal laws governing human behavior, for example: Give and you will receive; You reap what you sow. These principles are

*not invented by us or by society, they are the laws of the universe that pertain to human relationships and human organizations... These principles are woven into the fabric of every civilized society and constitute the roots of every family and institution that has endured and prospered.*¹⁶

Ironically, religion is still often more of a liability than a help in making the case for universal values. Thomas Lickona, who promotes “character education” in the public schools, is careful to establish a rational ground for ethics independent of religion.

*There is a natural moral law that prohibits injustice to others and that can be arrived at through the use of human reason. This natural moral law is consistent with revealed religious principles (such as “Love your neighbor” and “Thou shalt not steal”) but has its own independent logic that even children can grasp. The educational implication of this universal natural law is very important: It gives public schools the objective moral content—“Be just and caring toward others”—that they may legitimately teach in a religiously diverse society.*¹⁷

It seems that in America, at least, with its firm commitment to religious pluralism, this new reaffirmation of universal values will likely find its home in the nation’s civil religion rather than in particular religions.

As I have discussed previously, America up until the mid-20th century maintained a canopy of “self-evident truths”: the existence of a Supreme Being, a moral universe of cause and effect, the ultimate value of the individual, an ethic of love and charity, etc. These provided a minimal common ground upon which all the particular religious denominations, with their disputes over

dogmas and rituals, could freely coexist. The denominations, in turn, nourished the beliefs of the civil religion. This consensus was sorely challenged in the '60s, as the nation sought to deal fairly with its minorities and gained a new awareness of its diversity of peoples. It seemed to many that the inclusion of minorities outside of the Judeo-Christian fold—Muslims, Buddhists, American Indians and other new faces in the multicultural rainbow—would cause America's ethical consensus to collapse. Yet today we are recognizing that the ethical common ground among the world's religions,¹⁸ although it might phrased in non-Christian language, is as broad and deep as was the earlier ethical consensus among Protestants, Catholics and Jews. Hence the universal ethic of civil religion is being reasserted once more. And as before, it appears likely that the particular religious formulations of this ethic will remain in the background, nourishing and supporting a consensus that will be stated in the most general terms possible.

Universal Principles and the Family

Universal values are first of all about the family. The breakdown of the family, accompanied by the rise of incivility, deviant and criminal behavior among the young people victimized by family breakdown, sounded the trumpet call which roused ethicists and educators to reassert the primacy of ethics and values. The trend towards ever-greater individualism, compounded by a growing rejection of traditional cultural and religious norms, has contributed mightily to family breakdown.

Despite the tendency of many liberals to acquiesce in the demise of the nuclear family and even celebrate what they term the rise of alternative family patterns, a growing body of empirical evidence points to the destructiveness of this trend. 65% of new marriages in America fail, and hence many young people are avoiding marriage altogether. Yet cohabiting adults are less likely to have an enduring union fit to raise children. The long-term emotional and physical damage suffered

by children of divorced parents has been documented.¹⁹ Statistics show that mothers' boyfriends and stepfathers are the most frequent perpetrators of violence against children.²⁰ Boys raised by single mothers are far more likely to resort to crime, and girls are far more likely to have teen-age pregnancies, than are children raised in intact two-parent families.²¹

Moreover, it is now clear that these dire trends are not caused by poverty. They are being seen among the middle class as well as in the inner cities. These problems were not prevalent in the 1930s when poverty was far more widespread than it is today. Evidently, the breakdown of the family has moral and spiritual causes. While traditional religious values eroded, people of the baby-boom generation were presented with an unprecedented array of freedoms: birth-control pills and the hippie '60s promoted sexual freedom, feminism unshackled women from age-old restrictions, affluence and mobility opened new vistas of opportunity, as did society's expanded tolerance for all manner of lifestyle choices. Yet by and large, people have not been able to handle these new freedoms. It has been observed that in the domain of marriage and family life, our recent explosions of freedom have taken a largely unexpected toll. Far from improving, relationships between men and women are becoming more difficult and more unhappy. Many women are experiencing chronic economic insecurity. Many men are isolated and estranged from their children. Many more people are living their middle-age years alone.

