

HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership Newsletter

Thomas G. Walsh
August 5, 2026



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Discover what’s new at HJI! In this issue, we highlight summaries of three selected MA theses by recent HJI graduates, the latest publication from HJI Press, and a lecture series which features HJI Professor Dr. Thomas Ward. Explore the accomplishments, scholarship, and ongoing contributions of the HJI community.



The Carolingian Renaissance: A Unificationist Assessment

This thesis interprets the Carolingian Renaissance as the culmination of a long process of cultural preservation, adaptation, and institutional reconstruction extending from the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century to the reign of Charlemagne in the late eighth and early ninth centuries. Its central argument is that the Carolingian Renaissance was neither an isolated revival of classical learning nor a sudden intellectual awakening. Rather, it represented the consolidation of traditions that had survived and developed within the Christian institutions and successor kingdoms of post-Roman Europe. [Continue Reading...](#)



M.A. RELIGIOUS STUDIES THESIS
LORRAINE BAUGHMAN

How do spiritually identified clients experience the relationship between their spiritual beliefs and the therapeutic process?



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For some people, religion and spirituality are not an addition to life but a way of being — the framework through which identity, change, challenge and distress are understood. This study examines how such beliefs influenced participants' decisions to seek counselling, their experiences of it, and the meanings they attributed to therapeutic change. Throughout, the term spirituality is used inclusively, encompassing both personal spiritual experience and institutionally grounded religious faith.

Participants from both Christian and Unificationist backgrounds were invited to take part to explore how clients of any spiritual worldview might negotiate, conceal or integrate their beliefs within a predominantly secular therapeutic setting. [Continue reading...](#)



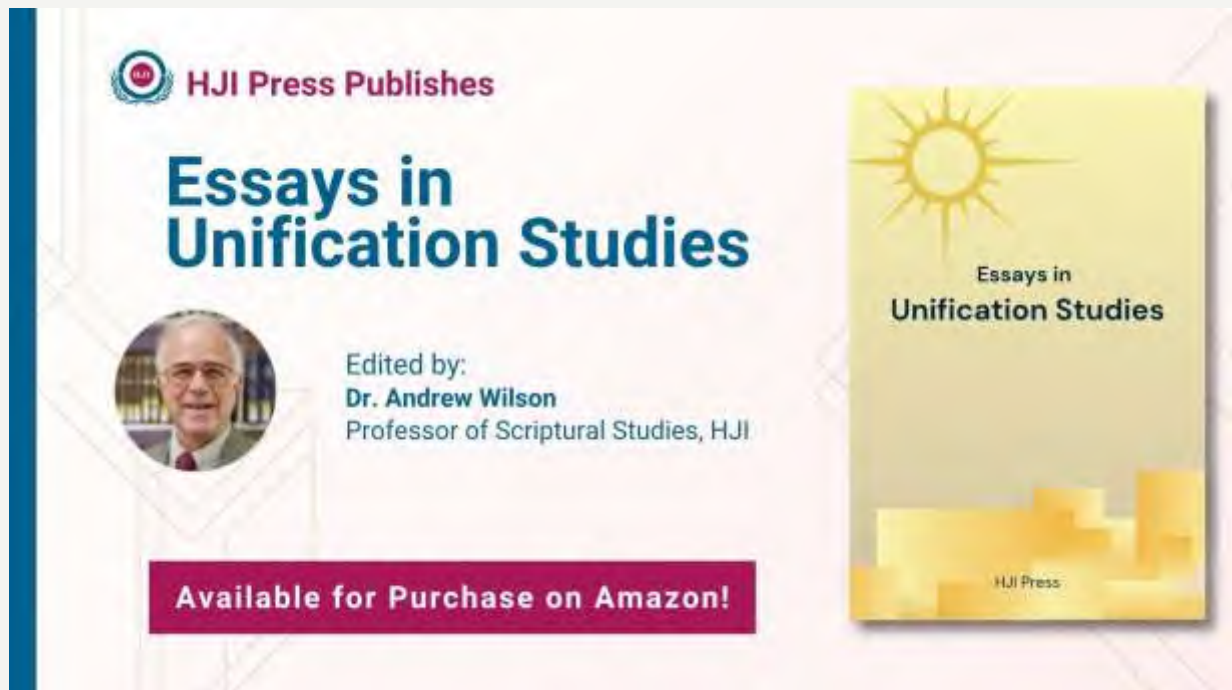
M.A. RELIGIOUS STUDIES THESIS
RUDOLF FAERBER

