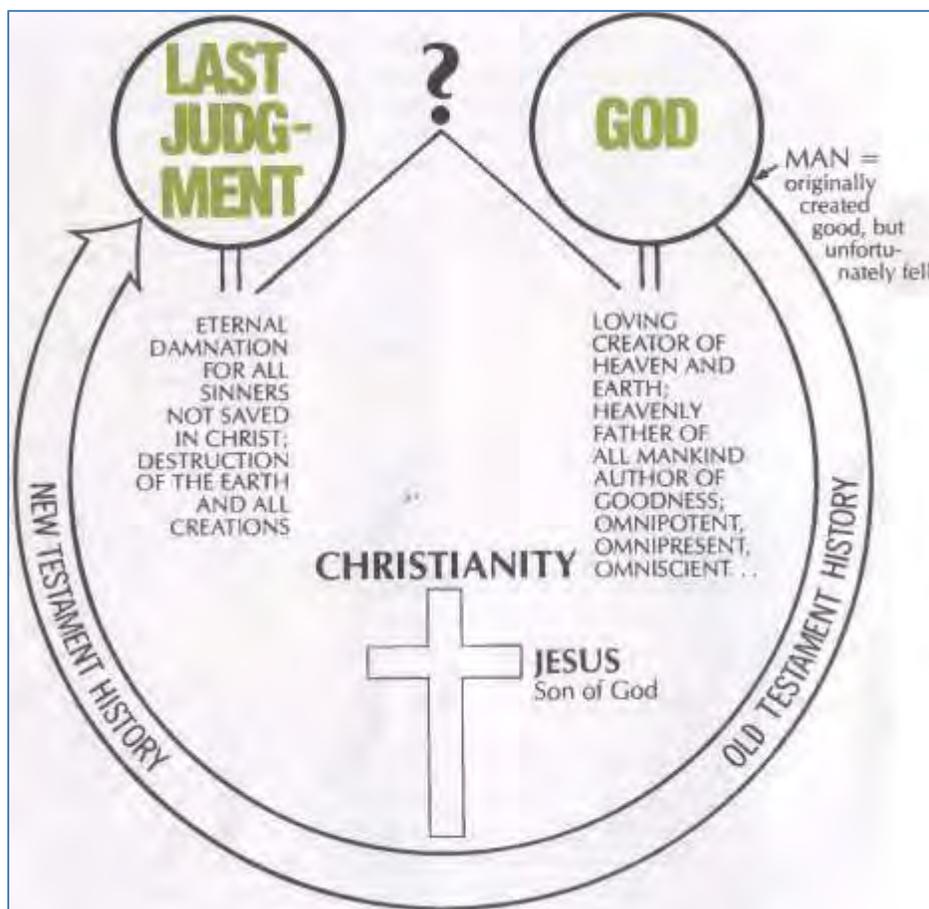


Divine Principle and the Bible

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In recent years and in various quarters of the world there has developed a growing controversy in Christian circles surrounding Sun Myung Moon and the Divine Principle. Because of the nature of the Divine Principle, it is only natural that it should be the center of great controversy.

Rev. Moon claims that the Divine Principle is a new and great revelation from God, which he received spiritually over a period of years beginning Easter morning, 1936. If so, it is not what one could call an "ordinary revelation" from God. By that I mean, for example, an experience in prayer in which it was revealed to us that we should do thus, or that we should correct this or that aspect of our character.

The Divine Principle is comprehensive in scope. If it is indeed a true revelation from God, then it is nothing other than a major extension and fulfillment of Christianity for the latter days, just as the words and works of Jesus 2000 years ago were the extension and fulfillment of the Hebrew law and prophets.

To many Christians, however, the Divine Principle seems to be a diabolical heresy. The question of which of these is the correct view is not easily dealt with, nor can it be lightly dismissed.

Jesus in his day was thought to be a heretic and a blasphemer by those in authority, and many a prophet and saint has suffered ridicule, persecution and martyrdom for voicing truths that did not meet squarely with conventional belief.

If the Divine Principle is in fact a true revelation from God, then it will never be dislodged, no matter what people may bring against it. And if the Divine Principle is indeed false, then it will inevitably be exposed. Just as the day of Judas' betrayal was the blackest day of his life, so will it be for those who in ignorance condemn something they later discover to be the truth of God. My appeal to Christians is simply this: Don't make a hasty judgment.

Christian Position

Christianity has held the same basic position for the past 2000 years: Almighty God is the Author of the universe and the Father of mankind. Above all else, He loves us with a love we have not begun to comprehend. He is pure goodness, righteousness, justice and love. He is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent.

God created man with the purpose of loving Him, and since love is creative and voluntary, God gave man

creativity like Himself, unlike any other of His creations. And since creativity cannot be expressed without freedom, God gave man free will.