Reviving the family is nearly impossible without first shoring up its ethical foundations. New formulations of universal values must address the importance of the family for character formation and its value as the pre-ordained structure for maximizing human happiness. In an age of unprecedented freedom, when the old cultural guideposts have been blown away and one can no longer say, "This is the way it's done," people must make intentional choices to live according to their chosen values. In this situation, a strong affirmation of universal ethical principles by families, schools, government and the media is essential to civilization's very survival.

The God-Centered Family

What is the heart of such universal principles that can sustain family life? Love is what sustains the family, hence these principles should foster warm and lasting love between husband and wife, parents and children. The way to true love requires that we connect with love's transcendent Source. As the Eastern definition of religion puts it, the true principles of family life must set up an altar to God in the home. True love abides in the family where God is present.

Marriage was traditionally dictated by social expectation and enforced by economic necessity; perforce, marriage was for life. In the affluence of the 20th century, however, marriage and family have become a free choice, with few penalties for failure. Today, people feel little obligation to endure an unhappy marriage, with the result that the divorce rate has skyrocketed. Hence the question in a free society becomes, "Why get married?" The obvious answer: "We love each other." But love is a slippery notion, filled with many misconceptions. There is our culturally-dictated notion of romantic love, which has been roundly criticized as inadequate by the popular psychologists Erich Fromm and M. Scott Peck.²² Romantic Love doesn't seem to fit well with the institution of marriage. Hence for a disillusioned generation of Baby Boomers, marriage has lost much of its allure.

Yet rather than throwing out either love or marriage, our concept of marriage needs to be expanded from within. Recently, this realization has dawned even on members of the alternative press. One editor lamented, "the culture is in a desperate state... heartbreak shrouds society like a restless ghost." One of the most fundamental issues we must address is "how to redefine love in the late 20th century."²³ Some seekers are finding answers:

Awakening, transcendence, connection to the divine—call it what you will... In this context, intimate relationship becomes a spiritual practice; a sacred, mystical union of two people connected to a larger reality... Maybe the sacred is the glue, the binding and holy energy that got lost.²⁴

A marriage which is predicated upon, founded upon something greater than itself is a marriage which is self-perpetuating and self-renewing.

True love is utterly unselfish. Human love in its true sense sets before us a high ideal that even the best of people find difficult to practice: “Love is patient and kind: love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way... Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Cor 13:4-7) In a committed marriage where we try and practice true love, we can bring out the best in ourselves. Marriage is that arena of spiritual growth where we overcome our selfishness:

*Marriage is generally the best vehicle for whittling away at our narcissism...
The tentacles of narcissism are subtle and penetrating and must be hacked away
one by one, week after week, month after month, year after year.²⁵*

Meaningful, growth-filled, long-lasting marriages are based upon something greater than the satisfaction of the two people involved; they are based upon a greater love—divine in nature and meant to be lived by humans. In the daily challenges of loving one’s spouse, one can touch divine love. The image of God is completed in the pair.

In the Jewish tradition, some rabbis go so far as to say that it is only after marriage and the union of man and woman into one person that the image of God may be discerned in them.²⁶ This is also the position of Unification Thought. Husband and wife enmeshed in oneness are an expression of the Godhead. The sexual act of marriage partakes of the divine; it is holy and should be treated as such. Because it is divine in nature, it should be inviolate. This physical moment of oneness, accompanying the enmeshing of both personalities, is a symbolic rejoining of the masculinity and femininity of God, incarnated separately in men and women yet ultimately one:

Husband and wife each, originally, represents one of God’s dual characteristics; accordingly, their conjugal union signifies the manifestation of God. When husband and wife love each other centering on God and with God’s love as the vertical axis, they love each other horizontally, performing a circular movement centering on that axis. When that happens, God’s love dwells in that couple.²⁷

By “circular movement” the text envisions a life of great freedom, variety and trust; the spouses may take on all manner of roles and travel to the ends of the earth, yet they remain firmly joined by the true love at the center of their relationship.

