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Unification Eschatology as Compared with Christian Eschatology

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Eschatology is the doctrine of “last things,” dealing with the consummation of the history of salvation. It is customarily treated in the last chapter of systematic theology. But many believe that eschatology actually penetrates the entirety of systematic theology, for while it specifically deals with how God’s will is going to be finally realized, God’s will itself is the main theme of the entirety of systematic theology. Therefore Jürgen Moltmann (1926–) is right when he says: “Eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation.”^[1] Unification theology would agree with this on the importance of eschatology.

Eschatology usually covers two distinguishable yet interrelated topics: 1) the future destiny of each individual after physical death, and 2) the final consummation and eternal order of the world or cosmos. This corresponds to the distinction theologians usually make between “individual” eschatology and “cosmic,” “general” or “universal” eschatology. The present essay will follow this distinction, dealing with the two in Unification eschatology in two different sections.

The first section will treat individual eschatology in Unificationism, on the final destiny of one’s life after physical death. In doing so, it will primarily focus on addressing the difficult issue in Christianity as to whether or not one can still grow spiritually after death in order to be able to go to a higher place in the other world.

Individual eschatology in traditional Christianity believes, with the exception of the Roman Catholic doctrines of purgatory and the limbo of the Old Testament fathers (*limbus patrum*), that once you die and go to the other world, you cannot spiritually grow at all without your body. So, once you unfortunately happen to go to hell, you will not be able to get out of there. But the Divine Principle uniquely argues that even after physical death you will be given a chance to spiritually grow. For your spirit, right after shedding your body at death, will *not* be completely “naked”^[2] physically, as the “spirit body”^[3] that is already built-in within your spirit will immediately start to function as a kind of your body in the spirit world.

The Divine Principle notion of the spirit body can importantly be equated with St. Paul’s notion of the resurrected “spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:44). The only difference is that while the Divine Principle holds that the spirit body is already integral to the constitution of the spirit that consists of the dual characteristics of “spirit mind” (the *sungsang* part) and “spirit body” (the *hyungsang* part)^[4], Paul believed that the spiritual body is acquired only through the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:52). But given this important equation between the two, the feasibility of the unique Unification idea of spiritual growth after physical death, involving the possibility of universal salvation, will be explored in the Christian context, so that it may be acceptable to Christians.

The second section will discuss general eschatology in Unificationism, on the final consummation of the world. According to the Divine Principle, the consummation of the world in the last days means the complete realization of the “three great blessings” centered on God, which were originally granted to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden but which failed to be realized due to their fall centering on Satan.^[5] They are: 1) individual perfection, 2) the multiplication of God’s children in families, nations and the world, and 3) the human dominion of love over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:28). The three great blessings are to be realized through the Lord of the Second Advent and his Bride in the last days on behalf of Adam and Eve and on

behalf of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Hence the last days is the time “when the evil world under satanic sovereignty is transformed into the ideal world [of the three great blessings] under God’s sovereignty. Hell on earth will be transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.”^[6]

This Unification view will turn out to be able to address the tension between the two opposing types of eschatology that exist in Christianity: 1) apocalyptic eschatology, and 2) non-apocalyptic utopian eschatology. “Apocalyptic” is the adjective of the word “apocalypse,” which is from the Greek word *apokalypsis*, meaning the uncovering, disclosure or revelation of something hitherto hidden. Apocalyptic eschatology, whether it is premillennial, postmillennial or amillennial,^[7] believes that the eternal state will be established in the other world, after the last judgment brings about the destruction of this world. By contrast, non-apocalyptic eschatology, which can be found in the optimistic German liberal thought of Albrecht Ritschl (1822–1889) and Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), in the Social Gospel movement in America, in the various schools of liberation theology, and in the Jesus Seminar founded in America in 1985, holds that the eternal state should be a kind of earthly utopia to be realized in this world.

But the mediating position of Unificationism’s general eschatology argues that the kingdom of God is both otherworldly and this-worldly, in that after it is firmly established on the earth, it is automatically established in the other world as well. And the kingdom of God both in the spirit world and in this world, says Unificationism, will continue for eternity.

Unification general eschatology also mediates between the two opposing types of Christian eschatology in another sense. Apocalyptic eschatology believes in God’s initiative even to the neglect of human responsibility, whereas non-apocalyptic utopian eschatology emphasizes human responsibility for the building the kingdom of God on earth. The Unification view harmonizes the two, holding that God’s will is realized through the cooperation of God’s responsibility and human responsibility.

Life after Death

The present section on individual eschatology will primarily focus on addressing the difficult issue in Christianity as to whether or not one can still grow spiritually after death in order to be able to go to a higher place in the spirit world. To do that, we will begin by showing the Unification view of spiritual growth, given the constitution of the human person according to the Divine Principle.

1. Role of the Physical Self for Spiritual Growth

This subsection is basically a summary of pages 47-50 (The Reciprocal Relationship between the Physical Self and the Spirit Self) of *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, although the present writer’s interpretation may also be contained slightly.

According to the Divine Principle, each and every human being was created, in resemblance to God’s dual characteristics of *Sungsang* (original internal nature) and *Hyungsang* (original external form), to assume the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (internal nature) and *hyungsang* (external form), thus consisting of “spirit self” (the *sungsang* part) and “physical self” (the *hyungsang* part).^[8] The spirit self and the physical self, while respectively belonging to the spirit world and the physical world, are united together in the human person. But the spirit self sheds the physical self when the latter dies. The spirit self thereafter lives in the spirit world for eternity. This “dichotomism” of the spirit self and the physical self about the constitution of the human person is very familiar and accepted to the great majority of Christians, according to the American evangelical theologian Millard J. Erickson (1932–).^[9] By dichotomism here, Erickson does not mean that the two are opposed to each other, unlike what the word “dichotomy” would normally mean. He simply means that they are distinguishable from each other in their unity.

The Divine Principle further believes, however, that the spirit self itself consists of the dual characteristics of “spirit mind” (the *sungsang* part) and “spirit body” (the *hyungsang* part), while the physical self itself similarly consists of the dual characteristics of “physical mind” (the *sungsang* part) and “physical body” (the *hyungsang* part). It may look complicated, but it all comes from the universal principle of dual characteristics. The Divine Principle, therefore, suggests “quadchotomism,” so to speak, based on dichotomism. The spirit mind is “the center of the spirit self, and it is where God dwells”; while the physical mind is the center of the physical

self, and it “directs the physical body to maintain the functions necessary for its survival, protection and reproduction.”

Given this quadchotomous structure of the human person, the spirit mind of the spirit self receives “life elements” (the divine truth) directly from God and is engaged in give and take action with the spirit body within the spirit self to yield “living spirit elements.” Living spirit elements are then sent from the spirit self to the physical self, so that the physical self may be encouraged to do good deeds through God-centered give and take action between its two parts: physical mind and physical body. Good deeds by the physical self as “vitality elements” are then sent as a response to the spirit self to be stored there in the unity of give and take action between the spirit mind and the spirit body for the spiritual growth of the spirit self.

Here we can see overall give and take action between the spirit self and the physical self for the growth of both as a whole human person. (By the way, the physical self, for its physical growth, absorbs air, sunlight, food and water as well.) This unity of give and take action between the spirit self with its dual characteristics of spirit mind (the *sungsang* part) and spirit body (the *hyungsang* part), on the one hand, and the physical self with its dual characteristics of physical mind (the *sungsang* part) and physical body (the *hyungsang* part), on the other, may, by analogy, be like the unity of resonance between two different tuning forks, which each have two oscillating prongs that symbolize the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*.