Unfortunately, the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, did not make proper use of their gift of free will. Against God's expressed will, they "ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil." By their disobedience, they fell away from God; sin came into the world of man, and has been carried down throughout human history from generation to generation, even to the present day. Because of this sin, all mankind is morally guilty before God. However, even before the Fall God had prepared His son, Jesus Christ to come to earth in human form to pay at the sacrifice of his life the accumulated debt of mankind's collective sin. This Jesus accomplished on the cross at Calvary 2000 years ago.

The intervening 2000 years is a time in which all mankind is being given the opportunity to return to God through His son, Jesus Christ. This is the objective of Christian history: to proclaim to the world the good news of Jesus Christ and show all mankind the way to salvation by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

We are now entering the time of the End, prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, and of which Jesus also spoke at length. It is the time in which Jesus will return in glory from the clouds of heaven and he will bring judgment upon all the world. Those who have accepted his salvation, both living and dead, will be bodily resurrected and dwell with Jesus in glory. Those who have not accepted Jesus will remain on earth and suffer great tribulations. Then will begin the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth.

Remaining humanity will have a final opportunity to come to Jesus for salvation. At the end of a thousand years, Satan will again be turned loose for a short time, and then he, his angels and all mankind who have not repented and accepted Jesus will be cast into the damnation of hell where they will languish eternally in the lake of fire. The earth will be destroyed, and those righteous Christians who have by the grace of God received the salvation of Jesus will dwell in glory forever with God in the kingdom of heaven. All this has been revealed in the Word of God, the Holy Bible. Additions and subtractions from this are false teachings.

Then we have the Divine Principle. How can one come to a reliable and objective conclusion as to the relative merits of these two contrasting systems? For example, one can accept the one and reject the other on the basis of personal preference or what he has been taught to believe. But the truth of the matter remains unchanged for all of that; one of the two must be nearer the truth, from God's point of view, than the other. The question then is what is God's point of view? The Christian would no doubt immediately reply, "God's point of view is clearly expressed in His Word, the Holy Bible." Well, that may be true; on the other hand, it may not. Or it may be only partially true.

The Line of Despair

In his book, *Escape from Reason*, Dr. Francis Schaeffer, founder of the L'abri Fellowship in Switzerland, gives an incisive account of the dichotomy which has developed in human thought since the Renaissance, and especially during the past century. The dichotomy is between the rationalists and those whose world view starts with the classical position that there is such a thing as absolute truth, absolute good, absolute value, and that "A is not non-A." In other words, when something is right, its opposite is wrong in relationship to an unchanging and absolute standard.

This is the position of historical Christianity: that there is an existing personal God who created everything for a specific purpose and who has a definite and absolute set of values against which all human values are to be measured. It is also the position of the humanistic idealists, with the exception that they do not believe in God, but nevertheless believe there to be a distinction between right and wrong. Their position is necessarily irrational because, unlike Christianity, it does not include an absolute starting point.

There has grown up in the modern age a trend of thought, first explicitly expressed by Soren Kierkegaard, diametrically opposite to the position of Christianity: without an absolute standard of goodness, or right and wrong, rational man is inevitably led by the process of reason to the conclusion that the world is mechanical and arbitrary, and that man is a machine.

The only way he can escape this conclusion is to part with reason and make a totally irrational "leap of faith" into the position that there is meaning and purpose in life. Prior to Kierkegaard, the humanists had been trying to formulate a philosophy which could close a circle around everything and explain in a unified field of knowledge the cosmos and man's place in it, rationally and optimistically.

Kierkegaard was the first philosopher to admit that such a unified field of understanding could not be reached-and so he was the first to be submerged below what Schaeffer calls "the line of despair." Despair because man was then left with the intolerable choice between reason which leads to the inevitable conclusion that life is meaningless and man is dead-or a thoroughly irrational hope, which is a leap of faith.

This attitude of despair has grown to monolithic proportions in the present time. It permeates literally every sphere of human endeavor, beginning with philosophy, art, music, then general culture, and ending with modern Christian theology. We are today inundated by a veritable ocean of despair.

The only island in this ocean is Christianity, which says, "There is hope because there is a living and absolute God, who created man in His image and for His purpose, and therefore, man has value and life has meaning." This position is not irrational, because there is objective evidence for such a God. (Rom. 1:20) An objective analysis of the Divine Principle will show that it has nothing to do with the philosophy of despair. The Divine Principle starts with God, not man: it recognizes the Fall, man's moral guilt and the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Historical Christianity has been backed up against the wall by the rising waters of existential despair on every hand, and many Christians have perceived another foe in the Divine Principle. However, the Divine Principle stands beside historical Christianity in vigorously opposing the philosophies and ideologies of despair in all quarters. Therefore, Christians should not rule out the possibility that they may find in the Divine Principle the very weapons they need to defeat the traditional enemy of Christianity which is gaining such rapid headway in the world today.