Going deeper still, Unification theology discerns the reason behind the conjugal bond in the purposes of the Creator. God, whose essence is Love, needs a partner with whom to share His love. For this purpose God created human beings, to be His partners in love. When husband and wife love each other, God beholds His own nature in their union; in their love they create the conditions for the divine-human partnership to be consummated. Reverend Moon describes this relationship:

If God is alone, does He feel lonely or not? ... Just like us, God has love, life, lineage and conscience, but He cannot feel them by Himself. Because they are completely in balance, God cannot feel them. That is why God also needs an object partner. We understand the necessity of an object partner from the perspective. When one is alone, one cannot feel oneself. But when a man appears to a woman and a woman appears to a man, the stimulation of love and lineage will erupt like lightning and thunder...

Then who or what within His creation could be His love partner? Is it man by himself? Or can woman by herself become God's love partner? ...

Thus, centering on the place where husband and wife become one through their sexual organs, God wants to appear and meet us. ... Love is absolute, and that place is where man and woman have the absolute desire to become one. Looking horizontally, man, who is plus, approaches that center and woman, who is minus, also approaches that center. In God also, the masculine characteristic and the feminine characteristic become one as plus and minus. That union in God, as a bigger plus, becomes one with a bigger minus, the union of man and woman.²⁸

Such teachings are a balm for couples whose affections have cooled. By exalting marriage and providing the spiritual resources for its continued enrichment, they are a corrective to our individualistic and love-starved culture. For as long as love and marriage are cast in terms of individual fulfillment they will sooner or later explode, pulled apart by the centrifugal forces of the individuals' wandering desires. The key to lasting love is to live for the sake of one's partner. To love means to live for others, and thereby connect with its spiritual center, God who lives “for us.”

A God-centered marriage becomes the divine center for a life of giving. It is the couple's source of the unconditional love that includes everything and everybody, love that is universal. Their marriage makes them, more than ever before, members of the human community. The quality of love nurtured in the family thus shines its light to the larger world.

Universal Principles and the Global Family

Universal values are also about constituting the global family. When the debate over multiculturalism was raging a few years ago, writers like Arthur Schlesinger warned, "if separatist tendencies go unchecked, the result can only be the fragmentation, resegregation and tribalization of American life."²⁹ As long as America's moral center was identified with European culture, it was vulnerable to the multiculturalist critique. Now, however, it is possible to redefine America's moral center as a *universal* moral center, valid for all the cultures in the pluralistic community of Americans. In the same way, we can find the universal moral center for the world community.

God has planted the seeds of truth in the traditions of every culture. Through sages, sacred writings, and folk wisdom, every nation has access to the Way.³⁰ The truth in every culture allows good people to recognize one another, and thence to cooperate in love. Moreover, when people share universal values, they share in their consciences a common sense of right and wrong. They will be able to judge for themselves where their own religions and cultures have been narrow-minded and partial. For this reason, religions and cultures are inevitably transformed as they participate together in the greater whole. But for this to take place, cultural leaders must have the integrity that permits them to place their commitment to universal truth ahead of parochial interests.

Taking the Brackets Off God in Interreligious Dialogue

Such integrity is a gift of God. It is not surprising that the most sincere participants in interfaith dialogue are those with a living faith, well rooted in their own traditions. It has been the experience of people in dialogue that faith speaks to faith. The heart that has plumbed the depths of faith can respond to another heart which has experienced a different faith in its depth. External appearances melt away in a genuine interior sharing. Furthermore, for such participants even the sharpest dialogue never seems to weaken faith. Faith is only enhanced by coming to know another dimension of the infinite Godhead.

People who stand on principles have a foundation to respect and understand others who stand for their principles, even if they suffer from a certain narrowness. Whether they are on the Right or the Left, and whether they agree or disagree on the issues, such people can have sincere and exciting dialogues. Yet faced with enduring prejudices, such dialogues have been rare.