The spiritual and physical growth of the human person based on the give and take action between the spirit self and the physical self goes through three different stages: formation, growth and perfection stages. As for the spiritual growth of the spirit self, the spirit self in the formation stage is called “form spirit”; in the growth stage, “life spirit”; and in the perfection stage, “divine spirit.” The spirit self will become a divine spirit that fully perceives God, when the “four position foundation” of 1) God, 2) the spirit self, 3) the physical self, and 4) their unity in the human person, is completely realized. Those earthly people with divine spirits live in the kingdom of God on earth, and after they pass away, shedding their physical selves, they go to heaven, i.e., the kingdom of God in heaven in the spirit world, to live there for eternity.

What deserves our special attention here, however, is that the physical self in the fallen world often do evil deeds, sending evil vitality elements to the spirit self. If this happens, the spirit self grows evil, ending up going to a low place in the spirit world, say hell, after physical death. Thus “good or evil in the conduct of the physical self is the main determinant of whether the spirit self becomes good or evil.” Consequently, “it is not God who decides whether a person’s spirit [self] enters heaven or hell upon his death; it is decided by the spirit [self] itself” whose spiritual growth depends on the conduct of the physical self in the physical world. Hence the role of the physical self for the spiritual growth of the spirit self is extremely important. This point is quite well understood in Christianity, as the Bible talks about the importance of one’s earthly life: “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt. 18:18); “each one may receive good or evil [before the judgment seat of Christ], according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor. 5:10).

2. Returning Resurrection

As seen above, the Divine Principle holds that if one does not live a moral life of good deeds by one’s physical self, one cannot send good vitality elements to one’s spirit self. In this case, upon physical death one will end up going to a low level of the spirit world. But the Divine Principle uniquely teaches that it is not the end of the story. For from a low place in the spirit world, one as a spirit self with no physical self can still spiritually “return” to an earthly person in the physical world, most likely one’s bereaved spouse or descendant, for one’s needed spiritual growth, which the Divine Principle calls “resurrection.” You can have this benefit of “returning resurrection,”^[10] in which you receive the merit of vitality elements from the good deeds by the physical self of your earthly counterpart to whom you spiritually return.

Resurrection here is a Divine Principle notion that refers to your spiritual growth process of being restored from the spiritually *dead* state of fallenness under Satan to the realm in which you are spiritually *alive* under God’s direct dominion, whether you are still on the earth or already in the spirit world.^[11] It may be similar to the Christian notion of “sanctification,” prominent especially in the Methodist tradition. If you are still on the earth, you have the spiritual benefit of resurrection directly from good deeds by your own physical self in accordance with God’s will. But if you are already in the spirit world, you have it by receiving merit from good deeds by the physical self of your earthly counterpart to whom you spiritually return.

Needless to say, this Divine Principle notion of resurrection as spiritual growth is very different in its meaning from the biblical and Christian idea of “physical resurrection,” “bodily resurrection” or “resurrection of the body,” which means that after you pass away and shed your body, you come back to some kind of physical life by regaining a body. These two should not be confused here.

What is noteworthy in the Divine Principle notion of returning resurrection is that even if one passes away as a person of failure on the earth and happens to go to a low level of the spirit world, say hell, one will be given a second chance to spiritually grow there, by spiritually returning to one’s earthly counterpart for one’s resurrection. That way, one may be able to move to a higher level in the spirit world, even getting out of hell to reach heaven eventually, no matter how enormously slow and difficult a process it may be. This would amount to the doctrine of universal salvation, which actually has much biblical support (Mt. 18:12; Rom. 5:18; 1 Cor. 15:22; Phil. 2:10-11; 1 Tim. 2:4, 6; etc.), although it has never been popular in the Christian tradition.^[12]

It is to be noted also that while you in the spirit world thus receive merit from your earthly counterpart’s good deeds, you, in turn, contribute something to that earthly person, by cooperatively assisting or at least expecting the earthly person to do good deeds in accordance with God’s will.^[13]

At this juncture, the way you in the spirit world receive merit from your earthly counterpart needs to be explained further. As was mentioned in the preceding subsection, during your physical life you have your spirit self and physical self, which have the relationship of the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*. If you pass away and shed your physical self, you will remain only as a spirit self in the spirit world. But in the spirit world you are not purely spiritual, since your spirit self is created from the beginning to contain both your spirit mind and spirit body, which have the relationship of the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*. Upon physical death, therefore, your spirit body starts to function as a kind of physical body in the spirit world.

So, when you as a spirit self in the spirit world face your earthly counterpart, whose physical self consists of physical mind (the *sungsang* part) and physical body (the *hyungsang* part), you do so with your own spirit self’s dual characteristics of spirit mind (the *sungsang* part) and spirit body (the *hyungsang* part) that are related to them. There is something in common between you as a spirit self and your earthly counterpart’s physical self: the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*.

Therefore, when good deeds are done by the physical self of your earthly counterpart, they as good vitality elements affect you in such a way as to be received and absorbed to your spirit self. This is how you receive merit from your earthly counterpart. Again, what is striking here is the existence of the built-in spirit body within your spirit self, so that you as a spirit self in the spirit world may have the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang* to be able to relate to your earthly counterpart who also has the same kind of dual characteristics.

Returning resurrection is not reincarnation,^[14] as it shows that you who have passed away and your earthly counterpart to whom you spiritually return are two different individual persons and not one and the same person.

3. Its Acceptability in Christianity

But the question is: Is this returning resurrection in the Divine Principle acceptable to Christianity? The answer may initially be in the negative because Christianity usually does not believe in spiritual growth for salvation in the spirit world. Christianity rather believes that the wicked, for example, upon physical death, will go to hell for eternal damnation (while the righteous will go to heaven for eternal blessing) without being able to spiritually return to their earthly counterparts, i.e., without being able to be given a second chance to grow spiritually through them for eventual salvation. They must stay in hell for eternity. Even after their physical resurrection, they will not be given a second chance. Their curse will be even more intensified with their physical resurrection.

Because of this, critics of Christianity usually say that the God of Christianity is very merciless and cruel toward people in hell. The famous British atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) states: “I think all this doctrine, that hell-fire is a punishment for sin [everlastingly], is a doctrine of cruelty.”^[15] In an attempt to justify the love of God, therefore, some Christians have

adopted reincarnation, which teaches that the soul can continuously grow through repeated life on the earth. For example, the Scottish American theologian Geddes MacGregor (1909–1998) has done so in his book *Reincarnation in Christianity: A New Vision of the Role of Rebirth in Christian Thought* (1978).^[16] Strictly speaking, however, Christianity has no room for reincarnation.

The present writer, however, believes that Christianity, while not being able to accept the theory of reincarnation, would be able to accept the Divine Principle idea of returning resurrection, if it could understand its traditional notion of physical resurrection in a *proper way* that is still non-heretical. In that way Christianity would be able to let the deceased wicked return to their earthly counterparts to be able to receive a second chance, so that it may be able to address the criticism of those who complain that the God of Christianity is a merciless God.

What, then, would be Christianity's proper way of understanding physical resurrection, so that it may be able to embrace the Divine Principle idea of returning resurrection? It would be by *equating* the resurrected body of a deceased person in the Christian tradition with the integral spirit body of a deceased person in the Divine Principle, so that the duality of the spiritual part (soul) and the physical part (resurrected body) of the deceased person in Christianity may be *equated* with the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (spirit mind) and *hyungsang* (spirit body) of the deceased person in the Divine Principle.