Adapting Unificationism to African Cultural and Spiritual Environment: A Path to Indigenization and Contextualization



Adapting Unificationism to African Cultural and Spiritual Environment: A Path to Indigenization and Contextualization

This thesis examines how Unificationism can be meaningfully indigenized and contextualized within African cultural and spiritual environments, with particular attention to Zambia. Africa stands at a critical historical juncture—facing moral, political, spiritual and social choices that will shape its future. The continent must navigate competing ideologies, global cultural currents, and the legacy of colonialism while preserving indigenous dignity and communal identity. In this context, the study argues that Unificationism offers a constructive theological and philosophical framework capable of bridging Africa's diverse religious heritage with global spiritual insights. [Continue reading...](#)



HJI Press has published *Essays in Unification Studies*, edited by Dr. Andrew Wilson, Professor of Scriptural Studies at HJI. The volume features essays by Dr. Wilson and other scholars, offering a range of perspectives on Unification theology, scripture, faith, and their relevance to contemporary religious and social questions. The publication reflects HJI's continuing commitment to advancing serious academic study and discussion of the Unification tradition.

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Dr. Thomas J. Ward, Professor of Peace and Development at HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership, is leading a new seminar series with the World Christian Leadership Conference titled, **"God or No God? Amidst the Tide of Secularism."**

The series begins **Wednesday, August 5, 2026**, and draws upon Dr. Ward's extensive experience in academic leadership and international human rights advocacy. The seminar examines the social teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, sometimes referred to as Headwing Thought, which begin with the affirmation of God. Dr. Ward explores how these teachings offer a path toward healing the human family while addressing both the shortcomings of Western society and materialistic approaches such as communism, secularism, and other contemporary worldviews.

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How do spiritually identified clients experience the relationship between their spiritual beliefs and the therapeutic process?



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M.A. RELIGIOUS STUDIES THESIS

LORRAINE BAUGHMAN

How do spiritually identified clients experience the relationship between their spiritual beliefs and the therapeutic process?



M.A. in Religious Studies Thesis Project Summary by Dr. Lorraine Moffat Baughman, CPsychol | l.baughman@hji.edu

Abstract

This study explores how clients who identify as spiritual experience the relationship between their spiritual beliefs and the therapeutic process. Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), it draws on in-depth interviews with thirteen participants from two spiritually committed groups: Unificationists (n=6) and Protestant Christians (n=7). Spirituality emerged not as a marginal aspect of identity but as a central interpretive framework through which distress, responsibility and personal change were understood. Participants described counselling as a space for meaning-making rather than symptom reduction, and the therapeutic relationship was consistently experienced as decisive, with relational safety shaped by how spiritual beliefs were received. Christian participants more often framed difficulty in moral or theological terms, whereas Unificationist participants emphasised development and integration. Counselling did not replace spiritual frameworks but offered a relational context in which spiritual and psychological understandings could be held together.

Introduction

For some people, religion and spirituality are not an addition to life but a way of being — the framework through which identity, change, challenge and distress are understood. This study examines how such beliefs influenced participants’ decisions to seek counselling, their experiences of it, and the meanings they attributed to therapeutic change. Throughout, the term spirituality is used inclusively, encompassing both personal spiritual experience and institutionally grounded religious faith.

Participants from both Christian and Unificationist backgrounds were invited to take part to explore how clients of any spiritual worldview might negotiate, conceal or integrate their beliefs within a predominantly secular therapeutic setting.

Research Design and Approach

The study employed a qualitative design using IPA, guided by the question: **How do spiritually identified clients experience the relationship between their spiritual beliefs and the therapeutic process?**

I approached this from a critical realist perspective: participants' experiences are real and meaningful, yet access to them is always mediated by language, culture and interpretation. In line with IPA's hermeneutic principles, I acknowledge the double hermeneutic: participants make sense of their experiences, and I, as the researcher, interpret their sense-making. Each

group was analysed separately as a homogeneous sample, with convergence and divergence examined only after within-group analysis was complete.