On the other hand, experience has shown that many who are initially most open to interfaith exploration are ill-equipped fulfill dialogue's ultimate ends. Among the most open-minded are the "scientific" scholars of religion. They carry no doctrinal limitations which would keep them from sitting at the table with anyone and giving them a fair hearing. They can converse intelligently about all manner of religious topics. Their partisanship is displayed, however, when you ask them about Fundamentalists or the Christian Right. Their liberal ideology blinds them from acknowledging that such people might have compelling reasons for their positions. Ignorant of their own bias—reinforced by their self-regard as members of a superior educated elite—they believe in the name of scientific "truth" that everyone should think as they do. Dialogue with such people cannot go far. In particular, it cannot bridge the yawning gulf between liberal and Fundamentalist, which is, in fact, one of the chief imperatives of interreligious dialogue in our time.³¹

How did this situation arise? The movement for interreligious dialogue in the 20th century began as a reflection upon Christian missions. Some Protestant missionaries recognized that in their evangelical fervor they were in fact being uncharitable and oppressive to the peoples of other cultures. In proselytizing the heathen, they insisted that everyone convert and put on Western dress. Yet it is a tenet of Christian charity that people should be respected, and hence their cultures should be respected also. On becoming aware of this issue, some missionaries and the children of missionaries took up religious studies and began interfaith explorations.

Through their study, many came to have a more sympathetic and even appreciative view of the cultures they had been proselytizing. Soon enough, they began to doubt the superiority of their message and the validity of seeking converts. Moreover, as these Christians saw the damage their religion has done to others in the name of Christ, as they were seized with guilt over the Holocaust, colonialism and imperialism, many lost all conviction that theirs was the superior religion. Building schools and hospitals and delivering charity became the purpose of missions. Consequently, they *bracket the evangelical Christian message*: it remains their personal faith and the fount of their charitable work, but it is not necessarily right to push it on others. At the same time, these have been the very Christians most open to dialogue.

It was safer to engage in the academic study of religion. This requires gaining some objectivity in order to gain an accurate assessment of beliefs and behavior of the people under study. For the purposes of academic study, researchers must *bracket their theological convictions*, if they have any. Teaching about religion in the academy became distinct from teaching religion in the church. Between academics and churchmen, the former regard themselves as naturally superior, due to their academic qualifications and scientific training. Furthermore, they have generally been far more interested and knowledgeable about other religions, and more ready to engage in interfaith dialogue.

Most interfaith dialogue takes place in places where liberal democratic values are ascendant. Liberal democratic values exalt the dignity of the individual and the equality of all peoples as of higher value than the rightness of one's beliefs or the truthfulness of one's actions. I discussed above that in a democracy, a pluralism of religions can be embraced by a minimal set of commonly shared values which are agreeable to reason and not specific to any one sect. This means that in one's public life, one must *bracket one's personal convictions about ultimate truth*, leaving them at the church door.

The end result of all this bracketing is that much interreligious dialogue has occurred amidst much charity to others, yet with a vacuum of conviction about God and ultimate truth. Its protagonists were liberals who believed passionately in pluralism, tolerance, and in the mission to build a global society. Conservatives who still held to their theological convictions were often put off. The hard issues—including the very divide that separates liberals from conservatives—were not faced. Eventually the passion for dialogue cooled, and there remained only a club of like-minded people sharing old stories.

The global family should be like the house with an altar to God at its center. God and issues of ultimate truth should be of central concern to participants in interfaith dialogue. Liberal zeal for tolerance and pluralism must be wedded to zeal for truth. Conservatives who stand by their convictions must overcome their narrow-mindedness and respect others with equally strong convictions. The interreligious work of the Unification movement has been about combining the best of both worlds: a universal embrace for all religions and a fundamental commitment to the truth of God. Instead of promulgating pluralism as an ideology, Unificationists create the conditions for mutual respect by the practice of sacrificial love, which is grounded in the divine imperative. The ultimate truth of God is love. God's love, when practiced, builds a family, even the global family of religions.