This equation must entail the following two important points regarding physical resurrection in Christianity. First, physical resurrection would not mean the reanimation or resuscitation of the same physical corpse that the deceased person used to have on the earth, but rather the gaining of what Paul calls a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), which is "celestial" (15:40), "imperishable" (15:42), "in glory" (15:43) and "in power" (15:43). This means that the deceased person does not literally come back to the earth with exactly the same body as before, but continues to live with a spiritual body in the spirit world after physical resurrection. Actually, this is what most theologians agree upon from the Bible. Amazingly, what Paul calls a "spiritual body" coincides name-wise with what the Divine Principle terms a spirit body.

Second, physical resurrection would have to take place immediately upon physical death and not in the last days. Regarding the time of physical resurrection, Paul apparently had two different understandings: 1) immediately upon physical death (2 Cor. 5:1-3); and 2) in the last days (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17). According to the Welsh-American New Testament theologian W. D. Davies (1911–2001), the first understanding was developed by Paul later than the second, thus being more advanced and more important than the second,^[17] although historically in the Christian tradition the second has been far more popular than the first. Also, if physical resurrection could take place in the last days, something inconvenient would emerge. It is that the deceased person would have to wait until the last days to be physically resurrected, i.e., that he would have to go through the so-called "intermediate state" between the time of physical death and the last days of physical resurrection, during which he would have to stay naked without a resurrected body. During the intermediate state in the spirit world, theoretically he would have no sense of personal self-identity whatsoever as a human being. According to the Scottish theologian John Macquarrie (1919–2007), it is "a doctrine with severe problems" because it cannot support "personal identity, which requires memory."^[18]

By having the above two points which are still biblical and therefore non-heretical, Christianity would now be able to say that for further spiritual growth in the spirit world, the deceased person with the dual characteristics of *sungsang* (soul) and *hyungsang* (resurrected body) can really relate to the earthly counterpart whose physical self consists of the dual characteristics of physical mind (the *sungsang* part) and physical body (the *hyungsang* part).

John Hick (1922–2012), therefore, is correct when he maintains that there still will be "a divine purpose of person-making [i.e., spiritual growth]" after physical death, and that this person-making takes place because of physical resurrection, although according to him it takes place when the deceased person with a resurrected body (a spiritual body) relates to fellow inhabitants with resurrected bodies in the spirit world.^[19] According to the Divine Principle, by contrast, the deceased person must be able to relate to the earthly counterpart for real spiritual growth. In this regard, Jürgen Moltmann agrees with the Divine Principle, when he says that for their eventual salvation "the dead [who are physically resurrected] are enduringly with us who are the living [on the earth]."^[20]

If the Divine Principle idea of returning resurrection is acceptable to Christianity in the way mentioned above, the Catholic notion of purgatory can be better understood in this light.

According to Catholic theology, if you commit only venial sins on the earth, you will not go to hell but to purgatory for purification, to be eventually allowed to go to heaven. For your purification in purgatory, your earthly counterpart can pray and buy indulgences. From the viewpoint of the Divine Principle, your earthly counterpart's good deeds of praying and buying indulgences constitute the merit you can receive through the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*, which both you and your earthly counterpart have in common.

The Catholic notion of the limbo of the Old Testament fathers (*limbus patrum*) also can be understood in the same way. The Catholic Church teaches that the limbo of the fathers is the place in the spirit world where the Old Testament saints such as Abraham, Jacob and Moses stayed until Christ's coming and redemption, which opened heaven to them. The Divine Principle can explain it by saying that when Christ came, the Old Testament fathers were able to have the benefit of returning resurrection by receiving merit from the good deeds of earthly Christians through the dynamics of the dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*.^[21]

Finally, however, there is a point of caution we have to bear in mind. When the Divine Principle teaches that even the wicked in hell will be given a second chance, it does not mean to say that their liberation from hell is an easy process. It is because the communication between the spirit world and the physical world is not easy. Especially an unfortunate person in hell would not have much ability to relate to the physical world. So, while we are on the earth, we are encouraged to refrain from thinking that we can commit sin now because we will be liberated from hell anyway.

Final Consummation of the World

This section will begin by presenting the two opposing types of general eschatology in Christianity regarding the final consummation of the world: apocalyptic eschatology and non-apocalyptic utopian eschatology. After that, the mediating Unification view of the end of the world will be shown as a solution to the problem of the tension between the two.

1. Apocalyptic Eschatology

We have to touch upon the apocalyptic eschatology of Judaism before dealing with Christian apocalyptic eschatology, because the latter was developed in the milieu of the former, which had emerged since the Babylonian exile in the sixth century B.C.

a. Apocalyptic eschatology in Judaism

Originally the eschatology of the Old Testament was predominantly non-apocalyptic, coming from classical prophets such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah before the Babylonian exile. It taught that if the Israelites repent of their transgressions, for which they were warned they would be punished by God (Amos 2:6; 3:2; Hos. 8:13; 9:7, 9; Isa. 10:5; 13:3, 11, 13), they will enjoy in this world the day of the LORD or Yahweh (Amos 9:11; Hos. 2:16; Isa. 12:1, 4; Mic. 4:6; 5:10), the coming of a Davidic Messiah (Amos 9:11; Isa. 7:14-16; 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:2-4), and the restoration of Zion or Jerusalem (Amos 9:11-15; Isa. 2:2-4; 12:6; 33; Mic. 4:1-13; 7:11-13). This earthly kingdom of Yahweh through a Davidic Messiah apparently meant the fulfillment of the promised land "flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8; Num. 14:8; Deut. 31:20). There was no specific interest in life after death.

As they still continued to sin, the Israelites received God's devastating punishment: The northern kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and the southern kingdom of Judah was thrown into the Babylonian exile for about 70 years in the sixth century B.C. As a result, the hope for the fulfillment of the Davidic promise was revised in such a way as to give rise in Deutero-Isaiah (Second Isaiah) to the notion of the Suffering Servant as the deliverer of the Israelites.^[22] God laid on this Suffering Servant "the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6) Deutero-Isaiah, which covers Isaiah chapters 40-55, is considered among scholars to have been written during the Babylonian exile by someone different from the eighth-century B.C. prophet Isaiah himself.

Jewish eschatology then went through considerable change. It became apocalyptic and otherworldly, as can even be seen in the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse (Isa. 24-27) that proclaimed the cataclysmic destruction of the earth (24:1, 3, 18-20), the resurrection of the dead (26:19) and

the victory of Yahweh over all evil at the end (24:21-23; 27:1). The Isaiah Apocalypse was written most likely after the Babylonian exile.

This apocalyptic shift or change of Jewish eschatology, which occurred because of the Israelites' loss of hope on the earth in the midst of the Babylonian exile, is well described by the American Lutheran theologian Carl E. Braaten (1929–): “A process of transcending took place which shifted the focus of attention from this world to the next, a transition that would be mediated by an apocalyptic transformation of the present age into a spiritual realm beyond time and space.”^[23]

Jewish apocalyptic eschatology was apparently shaped also under the influence of the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, to which the Israelites were exposed after the exile.^[24] In its resemblance to Zoroastrian apocalypticism, the apocalyptic eschatology of Judaism had at least two basic features: 1) the hope for an otherworldly transfiguration and renewal of the world, and 2) the hope for the resurrection of the dead.^[25] Furthermore, according to the American biblical scholar Bart D. Ehrman (1955–), Jewish apocalypticists believed in the following four things: 1) the dualism of God and Satan, according to which those who side with God have to suffer in the present age but will eventually witness the victory of God that annihilates all forces of evil; 2) pessimism about the present age, in which God's people have to suffer from the unbearable forces of evil; 3) the final vindication of God's people through the divine intervention involving the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of all people; and 4) the imminence of the coming of this vindication.^[26]

Jewish apocalypticism reached its pinnacle when it was experienced and lived by the Jews of the second century B.C. as they were harshly persecuted by King Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Seleucid Empire (r. 175–164 B.C.) with his policy of Hellenizing them. The king sacked Jerusalem, slaughtered many Jews, prohibited Jewish laws, and made the Temple a temple for Zeus, compelling them to sacrifice swine's flesh on the altar. The Maccabean revolt took place from 167 to 160 B.C. The Jews suffered a great deal and were afraid that they might get killed any moment. For their vindication, therefore, they hoped for the physical resurrection of the dead and the imminent coming of God's cataclysmic judgment of this evil world.