Key Findings

Five master themes emerged among the Unificationist participants. Spirituality as a core identity framed faith less as a belief system than as the medium through which life was interpreted — “a living prayer,” as one participant put it. Counselling as meaning-making rather than cure captured a consistent refusal to use the language of repair; therapy was valued as a space where confusion could be spoken aloud and gradually reorganised. Negotiating spiritual and psychological authority showed participants actively weighing where truth and help lay. Healing through relational safety and attunement revealed how finely calibrated that safety was: one participant described sensing a subtle wall after disclosing her spiritual affiliation, uncertain whether the judgement was real, but certain that something had closed. Integration as ongoing, self-directed becoming described what endured beyond therapy — walking, writing, free prayer, small interruptions of rumination — carried forward without continued reliance on the therapist.

Three master themes emerged among the Christian participants, each centred on the relationship with God. Spiritual failure — “I have failed God” — framed distress as evidence of personal inadequacy and the need for counselling as proof that faith alone had not sufficed. Spiritual refinement — “I want to hone my faith and know myself” — cast therapy as an extension of spiritual growth rather than a departure from it. Spiritual disillusionment — “God has failed me” — described a theological rupture following bereavement, in which counselling became the only space in which the question could be discussed at all.

Professional competence mattered more than shared belief. One of the study's more striking findings was that participants did not ultimately need a therapist who shared their faith. Several actively sought a counsellor from within their own tradition, yet even they emphasised that what mattered most was professional competence, emotional maturity, curiosity and genuine respect for their spiritual worldview. Participants were correspondingly critical of spiritual authority offered without adequate training — one dismissed “a course done on a weekend” as preparation for serious distress. Shared belief without competence was not experienced as safety.

The groups differed in where the sacred was most naturally encountered: Christian participants often brought prayer into the session itself, whereas Unificationist participants carried therapeutic insight outward into embodied daily practice.

Theological Reflections

The differences between the groups were not merely cultural or stylistic; they were theological. For example, contrasting understandings of the Fall determine whether distress is experienced as moral failure or as a stage in an ongoing restorative process. Differing emphases on shame and guilt determine whether suffering is registered as behaviour to be repaired or as evidence of an essential deficiency. Differing images of God — paternal authority or a parental being whose nature is *shimjung* — shape the internal relational template a client brings to disclosure. Differing structures of community and eschatologies affect both the stakes of vulnerability and the temptation to resolve suffering into meaning before it has been fully felt.

Suggestions for Future Research

These theological dimensions suggest a substantial and largely unexplored agenda: comparative work across other faith traditions; attachment-style-informed research into the relational templates that different images of God generate; and longitudinal study of how therapeutic change unfolds within a spiritual life, for example.

Concluding Reflections

What this study found was both simpler and more significant than its initial framing suggested: for these participants, there was no clear separation between the spiritual and the psychological to begin with. Spirituality was not a variable to measure or a sensitivity to manage. It was the medium through which suffering was felt, meaning was made, help was sought, and healing — when it came — was recognised.

The therapeutic relationship became the crucible in which all of this was negotiated. When therapists approached their clients' spiritual worlds with genuine curiosity, steadiness and respect, something opened. When they did not — even slightly or unintentionally — something subtly closed.

For clients whose beliefs may lie outside the mainstream, the counselling room has sometimes mirrored the marginalisation they encounter in wider society: a space where the most meaning-creating aspects of identity are treated, at best, as peripheral and, at worst, as

symptoms. This study proposes something more ambitious — that theology deserves a genuine place at the research table, not as doctrine to be evaluated but as a living framework that shapes human experience in clinically, relationally and personally significant ways. To genuinely care for the whole person, the therapist must be willing to enter the client's whole world.

About the Researcher

I am a BPS Chartered Counselling Psychologist practising in the UK, with a doctorate in counselling psychology and master's degrees in intercultural communication, psychology and religious studies. I have been affiliated with the Unificationist tradition since 1978. My work has consistently focused on what happens where meaning systems meet — first between Eastern and Western cultural logics, and now between theological and psychological approaches to understanding distress.

What brings these different strands together is a simple concern: how people come to be who they truly are, in relation to God, themselves, and their families and communities.



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Adapting Unificationism to African Cultural and Spiritual Environment: A Path to Indigenization and Contextualization



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M.A. RELIGIOUS STUDIES THESIS
RUDOLF FAERBER

Adapting Unificationism to African Cultural and Spiritual Environment: A Path to Indigenization and Contextualization



M.A. in Religious Studies Project Summary by Rudolf Faerber | r.ferber@hji.edu

Indigenizing and Contextualizing Unificationism in Africa: A Zambian Perspective

This thesis examines how Unificationism can be meaningfully indigenized and contextualized within African cultural and spiritual environments, with particular attention to Zambia. Africa stands at a critical historical juncture—facing moral, political, spiritual and social choices that will shape its future. The continent must navigate competing ideologies, global cultural currents, and the legacy of colonialism while preserving indigenous dignity and communal identity. In this context, the study argues that Unificationism offers a constructive theological and philosophical framework capable of bridging Africa's diverse religious heritage with global spiritual insights.