Religion as Restoration and the Battle for the Family

When we turn to the aspect of religion as restoration, suggested by the Western etymology *to rebind with God*, a different picture emerges: religion as salvation from a condition of sinfulness, restoration from sickness to health. As I mentioned above, restoration requires self-restraint and self-denial, to struggle against the desires of the flesh. Reverend Moon has said that God set up religion to help people subjugate the flesh and thus restore unity of mind and body.³²

There is a deep connection between the conflict between mind and body within each individual and the moral crisis of family life. According to Reverend Moon, the very origin of the conflict within the individual lies with the Fall of Adam and Eve, which was essentially a violation of the conjugal relationship.³³ The roots of our inner disorder lay deep in our lineage, passed down through the countless love relationships which gave birth to the generations before us. The relationship between Adam and Eve was ridden with conflict; and this conflict, passed down through the lineage to all their descendants, is experienced by human beings as the war between mind and body.

When, through the disciplined practice of religion, a person's conscience is able to dominate the body with some consistency, he or she can be faithful and chaste in any circumstance. Furthermore, because the conscience always seeks the benefit of others, that individual becomes capable of genuine, selfless, sacrificial love. He or she is then able to love another human being truly. Such is the individual's foundation for an enduring and happy marriage.

If one takes the ordinary experience of human nature as the starting point of ethics, there is no firm ground upon which to judge right from wrong. This is because we have a dual nature: an original nature which is manifested through the conscience, and a fallen nature which arose as a result of the Human Fall. As Reverend Moon puts it:

*If the Fall had not occurred, our mind and body would have become one through natural law. As a result of the Fall, there is a conflict between two pluses: the conscience on the side of heaven, and the body that opposes the conscience.*³⁴

Unless we understand clearly that the existential human condition is corrupted, disordered, and in need of repair, we shall not be able to have a proper understanding of many phenomena which appear to stem from our nature but are, in reality, false. As mentioned above, there is a tension between restoration and natural law. Existing in a state of double-mindedness, how can we know what the natural law is? How can we judge what sorts of human behavior are consistent with our original nature, and what sorts of behavior contradict it? Humans are in need of divine revelation, some guidance from religion, to even know their true selves.

Just as conservatives advance arguments for morality grounded in natural law, liberals also argue from human nature. For those do not believe in a Fall, who do not understand human nature to be in any way corrupt, it can be “natural” to make gratifying the body’s desires the paramount concern in our search for a fulfilling life. From that perspective, any lifestyle that appears to stem from a deeply-felt desire for human fulfillment is to be honored as a legitimate way to fulfill our human nature. Western culture celebrates tolerance and pluralism, so we tend to accept any freely chosen lifestyle so long as it is not harmful to others. Homosexuality is one example; extramarital sex between consenting adults is another. Everyone should be free to choose the lifestyle that is most genuine and most fulfilling. One who would make moral judgments is met by the chorus, “What right do you have to question my free choice?”

Furthermore, many today regard religion’s restorative ethic of asceticism and self-denial to be alienating from one’s true humanity. Indeed, they see in the trend towards alternative families a positive development towards increasing freedom and more genuine existence. It’s about time, they say, that people were free of the oppressive values of traditional morality and religion and able to live according to the heart’s desire—whether it be as liberated single mothers, as men sharing several lovers, as faithful homosexual couples, or whatever. For these reasons, the problem of family breakdown does not appear to be a straightforward matter of recovering lapsed traditional

values. It appears rather as a “culture war,” pitting two conflicting value systems against each other. How does one choose between them?

Perhaps we can know them by the fruits. There is empirical evidence for the superiority of the traditional family—where the children are raised by a father and a mother ever faithful to each other, and if possible with the grandparents nearby—evidence that the traditional family is healthier and happier by many measures. On the other hand, many of society’s most creative and influential people, role-models for many, have lifestyles far from the traditional norm. No, the empirical evidence is not by itself persuasive. The choice of values is ultimately a matter of faith.