The Book of Daniel, a Jewish apocalypse in the Old Testament, is believed to have been written in the second century B.C. Its verses such as 8:9-12, 23-25; 10:20; and 11:21 apparently refer to King Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In the context of the suffering of the Jews under him, it talks about the apocalyptic coming of “an anointed one” (10:25), God's final judgment of the evil world (10:27; 11:45; 12:7), and the resurrection of the dead (12:2). Other Jewish apocalypses such as the first Book of Enoch were also written. Jewish apocalypticism became so widespread that when Christianity emerged and developed, it was very much colored by it.

b. Apocalyptic eschatology in Christianity

The Synoptic Gospels describe the events surrounding Jesus in quite an apocalyptic manner, in resemblance to Jewish apocalypticism. They apparently compare the rule of Herod Antipas (r. 4 B.C.–39 A.D.) in Galilee and Perea with that of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Jesus' life was threatened by Herod, but his coming as the Messiah “with the throne of his father David” (Lk. 1:32) was believed to apocalyptically change the social order: “He [God] has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree,” in the words of Mary (Lk. 1:52).

But it is the so-called Olivet Discourse of Jesus in the Synoptics (Mt. 24-25; Mk. 13; Lk. 21) that is very explicitly apocalyptic, showing judgment-filled predictions of the destruction of the Temple, the tribulation of the Israelites, the chaos of the world, the catastrophic destruction of the cosmos, and the final coming of the “Son of man” in clouds with power and glory.

The chapters prior to the Olivet Discourse describe Jesus' earthly ministry, during which he received much opposition from Jewish leaders, and the chapters following the discourse write about his trial, death on the cross, and resurrection. From this, we can surmise that it was the Jewish leaders' sinful opposition to Jesus that led him to predict apocalyptic events such as the destruction of the Temple and also caused his death and resurrection in the end. This point is supported by the American New Testament theologian William L. Lane (1931–1999), for example, when he holds that “the relationship which exists between the judgment upon Jerusalem implied by the discourse and the death of Jesus” was occasioned by his “conflict” with the Jewish authorities.^[27]

We can therefore see parallels between what happened during and after the Babylonian exile, on the one hand, and what transpired in relation to Jesus' predictions, on the other. Just like the sin

of the Israelites in front of God caused the ordeals of the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C. and the persecution by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C., the sinful opposition to Jesus on the part of the Jewish leaders caused the destruction of the Temple by Rome and the tribulation of the Jews. Just like the sin of the Israelites was laid on the Suffering Servant according to Deutero-Isaiah, the sin of opposition to Jesus was laid on him on the cross according to the Synoptic Gospels. Just like the coming of “an anointed one” was hoped for in Daniel, the coming of “the Son of man” was expected in the Synoptics. The apocalyptic destruction of the sinful world was also expected to happen in both cases.

But the actual end of the world did not come as predicted by the Olivet Discourse of Jesus. So the Christians now came to believe that the discourse was about their own tribulation under the evil dominion of Rome rather than the tribulation of the Jews, and that they would be delivered when the end time came, sometime very soon. In that Christian context, the Book of Revelation, a New Testament apocalypse, was written around the end of the first century A.D. The Book of Revelation describes a lot of apocalyptic signs and symbols resembling those in the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament.

But again, the end-time did not come as was predicted in Revelation. Thus the apocalyptic hope has continued to exist in the minds of the Christians until today. This is the reason why there are various interpretations of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation, ranging from one that says that both purely talk about the situations of the first century, to those that hold that both are about what will happen whenever the end of the world comes in the future.

The Book of Revelation talks about the period of a thousand years during which Christ will reign over the millennial kingdom of God, and after which the final judgment will occur for the eternal state (20:1-21:8). There are three different interpretations of the millennium: premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism.

Premillennialism holds that Christ will gloriously return *prior* to the millennium to defeat Satan-dominated history and inaugurate the millennial kingdom of God on earth. At the Second Coming, both the resurrected righteous dead (1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:4-6) and the righteous believers alive in the church (1 Thess. 4:17) will be “caught up... to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:17); and then they will come down together with Christ to reign over the millennial kingdom on earth. After the millennium, the unrighteous dead will be resurrected for the final judgment (Rev. 20:5, 12-13).

Premillennialism is subdivided into two different kinds: posttribulational (the Second Coming *after* the seven-year tribulation) and pretribulational (the Second Coming *prior* to the seven-year tribulation). Posttribulational premillennialism was historically widespread in the ante-Nicene period, and is well accepted today among evangelicals. Pretribulational premillennialism emerged in the 1830s through the dispensationalism of the Anglo-Irish Bible teacher John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) and became popular especially in America, in which it is still widely accepted among conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists today.

Postmillennialism, by contrast, is less apocalyptic than premillennialism, as it holds that Christ will return *after*, or even based on, the optimistic millennium kingdom (although its length may not have to be taken literally) which is brought forth on the earth through the expansion and influence of the church doing religious revivals throughout the world (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 13:10). At the Second Coming, the general “resurrection of both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15) will occur for the final judgment. Postmillennialism was popular at least during the first three rounds of Great Awakenings in the history of American Christianity.

As for amillennialism, its prefix a- (“not”) means that there is “no” millennium except a symbolic millennial kingdom, which is the church on the earth. It is faced with tribulation and suffering, and only imperfectly points to God’s kingdom in heaven. The Second Coming will take place to put an end to this pessimistic situation, and the general resurrection of both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15) will take place for the final judgment. This position was proposed by St. Augustine (354–430), and it is adhered to today by the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the majority of mainline Protestant denominations.

What is important is that the three schools of millennialism, in spite of their differences, all believe that after the millennium and the resurrection (whether it is only of the unjust or the general one), the final judgment will bring natural calamities to destroy this world (Mt. 24:7, 29, 35; Mk. 13:8, 24-25, 31; Lk. 21:11; 21:25-26, 33; 2 Pet. 3:10-12; Rev. 20:9) and eternally assign the righteous and the unrighteous to heaven and hell respectively (Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:12-15).

That assignment will form the eternal state in the other world. The eternal state will be inhabited by all resurrected people with their resurrected bodies, whether they are righteous or unrighteous people. So they may look as if they were tangibly living in this physical world. But the eternal state is actually otherworldly, because their resurrected bodies are merely “spiritual bodies” (1 Cor. 15:44). The righteous people will experience their otherworldly eternal state as “a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Rev. 21:1). The unrighteous people, by contrast, will experience the eternal state of hell.

In the modern period, theological liberalism emerged and became widespread, proposing this-worldly, non-apocalyptic approaches in opposition to the apocalypticism of the Christian tradition. But the German New Testament scholar Johannes Weiss (1863–1914) strongly reemphasized apocalypticism in his 1892 book, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*.^[28] The German Lutheran theologian Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) popularized Weiss' thesis at the beginning of the twentieth century.^[29] Weiss and Schweitzer had quite a big impact on later New Testament studies.