African Spiritual Foundations and Contemporary Challenges

African Traditional Religion (ATR) remains a profound influence on African identity. Its relational ontology, communal worldview, and cyclical understanding of time form a deeply interconnected spiritual universe in which “God’s presence is remembered everywhere,” and ancestors remain active participants in communal life. ATR’s emphasis on kinship, moral responsibility, and the sacredness of life continues to shape African societies even amid rapid modernization.

Christianity, introduced largely during the colonial period, has become Africa’s largest religion, with approximately 658 million adherents. Islam, with 575 million followers, is firmly established across Northern, Eastern, and Western Africa. Both faiths have contributed significantly to education, healthcare, and moral formation. Yet Christianity’s fragmentation, cultural dissonance, and struggles to integrate indigenous wisdom have produced tensions, surfacing notably after a nation attained political independence. Many African Christians live in an “unhealthy blend” of unresolved conflicts between ATR and Christian values, resulting often in a possible identity crises and moral uncertainty.

The rise of global- and social media, liberal ethics, and shifting lifestyles has intensified these challenges. Africa has become a “bazaar for competing ideologies,” including capitalism, socialism, liberal democracy, and secularism. These forces disrupt traditional values, weaken family structures, and challenge moral leadership. The thesis argues that Africa must discern a path that neither rejects global engagement nor uncritically adopts foreign models, but instead integrates indigenous wisdom with constructive global ideas.

Unificationism as a BridgeBuilder

Unificationism, founded by Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, presents a universalist theological vision grounded in family, interdependence, and shared values. Their teachings, based on the volume Exposition of the Divine Principle, offer a comprehensive synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies, reconciling rational analysis with relational harmony. In a fragmented world, their work provides a muchneeded framework for interfaith cooperation and global peacebuilding.

The lifelong mission of Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to advance reconciliation among religions, cultures, and nations has inspired countless individuals and established a significant legacy in the field of interfaith cooperation and global peace initiatives.

Their publications articulate a distinctive epistemological and ethical approach in which “truth is both rational and relational; ethics are both principled and harmonious.” This dual emphasis resonates strongly with African communal values and the Ubuntu philosophy, which affirms that “I am because we are.”

Unificationism’s vision of “One Global Family Under God” aligns naturally with African concepts of extended kinship, communal responsibility, and spiritual interconnectedness. Its holistic integration of spiritual and material dimensions provides fertile ground for dialogue with ATR, African Christianity, and emerging interfaith movements.

Contextualization and Indigenization

The thesis proposes that meaningful integration of Unificationism in Africa requires two complementary processes:

Contextualization – an academic and doctrinal method that interprets Unificationist teachings through African cultural lenses.

Indigenization – a grassroots, community-based expression that allows African believers to embody Unificationism in culturally resonant ways.

As the thesis states, “spirit and truth have to be in harmony.” Sustainable religious growth must integrate rational theological reflection with lived cultural experience. Indigenization is not a departure from Unificationism’s identity but a form of unity in diversity, maintaining core teachings while embracing local expressions of faith, leadership, and ritual.

Given Africa’s painful history of cultural suppression, the process must be approached with humility, listening, and cocreation. African agency is essential. Missionaries must understand African symbols, worldviews, and traditions, while African believers must be encouraged to articulate Unificationism in ways that affirm indigenous dignity.

Cultural Comparison and Leadership Dynamics

Unificationism emerged within Korea’s Confucian heritage, emphasizing hierarchy, filial piety, and vertical leadership. African cultures, by contrast, emphasize communal identity, oral wisdom, and horizontal leadership rooted in community recognition. Western cultures prioritize individual freedom and rational progress. These differences require thoughtful and deliberate harmonization.

Individuals encountering African cultural settings or Western cultural frameworks for the first time often experience disorientation when interpreting African social realities through Western conceptual lenses—a perspective that can obscure the depth, coherence, and relational logic of African worldviews. For this reason, crosscultural engagement must be approached with humility, cultural intelligence, and a genuine appreciation for Africa’s relational epistemology.