Restoration typically involves a struggle: the battle between the spirit and the flesh within an individual; the battle for family values; the battle between good and evil in history. When battle lines are drawn, each side fortifies itself with hot passions and justifies itself and arguments from reason. The flesh is weak and easily tempted. The Devil can advance many clever and persuasive arguments for his cause. Moreover, having succumbed to false ways of thinking and lived and false ways of life for countless generations, there is much that is tainted and devilish within ourselves. To overcome this confusion, we have to take a stand and fight with strong conviction and discipline, enduring self-doubt, ridicule and even persecution.

Herein lies the importance of religious revival. Religions at their best have clear understanding of the need for restoration and the standards for judging between the true and the false in human life. Although some religious leaders have themselves been compromised by the world’s values, many are working to purify the churches of decadence and clear away confusion over right and wrong. As Reverend Moon declared:

The tasks of changing ritualized faith into living faith, reestablishing the true value perspective from the many confused value perspectives, restoring the original human nature from deviated and desolate human nature, elevating the moral standard and liquidating the decadent culture, all are to be accomplished by men and women of religion joined together in an allied movement of the eternal God.³⁵

Religiously-committed people have an important role to play in the battle for the family. Because religions teach the need for self-denial and subjugating the flesh, they are equipped to reaffirm a type of love and commitment to marriage and family that is not swayed by shifting sentiments. For those of us who are not persuaded to adopt a religion, or who are dealing with values in a pluralistic environment, we can adduce arguments for the wisdom and rightness of traditional family values from the insights which can be gleaned from the world's religions and the best of Classical philosophy.³⁶ The spirit of the present age that places fulfillment of the individual self above all other values must give way. Wholesale repentance is needed, to renounce the present disorder and begin to seek desperately for a cure to society's disease.

Restoring Wholeness to the Global Family

The same dynamic is at work in restoring wholeness to the global family. Building the global family is an act of restoration because it requires that we confront the parochial egotism of the group. The evils of racism, nationalism and religious prejudice are deeply ingrained in individuals and institutions. How often do people justify their prejudices with the unquestioned assumption that my nation, my race, my religion is the true arbiter of experience and judgment? Much of interfaith dialogue is a struggle to overcome one's own self-righteousness and sense of cultural superiority. Then we can recognize our prejudices and misconceptions of the other. In dialogue, we meet the stranger as a brother or sister who also has a genuine faith. Today there are many broad-minded people who have made significant steps towards reconciliation; yet the world as a whole has a long way to go.

Tied in with overcoming parochialism is the task of confronting the pain and resentments of history. Religions have been around for thousands of years, and in that time they have caused much pain and spilled much blood in the name of their faith. All religious teachings describe the

ways to resolve resentment: the oppressor must sincerely repent, make public confession and restitution; the aggrieved party must forgive his enemy. Interreligious dialogue opens the eyes of all parties to how they have wronged each other and misperceived each other; thus genuine dialogue is a precondition to repentance, restitution and forgiveness. Dialogue at its best is deep heart-to-heart sharing in the warmth of God's love; in such an atmosphere all things can be resolved.

Nevertheless, too often the restitution and the forgiveness is given half-heartedly. The repentance is not genuine, and neither is the forgiveness, as long as there is the slightest modicum of egoism or self-assertion. This creates a lingering emotional dynamic between victim and oppressor that we also find, for example, between Blacks and Whites—or between quarreling husband and wife.

The victimized religion or group may be full of resentment. It may demand an apology, even restitution, for all the pain it has suffered in the past, as if that were possible. Yet it has grown used to being the victim and at some level rather likes the status victimhood confers. The former oppressor, with its history of triumphalism, is smitten with honest guilt and makes its apologies and even some restitution, yet when the victim does not quickly accept the apology but continues its complaints, it may grow angry at the victim's apparent stubbornness and ingratitude. The former oppressor even begins to think that the victim *owes* it a modicum of respect and peace. In fact, the problem will remain unresolved as long as each side is *demanding* something of the other instead of *freely giving* of itself.