2. Non-apocalyptic Eschatology

In the history of Christianity, the Enlightenment emerged in the late seventeenth century, affirming this-worldliness, naturalism, rationalism and humanism. Under its influence, apocalypticism started to languish. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) integrated the Enlightenment with Pietism to come up with his moral philosophy,^[30] and because of this he still was under the influence of the Enlightenment. In his book, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), he held that if we, with Jesus as our moral teacher, autonomously follow the moral law (the categorical imperative) that exists within ourselves, we will always do right actions to be able to build an “ethical commonwealth,” which is the kingdom of God on earth.^[31]

In the nineteenth century, the German Protestant theologian Albrecht Ritschl inherited Kant's understanding of moral religion and maintained that the kingdom of God as God's community “forms... the ethical ideal for whose attainment the members of the community bind themselves to each other through a definite type of reciprocal action.”^[32] Ritschl had little interest in the traditional Christian notions of heaven and hell in the other world. The kingdom of God on earth itself will be the eternal state of human beings. The death of Jesus on the cross is not a substitutionary death on our behalf to propitiate God's wrath for the forgiveness of our sin, but rather a great example of love which we can imitate to be morally influenced by it for our salvation. This is the so-called moral influence theory of atonement.

Just several years after Johannes Weiss' 1892 publication of *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, which showed his apocalyptic view of Jesus, Adolf von Harnack, a well-known Ritschlian professor, gave a series of sixteen lectures on the topic of “What Is Christianity?” to some six hundred students at the University of Berlin in the academic year of 1899–1900. These lectures presented his non-apocalyptic understanding of the kingdom of God, and they were published as a book in 1901.^[33] It was widely circulated not only in Germany but also in England and America.

According to Harnack, Jesus spoke about the coming of the kingdom of God in an apocalyptic language that reflected the spread of Jewish apocalypticism in his days, but all his apocalyptic imagery was just the dispensable “husk” of a “kernel.”^[34] The indispensable kernel of Jesus' message was about the non-apocalyptic kingdom of God on earth: “The kingdom of God comes by coming to the individual, by entering into his soul and laying hold of it... it is the rule of the holy God in the hearts of individuals: *it is God himself in his power.*”^[35] Apocalypticism vanished here: “From this point of view everything that is dramatic in the external and historical sense has vanished,” and “It is not a question of angels and devils, thrones and principalities, but of God and the soul, the soul and its God.”^[36]

In the early twentieth century, this liberal trend was bequeathed to the Social Gospel movement of Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) in America. Although after World War I this liberal trend was not very popular in Europe and America any longer, it reemerged after World War II in liberation theology including black theology, feminist theology and womanist theology in America, and Latin American liberation theology. These schools of liberation theology were slightly different from the optimistic tradition of Kant, Ritschl, Harnack and Rauschenbusch, in that they were seriously interested in the fight to do away with the social injustices of racism, sexism and classism in this world. But because of this, they were this-worldly rather than otherworldly. According to the American black theologian James H. Cone (1938–2018), for

example, hope must not be related to life after death in such a way as to encourage us, as white slave masters have done, to forget about present injustice. “Hope must be related to the present, and it must serve as a means of transforming an oppressed community into a liberated—and liberating—community.”^[37] Carl Braaten states, therefore, that liberation theology resembles the tradition of Kantianism, Ritschlianism and the Social Gospel.^[38]

This liberal tradition was also inherited by many American New Testament scholars such as Robert W. Funk (1926–2005), Marcus Borg (1942–2015) and John Dominic Crossan (1934–). In 1985 Funk founded the Jesus Seminar, whose prominent members include Borg and Crossan. The Jesus Seminar was deemed a controversial group by conservatives. Borg, echoing Harnack concerning the kingdom of God in the proclamation of Jesus, says: “For Jesus, the language of the kingdom was a way of speaking of the power of the Spirit and the new life which it created. The coming of the kingdom is the coming of the Spirit, both into individual lives and into history itself.”^[39]

These scholars realize that the Synoptic Gospels contain many non-apocalyptic “wisdom sayings” of Jesus such as the one that says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Mt. 5:43-44). They also believe that the wisdom sayings of Jesus in Matthew and Luke came from both Mark and a hypothetical independent collection of Jesus’ sayings called the Q source. Additionally, there is the Gospel of Thomas, an old collection of Jesus’ wisdom sayings, which was discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. These scholars hold that the Q source and the Gospel of Thomas were produced earlier than the Synoptic Gospels, sometime soon after the death of Jesus in the first century,^[40] so that both showed a true picture of Jesus as a wisdom Teacher/Messiah rather than an apocalyptic Messiah.

3. The Unification View

Now the Unification view of the end of the world will be shown as a possible solution to the problem of the tension between the two opposing types of Christian eschatology discussed above.

a. Restoring the three great blessings

The Divine Principle holds that God’s original purpose of creation was to realize the “three great blessings”: 1) individual perfection, 2) the multiplication of God’s children in families, nations and the world, and 3) the human dominion of love over the rest of creation, as written in the Bible: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:28)

Adam and Eve were expected to realize each of these three blessings through the “four position foundation” centered on God: 1) the four position foundation of God, mind, body, and their unity for individual perfection; 2) the four position foundation of God, husband, wife, and their children for the multiplication of children, and 3) the four position foundation of God, human beings, all things, and their unity for the human dominion of love over the rest of creation.^[41] In this way the kingdom of God *on earth* was supposed to be built, and then the kingdom of God *in heaven* was to be automatically established in the spirit world after the physical death of human beings.^[42] For the realization of the three great blessings through the four position foundation as the purpose of creation, both God and human beings were to fulfil their respective portions of responsibility.^[43] And after the realization of this purpose of creation, both God and human beings were to experience “joy.”^[44]

Unfortunately, however, Adam and Eve failed to accomplish their human portion of responsibility and sexually fell centered on Satan.^[45] They thus lost the three great blessings of God in this world and instead realized them through a four position foundation under the sovereignty of Satan.^[46] This brought forth hell on earth, and then automatically hell in the spirit world that human beings enter after physical death.^[47]

From the viewpoint of the Divine Principle, therefore, the Messiah is to come on behalf of Adam in the last days to restore the three great blessings centered on God, in order that he may transform this satanic world for the realization of the kingdom of God on earth: “the world under the sovereignty of Satan must... be transformed into the world... where the three great blessings are fulfilled centered on God. The Messiah comes at this time of transformation.”^[48] Therefore the last days is the time “when the evil world under satanic sovereignty is transformed into the

ideal world under God's sovereignty. Hell on earth will be transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."^[49] This kingdom of God on earth is the kingdom of "interdependence, mutual prosperity and universally shared values."^[50]

Furthermore, once the kingdom of God on earth is established in this world, it will continue to exist for eternity beyond the last days: It is "everlasting and indestructible."^[51] "God, the subject partner, is eternal; likewise, earth, the object partner, should be eternal."^[52] This world, therefore, will not be apocalyptically destroyed by the final judgment. The biblical passages about the apocalyptic destruction of the world, then, should not be taken literally. They just symbolically mean that "the tyranny of Satan will be overthrown" for the restoration of *this* world to "God's sovereignty founded on Christ."^[53]

According to the Divine Principle, the day of Jesus as the second Adam was to be the last days, when he was to build the kingdom of God on earth by restoring the three great blessings in this world.^[54] But the people of Israel did not believe in him and killed him on the cross. So the kingdom of God on earth was not built at that time, and only spiritual salvation was brought forth by the resurrected Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This means that the fulfillment of God's original will was prolonged until the day of the Lord of the Second Advent as the third Adam, so that the day of the Lord of the Second Advent will be the last days.^[55] He and his Bride will restore the three great blessings to build the kingdom of God on earth, bringing forth both spiritual and physical salvation.