Interpretive Challenge:

- Western lens → misreads African relational logic
- African lens → misreads Western individualism
- Both require cultural intelligence and humility

The thesis proposes a crosscultural leadership training program titled *Bridging African Christianity and Unificationism in Leadership*. Its sessions explore:

- vertical vs. horizontal leadership
- time consciousness (clock vs. kairos)
- communication styles (proverbs vs. principles)
- kinship, lineage, and blessing theology
- peacebuilding through cultural synergy

This program aims to cultivate mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration between African Christian leaders and Unificationist mission leaders.

Shared Ethical Foundations Across Religions

Despite doctrinal differences, major religions share core ethical values: the sacredness of life, compassion, charity, justice, righteousness, peace, reconciliation, and transcendence. The Golden Rule appears in Christianity, Islam, ATR, Buddhism, and other traditions. These shared values form natural foundations for interfaith cooperation and peacebuilding.

Institutional Synergy and Youth Development

In Zambia, the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) serves as the doctrinal wing, while the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) functions as the public relations and diplomatic wing. This “heart and hands” synergy enables Unificationism to engage both spiritual formation and public peace initiatives.

public peace initiatives.

Youth development is central to the movement’s strategy. Leadership academies, scholarships, community service, and interfaith initiatives cultivate future leaders capable of contributing to national development and global peace.

Conclusion

Africa’s future depends on integrating indigenous wisdom with global spiritual insights. Unificationism, inspired by the vision of Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, offers Africa a transformative agenda rooted in peace, unity, and shared humanity. By embracing contextualization and indigenization, Unificationism can affirm African dignity, strengthen interfaith harmony, and contribute to spiritual renewal and sustainable development. Africa’s openness, resilience, and spiritual vitality make it uniquely positioned to shape a future where living for the sake of others becomes the foundation of national progress and global peace.



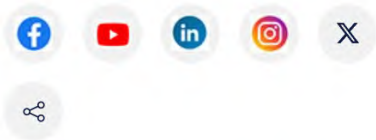
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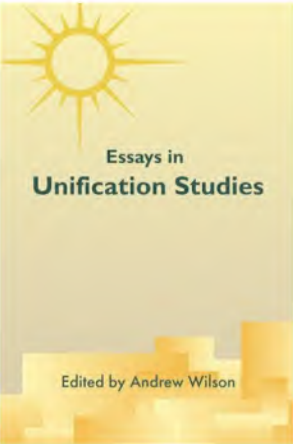
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Essays in Unification Studies

by [Andrew Wilson](#) (Author), [Dan Fefferman](#) (Contributor), & 8 more | Format: Paperback

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The Journal of Unification Studies has been the preeminent forum of the HJ International Graduate School for Peace and Public Leadership (HJI) for committed engagement with Unification theology and practice, addressing concerns of the theological community and the ministry community. Its articles have included commentary on Unification texts and doctrines, historical studies of the movement and its founders, and pieces comparing Unificationism with the beliefs and practices of other faith communities. The articles selected for this volume represent the diversity and range of the scholarship of HJI's faculty, alumni and students over the journal's history. They are grouped into five categories: scriptural and theological studies, historical studies, philosophical studies, ministerial and pastoral studies, and gender studies.

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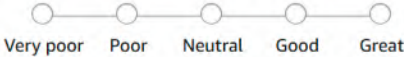
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“United for Peace: Christianity in a Multi-Faith World”

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“God or No God: Amidst the Tide of Secularism” starting on Wednesday, August 5th, 2026 at 2 PM EST / 11 AM PST

Dr. Thomas J. Ward will begin the first session the new seminar series, “God or no God? Amidst the Tide of Secularism.” Dr. Ward brings unique qualifications to this discussion, currently serving as Professor of Peace and Development at HJ International following decades of academic leadership and international human rights advocacy. In this series, Reverend Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han’s social teachings, referred to by some as Headwing Thought begin with the affirmation of God. Their social teachings offer a path forwards towards healing the human family, addressing both the wrongdoings of Western society and proposed purely materialistic solutions to them, whether in the form of communism, Western secularism, or more recent materialist worldviews. Just as light alone can overcome darkness, God alone can overcome godlessness.

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Amidst the Tide of Secularism

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Isaiah 9:2

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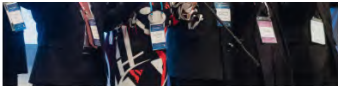
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