The key to reconciliation is that it must be offered unconditionally. One making restitution does not calculate how much he owes; he leaves it to the ones he has wronged to declare finally, "it is enough." If he holds something back, it will never be enough. Likewise, the party proffering forgiveness must give it freely, regardless of how the other side treats it. Forgiveness is not conditional upon the other's gratitude. The Divine Principle describes the making of restitution—

which it calls an “indemnity condition”—as a “substantial offering”; it means to completely offer oneself to the other: “The substantial offering is carried out when a person in Cain’s position honors the person in Abel’s position and sets him above himself as an offering. Through this, they fulfill the indemnity condition to be restored as good children.”³⁷ When there is such a complete offering, all the resentment and hatred dividing the two sides melts away and they become one.

Because religiously-committed people are equipped with teachings of forgiveness and reconciliation, they should be capable of overcoming all manner of historical resentments. They can lead the way for political leaders who, faced with the same sorts of resentments and mistrust in their nations, lack the tools to resolve them. Politicians are schooled in the art of diplomacy and negotiation to promote the self-interest of their nation and party. They can teach religions much about compromise and tolerance. But negotiations alone do not solve the resentments in people’s hearts. Racism cannot be abolished by a law of Congress. The inner, spiritual dimension of ethnic national and global conflict can only be solved by spiritual methods. The same holds true for the devastation of the modern family; its breakdown is rooted in a spiritual malaise. In this regard, religions actively pursuing ministries of restoration and reconciliation have a crucial role to play in restoring wholeness to the family, and the global family.

¹ E.g., Dhammapada 3-5 (Buddhism); Matt 5:43-48 (Christianity); Qur’an 60.7 (Islam); Analects 4.3-4 (Confucianism); Tao Te Ching 63 (Taoism); Ramayana, Yuddha K. 115 (Hinduism). See *World Scripture*, International Religious Foundation (New York: Paragon House, 1991), pp. 705-7.

² E.g., “There are righteous men among the Gentiles who have a share in the world to come” (Tosefta Sanh. 13.2—Judaism); “Unto each nation We have given sacred rites to perform; so let them not dispute with you of the matter” (Qur’an 22.67—Islam); “In every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations” (Mal 1:11—Judaism and Christianity); “God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35—Christianity); “The One Being sages call by many names” (Rig Veda 1.164.46—Hinduism). See *World Scripture*, pp. 35-37.

³ John 17:20-23; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:14-16.

⁴ E.g., “Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12—Christianity); “Reville not unto who they pray besides God, lest they out of spite revile God through ignorance” (Qur’an 6.108—Islam); “Ignorant is he who says, ‘What I say and know is true; others are wrong.’ It is

because of this attitude that there have been doubts and misunderstandings about God.” (Srimad Bhagavatam 11.5—Hinduism). See *World Scripture*, pp. 39-42.