And the Divine Principle asserts that today is the last days, i.e., the time of the Second Advent, because in the world of the present age we can recognize various phenomena leaning toward the restoration of the three great blessings, such as an increased recognition today of the "true human value" of each person for the restoration of the first blessing, a trend today toward "the formation of one global cultural sphere based on Christian ideals" for the restoration of the second blessing, and an increased development today of our ability to "govern the creation" through "heart" and "highly advanced science" for the restoration of the third blessing.^[56]

b. Mediating between the two opposing types of eschatology

As was seen above, Unification eschatology concerning the final consummation of the world is very this-worldly in character, not being apocalyptic. Does this mean that it is the same as the non-apocalyptic eschatology of Kant, Ritschl, Harnack and many other liberals? The answer is in the negative, because Unification eschatology is also very much interested in the kingdom of God in heaven in the other world, whereas the non-apocalyptic eschatology of Christianity is hardly interested in it. According to the Divine Principle, "Once people have attained full maturity and enjoyed life in God's earthly Kingdom, then when they shed their physical bodies and pass into the spirit world, they will form the Kingdom of Heaven in heaven."^[57]

God actually wants all of us as his beloved children to happily live an eternal life of true love in the kingdom of God in heaven in the other world, although in order for that to happen the kingdom of God on earth must be built first. Regarding this eternal life of love in the spirit world, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon says:

We are created to live an eternal life. We are similarly created to practice true love. Furthermore, we are to practice true love here on the Earth. We engage ourselves with many things in this world. These things become the material that insures our eternal life. In other words, everything we do in this world is training for eternal life [in the spirit world].^[58]

There is another reason why Unification eschatology is not the same as the non-apocalyptic eschatology of Kant, Ritschl, etc. It is that the former actually talks about the behind-the-scenes cosmic struggle between God and Satan that lasts until the last days, when the final realization of the God-centered three great blessings and the defeat of the Satan-centered three great blessings occur in this world. The latter, on the other hand, is rather disinterested in this struggle between God and Satan. Unification eschatology thus accepts what Braaten refers to as the "fundamental story line" of biblical apocalyptic, being "the cosmic struggle between the Lord and Creator Spirit of life and 'the prince of demons,' 'the ruler of this world' of death, darkness, and destructiveness."^[59] Unification eschatology may therefore sound quite apocalyptic, although it denies the apocalyptic destruction of the world.

From above, it can be understood that Unification eschatology is basically *neither* an apocalyptic eschatology *nor* a non-apocalyptic eschatology, negatively speaking. What, then, is it, when it affirms both the eternity of the this-worldly kingdom of God on earth and the eternity of the otherworldly kingdom of God in heaven at the same time, and also when it may even sound quite

apocalyptic because of its acknowledgment of the cosmic battle between God and Satan behind the scenes? Positively speaking, Unification eschatology is perhaps *both* a non-apocalyptic eschatology *and* an apocalyptic eschatology at the same time. If so, it can mediate between the two opposing types of eschatology in Christianity, putting an end to their conflict.

There seems to be still another way in which it can be said that Unification eschatology is a mediating eschatology. According to the Divine Principle, in order for the three great blessings to be realized, both God and human beings are to fulfill their respective portions of responsibility. For when the three great blessings are each realized through the four position foundation to be formed centering on God, its formation involves both God and human beings. On the part of God, he fulfills his portion of responsibility when he totally negates himself and dedicates himself for the sake of his beloved human beings, by having sacrificial give and take action of his dual characteristics of *Sungsang* and *Hyungsang* centering on Heart. On the part of human beings, they similarly fulfill their portion of responsibility when they totally negate themselves and dedicate themselves for God's will to love the world, by a subject partner and object partner—whether mind and body for the first blessing, husband and wife for the second blessing, or humans and the rest of creation for the third blessing—engaging in sacrificial give and take action between each other centering on God. This is how God and human beings can come to completely resemble each other and unite with each other to form the seamless four position foundation.^[60] Hence the mutual involvement of both God's responsibility and the human responsibility. Once this mutual involvement of God and human beings is accomplished on the earth, it will automatically be carried to the kingdom of God in heaven in the spirit world where we experience it for eternity.

However, apocalyptic eschatology and non-apocalyptic eschatology in Christianity are both one-sided, in that the former emphasizes God's responsibility to bring about the apocalyptic judgment in front of powerless, sinful humans in order to launch the eternal state in the other world, while the latter stresses the human ability to build the apocalyptic kingdom of God on earth without any involvement of God. Here we can say that Unification eschatology can mediate between the two conflicting types of Christian eschatology with respect to the tension of God's responsibility and the human responsibility.

c. Other mediating eschatologies

Carl Braaten is aware of the tension or opposition between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology in Christianity, when he says:

Christianity today stands at the crossroads between two diametrically opposed interpretations of eschatology. On one side are the "conservative evangelicals" in all Christian denominations who think of eschatology in the traditional sense of "last things" to occur in some near or distant future. On the other side there are "post-Enlightenment" Christians who think of eschatology more concretely in relation to social-ethical objectives.^[61]

In order to help to solve this problem of the tension between the two, Braaten proposes that we should start our eschatology with the original Old Testament eschatology of the classical prophets such as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah before the Babylonian exile, which was not yet apocalyptic: "It is necessary to retrace the steps of Israel, as it were, and start our eschatology like the prophets with the struggles of people in this life" to be able to "escalate human hope... to enfold the totality of reality in a cosmic eschatology."^[62] This proposal by Braaten makes sense, because it is important to go back to the original preexilic eschatology of the Old Testament to "enfold the totality of reality." Although the classical prophets did not have a developed doctrine of afterlife other than the still ethereal, shadowy notion of Sheol (Gen. 42:38; Ps. 141:7; Amos 9:2; Hos. 13:14; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; etc.), nevertheless Unification eschatology, with its capacity of mediating between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology, would welcome Braaten's proposal.

Let us now deal with the eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann. Here we can be reminded of his "practical theodicy" to actually eradicate evil from this world based on our practicing the love and sacrifice of Christ who died on the cross and was resurrected.^[63] Moltmann was a German prisoner of war from 1945 to 1948 in Belgium, Scotland and England, and he came to feel the need for God as a real source of future hope to tackle the problem of pain and sorrow within this world. Somewhat influenced by the Jewish Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's (1885–1977) three-volume *The Principle of Hope*, Moltmann well expressed that need in his celebrated book on eschatology, *Theology of Hope* (1965 in German; 1967 in English).

Moltmann's eschatology resembles Unification eschatology, in that it is neither an apocalyptic eschatology nor a non-apocalyptic eschatology. First, it is not an apocalyptic eschatology. According to him, if it were an apocalyptic eschatology, "it would be better to turn one's back on it altogether; for 'the last things' spoil one's taste for the penultimate ones, and the... end of history robs us of our freedom among history's many possibilities, and our tolerance" for all the "unfinished and provisional" things in history.[64] True Christian hope arises when we take responsibility together with Christ to tackle many problems related to the penultimate in the world. Second, however, his eschatology is not a non-apocalyptic utopian eschatology, either: We have to "distinguish the spirit of eschatology from that of utopia." [65] This means that eschatology involves God's radical power as well as our human responsibility, in order to transform human history and the world. If Moltmann's eschatology is thus neither an apocalyptic eschatology nor a non-apocalyptic eschatology, it can be regarded as a mediating eschatology.