I have not heard any objective Christian criticism of the Divine Principle. They have all proceeded from the position: "Christianity is true, therefore the Divine Principle is false," which may be a true statement; but it is not an objective criticism.

Let us examine the biblical foundation for the Christian claim to exclusive access to the revealed Word of God: that God has made known to man all that he needs for his salvation in the Holy Bible, and that additions or modifications of this are in effect heretical or untrue.

Deuteronomy 4:1-4: "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it; that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

Galatians 1:6-9: "If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."

Revelation 22:18-19: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

These passages as well as others are cited by Christians to prove that the Word of God as written in the Bible is complete, and that any further "revelation" apart from the Scriptures must be regarded as a lie and heresy. This may be true-yet the very same Bible seems to make explicit provision for future revelation from God, and by no means rules out the possibility of latter-day prophesy.

Acts 2:17-18: (Also, Joel 2:28-29) "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

John 16:12-13: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he declares to you the things that are to come."

John 16:25: "I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father."

I Corinthians 13:9, 10, 12: "For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."

These passages, as well as others, provide the biblical foundation for the Divine Principle's claim to being a latter-day revelation from God. As to the passages quoted above which Christians have used to deny this, if they mean what Christians claim they mean, then there is evident contradiction in the Bible. Let us look at them again.

If Deut. 4: 1-4 is taken as a blanket condemnation of any and all additions to the Word of God, then everything written in the Bible after Deuteronomy must be heresy. The passages must therefore mean that additions without the authority of God are forbidden. Likewise, if Gal 1:6-9 is to be taken as an absolute ban on all further revelation, then it contradicts Paul elsewhere (i.e., I Cor. 13:9, 10, 12) as well as Jesus.

The letter to the Galatians is a passionate appeal from Paul over a very specific matter: the controversy over circumcision. Paul is saying that the salvation of Jesus liberated them once and for all from responsibility to the Law, and that whoever was trying to persuade them to submit to the rite of circumcision was leading them away from the universal Gospel of Jesus, which does not distinguish between Jews and Gentiles, between the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

Clearly, Paul cannot be making a blanket statement condemning any and all present and future revelations which add to God's Words to man. To interpret him thus is to contradict him elsewhere, and to contradict Jesus. Rev. 22: 18-19 clearly and explicitly refers only to the prophecy in the Book of Revelation. Therefore, the Bible makes a clear case for the open possibility of future divine revelation. The nature of revelation is that it is something new, not previously known. Jesus and Paul both repeatedly state that God has not revealed everything to man yet, and that human understanding is therefore not complete. There are things of vital importance we do not know about God (John 16:25) and about the last days (John 16: 13). The Divine Principle claims to be such a revelation from God, making known things not previously understood. If the Divine Principle is true, Christianity needs it. Christians should be leaving no stone unturned in their search for God's Words to man in the latter days.

Biblical Authority

The Bible must be a document of profound and divine truth. It demonstrates its truth to any who would read it objectively- and it has lasted down the centuries as the guiding principle behind the advance of the greatest civilization in human history. Its authority is manifested in its results.

As Jesus said, "By their fruits you shall know them." The fruits of the Bible testify that it is a message from God, nothing less. The question of how to understand the Bible is nevertheless one of decisive importance. There are of course many and various opinions, often firmly maintained and vociferously expressed, as to the "true" interpretation of the Bible. Many Bible-believing Christians have taken the position that in the Bible they have a totally reliable and absolute standard of truth-the very Word of God.

Unfortunately, it does not quite work. The contents of the Bible come from God. But they were set down on paper by fallen men. Fallen men are imperfect; and not only are they imperfect, they are distortions of the original image of God in which they were to have been created: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8) The prophets and saints of the Old and New Testament have been the most reliable transmitters of the Word of God that He could find. But no one can say that they were infallible. For example, Jesus said that there was never a greater prophet than John the Baptist- yet John, who had previously testified by the Holy Spirit to the Messiahship of Jesus, evidently in a moment of weakened faith while in prison, asked Jesus if he was truly the Messiah.

Therefore, we must conclude that the Word of God in the Bible is not 100 percent free of error from God's point of view.

Now this enormously complicates the Christian's position. He cannot simply say, "It's the Word of God, therefore believe it." It is indeed the Word of God-but filtered through the fallible mediumship of fallen man. The problem exists of distinguishing between that which is of man and that which is of God in the Bible.

We must conclude that the Bible is after all a book of mysteries: not without meaning, but the true meaning is known only to God. Yet God wants us to understand His meaning in the Bible. How can we be sure to do this?