- ⁵ Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), pp. 36-37, 72-74.
- ⁶ Exod 23:23-33; Deut 7:1-5.
- ⁷ Ezra 9-10.
- ⁸ *Essentials of Unification Thought* (Japan: Unification Thought Institute, 1992), p. 208.
- ⁹ Sun Myung Moon, “Founder’s Address,” Third IRFWP Congress, Seoul, August 21, 1995.
- ¹⁰ Robert Rector, “God and the Underclass,” *National Review*, July 15, 1996.
- ¹¹ The opening of the modern age of interreligious dialogue was the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893.
- ¹² Sun Myung Moon, “Founder’s Address,” Third IRFWP Congress, Seoul, August 21, 1995.
- ¹³ E.g. Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933), p. 16.
- ¹⁴ Sun Myung Moon, “The True Family and I,” Montevideo, Uruguay, December 12, 1995.
- ¹⁵ Andrew Wilson, “One Culture Centered Upon God,” *Dialogue and Alliance* 5/4 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 110-20.
- ¹⁶ Stephen Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, p. 18.
- ¹⁷ Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam, 1991), pp. 43f.
- ¹⁸ As illustrated by *World Scripture*, op. cit.
- ¹⁹ Judith S. Wallerstein, “Children After Divorce: Wounds that Don’t Heal,” *Perspectives on Marriage: A Reader*, ed. Kieran Scott and Michael Warren (New York: Oxford, 1993), pp. 337-46.
- ²⁰ Glenn T. Stanton, “Only a Piece of Paper? The Social Significance of the Marriage License and the Consequences of Cohabitation, Divorce and Stepfamilies,” Colorado Springs, CO, Focus on the Family Public Policy Division, August 1995, p. 16.
- ²¹ Although only about 30% of young people are raised in single-parent families, they account for 75% of juveniles in youth correction facilities, according to US Bureau of Justice statistics, 1988; 70% of teenage pregnancies, according to “Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged,” Committee for Economic Development; and 75% of adolescents in drug treatment centers, according to the Center for Disease Control, Atlanta.
- ²² Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956); M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).
- ²³ Hugh Delehanty, “Bo Knows Love,” *Utne Reader*, Nov.-Dec. 1996, p. 3.
- ²⁴ Barbara Graham, “The Future of Love,” op. cit., p. 51.
- ²⁵ M. Scott Peck, “World Waiting to be Born,” audiotope, part 2, side 2.
- ²⁶ Michael G. Lawler, “Marriage in the Bible,” in *Perspectives on Marriage*, p. 12.
- ²⁷ *Essentials of Unification Thought*, p. 96.
- ²⁸ Sun Myung Moon, “In Search of the Origin of the Universe,” Washington, D.C., July, 1996.
- ²⁹ Arthur Schlesinger, “The Cult of Ethnicity, Good and Bad,” *Time* (July 8, 1991), 21.
- ³⁰ “I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice.” (John 10:16)

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- ³¹ This has been one of the hard lessons of the International Religious Foundation's experience in interfaith dialogue, which began with academics who were initially more open to the Unification Church than were pastoral church leaders. After a while, the wells of ideas and inspiration ran dry.
- ³² Sun Myung Moon, "The True Family and I," p. 7.
- ³³ Sun Myung Moon, "The True Family and I," pp. 4-5.
- ³⁴ Sun Myung Moon, "In Search of the Origin of the Universe."
- ³⁵ Sun Myung Moon, "The Tradition of True Love and Bequeathing that Tradition," Address to the Assembly of the World's Religions, San Francisco, CA, August 16, 1990.
- ³⁶ One effective non-religious approach is to link sexual lifestyle choice with character education. By placing issues of character and core ethical values first, educators in the public schools can build a proper context for a later discussion about issues of sexuality and family. This has the effect of taking sex education out of the area of health and biology and placing it in the context of such core ethical values as respect, responsibility and self-control—which students have previously learned are important for all areas of life. The effectiveness of this approach is due to the fact that it sets up the proper order between mind and body. See Thomas Lickona, "The Neglected Heart," *American Educator*, Summer 1994, pp. 34-39; also The Medical Institute for Sexual Health (MISH), "National Guidelines for Sexuality and Character Education," 1966.
- ³⁷ *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (New York: HSA-UWC, 1996), p. 196.

Religion's Role in Promoting Family and Global Family

by Andrew Wilson

Abstract

In broad strokes, this paper construes the general role of religion in promoting family and the interfaith project of promoting global family as profoundly interconnected. The spiritual characteristics of healthy, loving families are the same, on an expanded scale, as the characteristics required of the global family. Issues facing families can be dealt with on an interreligious basis. Conversely, the prospects for the future of interfaith relations turn on how religious groups deal with the crisis of the family. In this way, the health of the family becomes a cipher for the condition of greater family of humankind. These matters are discussed by drawing on both Eastern and Western meanings of religion: religion as teaching the Way of the original self, and religion as salvation from the condition of sinfulness.