The eschatology of Moltmann is also interested in both the eternity of the eventually transformed world on the earth and the eternity of eventually transformed life after death. For all the living people on the earth and all the resurrected dead in the other world are "in community with Christ" for their eventual salvation.[66] For him, the eternity of life after death does not mean the immortality of the soul as understood in the Greek tradition, but rather the resurrection of the dead and its eternity in the Bible. According to him, the resurrection of the dead takes place immediately upon physical death, so there is no time whatsoever during which their souls are disembodied.[67] They are thus able to relate to earthly people for their eventual liberation in the other world: "The dead [who are physically resurrected] are enduringly with us who are the living [on the earth]."[68] There is no eternal hell in the other world, therefore.

Moltmann's eschatology has a single focus, which is the indwelling of God in his creation in the last days:

The different horizons of eternal life, the eternal kingdom and the eternal creation draw together to a single focus: the cosmic *Shekinah of God*. God desires to come to his 'dwelling' in his creation, the home of his identity in the world, and in it to his 'rest', his perfected, eternal joy.[69]

Note that God's joy is mentioned here. This echoes Unification eschatology's assertion that in the last days God is to be able to dwell in the whole of creation to his joy, by completely realizing the three great blessings for the eternal kingdom of God on earth and in heaven as well.

But there seem to be at least two points of difference between Moltmann's eschatology and Unification eschatology. First, the former, when not accepting apocalyptic eschatology, does not believe in the existence of Satan from the beginning, whereas the latter knows that Satan exists until the sovereignty of God is established in the last days.

A second point of difference between them concerns Christ and his Second Coming. Moltmann's eschatology holds that the death and resurrection of Christ out of his sacrificial love combined with the Holy Spirit constitutes the ultimate driving force for our responsible work for the transformation of the world, and that when Christ returns, he will finish any unfinished work with us by use of the same way of his death and resurrection: "The parousia of Christ is first and foremost the completion of the way of Jesus: 'the Christ on the way' arrives at his goal. His saving work is completed." [70] By contrast, Unification eschatology maintains that while the resurrected Christ and the Holy Spirit brought forth spiritual salvation, the three great blessings were not completely realized on the earth due to his death on the cross. On behalf of Christ and the Holy Spirit, therefore, the Christ of the Second Coming and his Bride will do their enormously hard work of love and sacrifice, rather than literally dying on the cross, to realize God's three great blessings on the earth. As they can be called our "True Parents," we will responsibly work together with them as their children in front of God.

Issues and Proposals

After dealing with both individual and general eschatology in Christianity, and with both apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology within general eschatology in Christianity as a context in which to discuss Unification eschatology, we can find at least three important issues that need to be addressed.

1. Universal Salvation

We have learned that apocalyptic eschatology, with its emphasis on God's final judgment, does not believe in universal salvation. It believes that the wicked, even after their physical resurrection, will be eternally judged in hell in the other world. Their individual eschatology, therefore, is a miserable one. Non-apocalyptic eschatology, by contrast, is basically disinterested in heaven and hell in the other world, focusing instead on building an ethical world of goodness on the earth for as many people as possible. This may be merely an earthly version of universal salvation, which does not talk about eternal life beyond the earth. When Unification eschatology unites and mediates between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology through its notion of God's three great blessings to be realized for everybody not only here on the earth but also in the spirit world, it undoubtedly stands for universal salvation.

Braaten observes that the doctrine of universal salvation has been a minority opinion in the Christian tradition, and that the majority of Christians in their adherence to apocalyptic eschatology have resisted that doctrine, thinking chiefly of their own salvation in the other world. And he wonders if what they have done to resist it is Christian: "Christians have done what comes naturally—to hope chiefly for themselves, their own family and friends, and let the rest go to hell. This is most natural, but is it Christian?"^[71] Unification eschatology addresses this question in favor of universal salvation, by bringing back Christ's teaching of love for all people. So does Moltmann's eschatology as another mediating eschatology.

2. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus

We have learned that the original eschatology of the classical prophets such as Amos, Hosea and Isaiah before the Babylonian exile was not apocalyptic yet, and that Jewish eschatology later became apocalyptic because the Israelites experienced the harsh Babylonian exile in the fifth century B.C. as God's punishment for their sins. As a result, the idea that God was to lay their sins on the Suffering Servant as the deliverer of the Israelites emerged in Deutero-Isaiah. This would mean that if the Israelites had not committed sins serious enough to invite God's punishment, then the Babylonian exile would not have occurred, and apocalyptic eschatology would not even have been born in Judaism. Also, the notion of the Suffering Servant would not have come into existence. This is, of course, a speculation, but it may not be a very strange speculation.

We have also learned above that the apocalyptic eschatology of Christianity emerged within the milieu of the apocalyptic eschatology of Judaism. The Synoptic Gospels show that Jewish leaders' sinful rejection of Jesus most likely led him to present the Olivet Discourse to predict things like the destruction of the Temple and the tribulation of the Israelites as God's punishment for their sinful rejection, and that in that apocalyptic condition which worked against him, he had to carry their sin upon his shoulder like the Suffering Servant by being killed on the cross and resurrected. Therefore the American Lutheran theologian David P. Scaer (1936–), in his article on "Death and Resurrection as Apocalyptic Event," states: "His own death and resurrection will be an apocalyptic judgment against the generation that rejected him."^[72]

The same bold yet not strange speculation can be proposed here: If the Jewish leaders had not committed the sin of rejecting Jesus, then his Olivet Discourse could not have been needed, and Christian apocalypticism could not even have been born. Also, the death and resurrection of Jesus could not have occurred. Instead, Jesus and his potential Bride, on behalf of Adam and Eve, could have simply worked hard to realize the three great blessings based on God's initial plan, as Unification eschatology asserts, in order to establish the kingdom of God on earth neither apocalyptically nor non-apocalyptically.

But the sin of opposing and rejecting Jesus was actually committed. Apocalyptic eschatology, therefore, became a commonsensically received alternative in Christianity, and in that context the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus for our redemption became a standard Christian doctrine. As a natural reaction against apocalypticism, therefore, utopian non-apocalypticism emerged, saying that the death and resurrection of Jesus was not an apocalyptic event but merely an example of love we can morally imitate to build a world of goodness. Unification eschatology goes beyond the tension of these two types of eschatology to say that the original mission of Jesus was to realize the three great blessings both on the earth and in the spirit world, without necessarily dying on the literal cross to be resurrected but rather by living a life of sacrifice and love continuously on the earth to defeat the power of Satan.^[73] On this point, Unification eschatology diverges from Moltmann's eschatology that stays with the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus, although the latter still is an eschatology to mediate apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology, in large measure resembling the former.

3. The Relationship between Individual and General Eschatology

The first and second sections of the present essay have dealt with individual and general eschatology. But what is their relationship?

Individual eschatology within apocalyptic eschatology talks about the so-called “intermediate state” of the soul in the other world between the time of physical death and the future last days of physical resurrection, during which the soul would have to stay naked without yet having a resurrected body. The disembodied soul will have no sense of personal self-identity, self-consciousness and memory whatsoever as a human being, and thus have no ability whatsoever to relate to people in the earthly world in order to grow spiritually. This means that the disembodied soul during the intermediate stage in the other world cannot grow spiritually and is cut off from the earthly world as it goes through the process of time until the final judgment in the last days. In this scenario, there is no real connection between the individual eschatology of the soul and the general eschatology of the world. Both are very much disconnected from each other.

What of individual eschatology in non-apocalyptic eschatology? Unfortunately, individual eschatology is virtually absent within non-apocalyptic eschatology, which is much disinterested in the other world.