It is very important to understand that interpretation of the Bible is quite comparable to interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream: wise men and magicians cannot interpret it, but God can make known its meaning to men. (Daniel 2:26-28) The prerequisite is diligent and prayerful search.

We must make known to God that we really want to know His will and that we are prepared to follow it, whatever it is, even at the cost of our lives. This is true living faith. Christians and non-Christians alike desperately need a new revelation from God which will clearly show His will to us in this day of Armageddon. The possibility exists that the Divine Principle is such a revelation. Are those who reject it unexamined really desperately seeking the will of God?

A Closed Circle Since the Fall of man and the resultant loss of understanding of man's identity and place in the universal scheme of things, he has sought a comprehensive understanding which could take the form of a closed circle. This has been the aim of religion, philosophy, and science-and in a corollary way, even politics, jurisprudence, and all cultural endeavors.

Throughout history, man has been continually off his balance- because he has always known that he doesn't know. If only he could come up with an understanding which would encompass everything,

including himself, then he could begin to live in a sensible, reliable, orderly way; and his experience of life could at last include true happiness, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose.

Christianity looks like a closed circle which hasn't left anything out, and so the Christians have at last arrived in the harbor of refuge from uncertainty and can enjoy that longed-for peace which only comes with knowing. God is absolute goodness and love and is the source and standard for the purpose and direction of all things.

Man fell by his free will in disobedience of God's command, but God, in His infinite wisdom and love, already had a means of salvation in His son, Jesus, whom He sent as a ransom for the forgiveness of man's sins - available to any and all who will receive him as their personal Lord and Savior. Anything not included in the circle is provided for with the return of Jesus and the Day of Judgment, in which the righteous will be resurrected, the sinners will be judged, and the world will be destroyed.

It looks like a closed circle with nothing left out. But let's look again. If God is truly the God of goodness and love, then He could not have intended the Fall of Adam, which was undeniably evil. If there had been no Fall, there could not have been evil. Then there having been no evil, neither would there have been any need whatsoever for salvation. God would not have had to send Jesus to die on the cross, nor would there have to be a final judgment of the world, or its destruction. One thing we can say for sure about God's original plan for creation: eternal damnation of sinners was not part of the plan.

According to Christian theology, after the End, all the righteous Christians will be in heaven eternally with God, while all the sinners will be eternally damned to hell in the lake of fire. Now just take a moment to think about exactly what that means.

Imagine yourself on the "Very Last Day." You have loved Jesus all your life; you've been saved; you lived as righteously as you could, and now you have finally been admitted as an eternal citizen of the kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem. However, unfortunately, your son or daughter didn't make it on the "Last Day."

How do you feel, now that you're in heaven and the person you love the most is eternally damned to hell-happy? How do you think your fellow Christians feel-the ones who got resurrected with you but, like yourself, also have loved ones in hell? And how do you think God, our Heavenly Father, feels about having millions, perhaps billions of His fallen children damned-how does He feel on the "Last Day?"

Truly, if Christian theology has the last word on God's ultimate plan for man, then heaven must be the saddest place that ever was. I think it safe to say that there is something of vital importance about God's providence of salvation which Christianity does not know. Therefore, before the End, if God is just and truly loves His children, we can certainly expect Him to reveal something to us which has been entirely unknown: something that will truly close the circle of our understanding. Can anybody say, without deep and prayerful examination, that the Divine Principle is absolutely not the very revelation from God we all so desperately need?

Earlier, I raised the question, why is Christianity losing ground to the extent that even Christian clergymen are falling into despair? Dr. Schaeffer's answer is that this is a manifestation of man's rebellion against God-which is undoubtedly true. But, in addition, modern man is discovering that even Christianity hasn't closed a circle around everything man needs to understand about his place in the universe and before God. Truly God-searching people are leaving Christian orthodoxy in a desperate search for a deeper understanding of God, one which can answer the deep and burning questions Christianity leaves unanswered.

Christians who have not lost their faith can take two alternatives: they can join in this search and try to aid those who are truly seeking deep answers, or they can resist this search, clinging tenaciously to their beliefs.

The questions that modern men are so desperately seeking to understand are dealt with in depth by the Divine Principle. If it is truly a revelation from God, then it is possible that God's answers to man's troublesome questions are at last at hand.

Christian brethren! Once again I plead with you: don't reject the stone to be used as the foundation for the corner. Don't allow yourselves the awful opportunity to discover one terrible day that you have been fighting against God. In the name of God, you owe it to yourselves and to each other and to all mankind -- and to Lord Jesus and to God Himself-to examine with prayers of desperation anything and everything which can possibly bring a greater illumination of the matters of ultimacy in human life.