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ZONING BOARD

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TOWN OF NEW CASTLE, NY

Here is my testimony for 3 Dec 79:

MEMBERS OF THE ZONING BOARD, I am appearing here this evening not as one who knows what you should do, for I do not, but as one whose experience both of the Cenacle under the sisters and of Unificationism (the term I shall use for Sun Moon's movement as leader and teaching and institutions and followers) just may contribute some information and perspective useful to you toward your decision. As for you yourselves, I thank God for the privilege of having lived these past 17 years in a town of such public-spirited citizenry as can produce, for a zoning board, persons of such assiduous competence and fair-minded patience.

FIRST, my experience of the Cenacle under the sisters. Through the years, as a religion teacher and as a retreat leader, I, a Protestant, was welcomed by the Catholic sisters, who were eager to have my groups both on a day basis and for overnight retreats. Their hospitality was perfect, and I was saddened when their order decided to discontinue operations at this facility. Naturally, I would like to see this facility in the hands of some similarly ecumenically minded folk, who would be willing and eager to provide hospitality to religious groups of various persuasions. An ownership of this type would continue services to the community at large....As to Cenacle-sponsored activities at the facility during my years of living in Chappaqua, I can only witness to my experience--on the premises, and reading their literature--that such activities were brief in duration and involved few people--though others' experience may differ from mine; and I suggested the name of a person who, as Catholic and as in the past a frequent retreatant at the Cenacle, could provide more useful information on this.

SECOND AND FINALLY, my experience of Unificationism. Aspects of this are being with Sun Moon, having long discussions with Unification leaders (some of whom have studied in the theological school of which I am a professor), studying Unification literature (published and unpublished) as a religion scholar and in connection both with coercive deprogramming (which I am against, as is Mr. Gutman, with whom I served on a panel in this connection) and with mentoring an NYU student through his PhD on the hermeneutics of DIVINE PRINCIPLE (Wm. L. O'Byrne, Jr., who in his thesis demonstrated the interpretive fraudulence of Unificationism's "Bible" in light of the solid exegetical principles built up through the centuries by Jews and Christians, by literary-historical-critical science), and lecturing at Sun Moon's Unification Theological Seminary 19May78 (the only participation in that institution that conscience would permit; the lecture entitled "Unificationism Is Not Christian"--a six-hour visit with students and, at dinner, with faculty)--and, most recently, counseling, on his doctoral project, Jn. Sonne born, whose project is preparation toward teaching a course at Unification Seminary, and who told me (in my Manhattan office, 12Nov79) that he is the leader of the 19th and 20th floors of the Manhattan hotel which houses 500 Unificationists....On the basis of the above experience of Unificationism, I make the following allegations and share some impressions:

1. On the date mentioned above, Mr. Sonne born, a brilliant man whom I've long known as a leading thinker in the movement (and who was present at the Unification Seminary on the occasion of my only experience there--on which occasion he said he was puzzled that I could "think just like Father" [i.e., Sun Moon], yet considered

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Sun Moon inspired more of hell than heaven), told me than the Cenacle is to be used for training programs of the various lengths, including the 120-day. Given Mr. Sonneborn's prominence in the movement, it seems unlikely that on this matter he was only guessing or was misinformed, especially since it seems to me highly likely that he is intended as one of the teachers at the Cenacle. But I want to be objective and fair about this: The Unification Church is now a vast and complex operation, and it is possible that Mr. Sonneborn was only speculating that the Cenacle is to be used for the long programs as well as for the short ones.

2. Given the nature and history of Unificationism, it seems to me inherently probable that the operational principle vis-a-vis real estate is the principle of maximizing use-options. If I were a Unificationist, I would resist any zoning board's efforts to delimit property-use. The movement is both fixed and fluid: fixed in its multi-program training process, fluid in its exploration toward training forms more appropriate to its burgeoning existence and developing theology and politics. Both this fixity and this fluidity argue for keeping property-use-options open. In short, I would be surprised if the Cenacle were not intended for the 120-day program: it is ideal for the purpose.

3. In light of my second comment, I would be surprised if the Unification Church were to exclude first-stage programming--i.e. programs for inquirers, pre-converts. Again, the Cenacle is an ideal, and impressive, place for the purpose. It is closer to New York city, and is far more beautiful, than the Barrytown property (the present site of the Unification Seminary). Furthermore, it is an ideal location for a dragnet operation seeking converts in northern Westchester and other northern exurban areas. As the Unification Church is in an expansionist mood and stage, it would be natural to expect that the Cenacle would be used for this expansionist (I would even say imperialistic) purpose. There is no good reason to be left in doubt as to Unificationism's triumphalism; and while you the Zoning Board are not to judge as to a prospective land-purchaser's beliefs, it is within your province to make determinations with regard to land-use; and it is clear that the prospective owner of the Cenacle is a messianic movement centering in Korea (the "third Israel," DIVINE PRINCIPLE p.521) and intending to take over the world--which, a fortiori, means intending to take over northern Westchester. The naive notion that belief can be separated off from politics and land-ownership has been, in these last few weeks, dramatically exploded by the confrontation of transpolitical sacralities between Iran and the United States: life is a seamless garment of sacred and secular, and we can no longer afford the myopia of hunkering down merely in our several assignments within society--each citizen and sodality is responsible for going to the heart of the matter in living and in trying to understand, in steering a humane course through darkness to light.

4. In light of my third comment, I consider disingenuous the allegation, by the Unification Church's Director of Legal Affairs, that the Unification Church intends for the Cenacle property "the same" use "the Catholic sisters were permitted," viz. "religious retreat." Clearly, the message and mission of the Unification Church is not "religious" in the Catholic sisters' sense, but religiopolitical; so one would be naive and misled if one were to conclude, fooled by this deception, that under Sun Moon this property would be used as a religious retreat center rather than as a religiopolitical 'boot-camp' to prepare to lead the world's democratic forces to "subjugate the communist world" by "the Third World War" (DIVINE PRINCIPLE p.493). We are involved here with a georeligiopolitical strategy in action, so that the principle of "prior restraint" is inapplicable. In short, it is a travesty against language to pervert the phrase "religious retreat," which means devotion to God on behalf of the world, to mean a 'training camp' to prepare to take over the world by persuasion and coercion. If it be countered that these matters reside in the various Washington bureaucracies and not at the local level, certainly not in the lap of a town zoning board, I must respond that it is time once again to think small in a big way; it is time for the citizenry to do its own thinking, at the local level, under guidance of the principle that if it's not local it's not real.

5. Finally, if I were on the zoning board, I am not sure how I would vote on this application. I am sure, however, that I would not be frightened away from my duty by fundamentalistic references to the First Amendment as a tabu depressant on discussion of matters fundamental to humanity and citizenship.

I thank you for your kind and patient attention.