So let us look at the individual eschatology of Unification eschatology that mediates between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic eschatology. According to the Divine Principle, once one dies physically, the built-in spirit body of one’s spirit self will start to function like a physical body in the spirit world, so that there will be nothing like what is called the intermediate stage of the disembodied soul. The spirit self with its dual characteristics of spirit mind (the *sungsang* part) and spirit body (the *hyungsang* part) in the spirit world, then, will be able to have give-and-take action with an earthly person’s physical self with its dual characteristics of physical mind (the *sungsang* part) and physical self (the *hyungsang* part) in the physical world, due to their common dual characteristics of *sungsang* and *hyungsang*. Through that give and take action, the spirit self in the spirit world will be able to continue to grow spiritually. This means that individual eschatology and general eschatology in Unification eschatology are deeply interconnected.

Moltmann’s eschatology, although it may not have such a detailed explanation of the relationship of the spirit world and the physical world as does the Divine Principle, nevertheless resembles Unification eschatology in acknowledging the close connection between individual and general eschatology. It acknowledges this close connection by “overcome[ing] the unfruitful and paralyzing confrontation between the personal and the cosmic hope, individual and universal eschatology” centered on “*God, God’s kingdom and God’s glory.*”^[74] In this sense, he appropriately calls his eschatology an “integrating eschatology.”^[75]

Notes

[1] Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 16.

[2] For the use of the word “naked” here, see Paul’s description in 2 Cor. 5:1-3 that we “may not be found naked” after physical death, as we will put on “a building from God” (spiritual body) upon shedding our “earthly tent” (physical body).

[3] The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, *Exposition of the Divine Principle* (New York: H.S.A.-U.W.C., 1996), p. 48. Henceforth abbreviated as EDP.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] EDP, pp. 88-89.

[6] EDP, p. 89.

[7] The meanings of premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism will be explained later.

[8] In this subsection, all the terms, phrases, clauses and sentences with quotation marks, except “dichotomism,” “dichotomy,” “quadchotomism” and the biblical quotations, are from EDP, pp. 47-50.

[9] Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 3rd ed., ed. L. Arnold Hustad (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015), p. 197. Erickson reports that regarding the constitution of the human person, there are two more options in Christianity besides dichotomism: trichotomism and monism (pp. 196-199). Trichotomism believes that the human person is composed of three parts: body, soul and spirit. But the terms “soul” and “spirit” are often used interchangeably, thus being virtually equivalent. So there is not as much difference between trichotomism and dichotomism. By contrast, monism is quite unique because under some influence of the Old Testament it insists that the human person is a unity, not being composed of separate parts.

[10] EDP, pp. 144-48.

[11] “Resurrection may be defined as the process of being restored from the death caused by the Fall to life, from the realm of Satan’s dominion to the realm of God’s direct dominion, through the providence of restoration. Accordingly, whenever we repent of our sins and rise to a higher state of goodness, we are resurrected to that degree” (EDP, p. 136).

[12] The reason why the doctrine of universal salvation has never been popular in Christianity is that there are also quite a few biblical passages against it, such as Mt. 25:46; Mk. 9:48; Jn. 3:36; 1 Cor. 1:18; and Phil. 3:19.

[13] EDP, pp. 144-45.

[14] EDP, pp. 149-50.

[15] Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), p. 18.

[16] Geddes MacGregor, *Reincarnation in Christianity: A New Vision of the Role of Rebirth in Christian Thought* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1978).

[17] W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1970), pp. 317-18.

[18] John Macquarrie, “Identity,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson and John Bowden (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), pp. 278-79. In the same article, he further says, however, that if a resurrected body is added, “the idea of an identity ‘beyond death’ is conceivable, and by no means nonsense.”

[19] John Hick, “Life after Death,” in *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology*, pp. 331-34.

[20] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 107.

[21] The Divine Principle describes this as follows: “The spirits of the faithful Jews descended to the earth from the form-spirit level of the spirit world where they had been living. They returned to help the believers on earth, who had the opportunity to benefit from the redemption by the cross, to believe in Jesus and become life spirits. In doing so, the returning spirits also became life spirits” (EDP, p. 146).

[22] Hans Schwartz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Mich, Eerdmans, 2000), p. 51.

[23] Carl E. Braaten, “The Kingdom of God and Life Everlasting,” in *Christian Theology: An Introduction to Its Traditions and Tasks*, rev. and enl. ed., ed. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 331.

[24] Schwarz, *Eschatology*, pp. 55-60.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[26] Bart D. Ehrman, “The Apocalyptic Context for Jesus’ View of the Messiah.” <https://ehrmanblog.org/the-apocalyptic-context-for-jesus-view-of-the-messiah/>.

[27] William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 444.

[28] Johannes Weiss, *Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. and ed. Richard Hyde Hiers and David Larrimore Holland (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

[29] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1961). The original German edition published in 1906.

[30] This point was discussed in Theodore Shimmyo, “The Providential History of Modern Thought: A Unification Perspective,” *Journal of Unification Studies* XVIII (2017): 14-15. It is a subsection on “Moral religion of Immanuel Kant.”

[31] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

[32] Albrecht Ritschl, “Instruction in the Christian Religion,” in *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. 222.

[33] Adolf von Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* trans. Thomas Bailey Saunders (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 56. Italics original.

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 140.

[38] Braaten, “The Kingdom of God and Life Everlasting,” p. 347.

[39] Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 198.

[40] Helmut Koester and Stephen J. Patterson, for example, argue that the Gospel of Thomas was written as early as 30s or the 40s of the first century. See their “The Gospel of Thomas: Does It Contain Authentic Sayings of Jesus?” *Bible View* 6, no. 2 (April 1990); 37.

[41] EDP, pp. 33-36.

[42] EDP, pp. 36, 81.

[43] EDP, pp. 43-44,

[44] EDP, p. 33-35.

[45] EDP, pp. 63-65.

[46] EDP, p. 68.

[47] EDP, p. 82.

[48] EDP, pp. 88-89.

[49] EDP, p. 89.

[50] EDP, pp. 342-44.

[51] EDP, p. 118.

[52] EDP, 91.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] EDP, pp. 89-90.

[55] EDP, p. 90.

[56] EDP, pp. 96-103.

[57] EDP, p. 81.

[58] Hak Ja Han Moon, “Blessed Marriage and Eternal Life,” address given on a 16-city North American speaking tour on April 1-16, 1996. <http://www.tparents.org/Moon-Books/Tfwp/Tfwp-3-2.htm>.

[59] Carl E. Braaten, "The Recovery of Apocalyptic Imagination," in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 17.

[60] See Theodore Shimmyo, "God and the World: Advantages of the Unification Doctrine of God's Dual Characteristics," *Journal of Unification Studies* XVI (2015): 30-35, for how the four-position foundation is formed, given God's dual characteristics of Sungsang and Hyungsang and the world's dual characteristics. It is a subsection on "Dual Characteristics."

[61] Braaten, "The Kingdom of God and Life Everlasting," p. 347.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 348.

[63] See Theodore Shimmyo, "The Problem of Evil: Unification Theodicy," *Journal of Unification Studies* XVII (2016): 51-54. It has a subsection on "Jürgen Moltmann."

[64] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p. x.

[65] Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, p. 17.

[66] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p. 106.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 102-4.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[69] *Ibid.*, xiii. Italics original.

[70] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, tr. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 319.

[71] Braaten, "The Kingdom of God and Life Everlasting," p. 350.

[72] David P. Scaer, "Death and Resurrection as Apocalyptic Event," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 64:4 (October 2000): 280.

[73] To know this further, see Theodore Shimmyo, "The Unification Doctrine of the Atonement," *Journal of Unification Studies* XII (2011): 11-40.

[74] Moltmann, *The Coming of God*, p. xv. Italics original.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. xiv.