

## A View of God's Story 2.0

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If I think about how I developed my view of "God's story," I have to remember my early days of listening to lectures in Barrytown, in 1974. Back then, we went to 3-, 7-, 21-, 40- and 120-day workshops. DP was taught completely, every chapter, three sessions a day, three hours per lecture. No questions, no discussions, just intensive listening and note-taking. My notebooks were filled with tiny handwriting and versions of every diagram I could manage to copy from the board. And during each workshop, I'd refine the diagrams, catching what I'd missed last time.

Then, in the 120-day workshop, we were trained to lecture the Divine Principle by Rev. Ken Sudo, Rev. Tom McDevitt, and Rev. Kevin McCarthy. (We also had to learn VOC theory - Victory Over Communism - and Unification Thought.) We had the intensive

lectures as always, but then we had to practice giving our own lectures. I don't remember getting handouts, and certainly there was nothing digital - no PDFs, Word files, slides, or screenshows. We all just worked from our handwritten notes. One of the methods we learned was the "napkin lecture". Basically, Rev. Sudo taught us that we'd likely find ourselves with a new person in a coffee shop or some other casual meeting place, and they'd ask us to explain our teaching. In that situation, you'd have to grab whatever piece of white paper was at hand. In a restaurant, that would naturally be a white table napkin. And there, you'd draw your circles and arrows as you explained the basics.

I think what really jump-started my lecturing was the 21-day "pioneering" condition. For that, each of the 120-day trainees were dropped off in a city with our clothes, cassette tapes of Rev. Sudo's lectures, and a standing easel that the Barrytown carpenters had made for each of us. I was less than a year in the movement. A caravan of vans left Barrytown one morning, each with perhaps 6-8 members, and in the back were our suitcases and easels. The vans drove from location to location, dropping us off one-by-one until, at dusk, we arrived in my city, the southern-most on my route. So, I was the last one and my bags and easel were unloaded onto the sidewalk and the now emptied van drove off.

I began teaching the Divine Principle on the boardwalk (my city was a summer beach town). Even though our Barrytown lecturers had taught us very passionately, I didn't clearly have a sense of the Divine Principle as God's "story". Rather, I saw it as an amazing revelation of a large number of spiritual principles and laws that explained exactly what was happening in well-known bible stories and - in the later chapters - what had been happening in the world in the ages after the bible. I remember that I had to commit to memory an enormous number of facts about the bible, science, Jewish/Christian/European history, some philosophies, government, and the world wars. I had to know enough to sound knowledgeable and credible, so that I could be a convincing presenter. And so I practiced and practiced, listened to many lecturers, gathered more and more material from them, and developed and polished my own presentations until I also could teach a one-day, two-day, or even a seven-day lecture. And each lecture would be filled with enough material to last the standard three hours. When I eventually was assigned to workshop staffs, I learned to participate in teaching 21-day workshops.

But as far as my teaching the Principle, the amount of material I'd accumulated was overwhelming, and by constant repetition, it sometimes became dry. Combined with the very long days we worked, falling asleep was common in the three-hour lectures. I even sometimes felt that my material was so dry that I wished the time could end soon, so that I could finish talking! After some years, I stopped teaching altogether.

Initially, I was relieved, but as time passed, I felt a growing sense of unease and unfulfillment: the Divine Principle and Unification Thought were so elevating that to not be sharing them - especially after all the training I'd been given - felt like I was just half-alive. Also, I'd been a New York member for some years, so I'd had the chance to see Abonim speak every Sunday, for that entire time. And his urgency was a weight that became so heavy that I had to begin teaching again. At one point, I was able to attend the Seminary at Barrytown. And there, I determined to learn to teach Unification Thought, which was instrumental in my acceptance of Abonim six years earlier. In my two years at UTS, I created a study guide for Unification Thought, and could more deeply understand Abonim's vision of the original world and the original way of God-centered life. I also managed to win 1st place one year in the Divine Principle lecturing contest.

After I graduated from the Seminary, I joined CARP and Dr. Joon Ho Seuk appreciated and supported my interest in Unification Thought. He arranged for me to meet Dr. Sang Hun Lee, and I had the chance to

support some Unification Thought seminars that Dr. Lee led, and was eventually certified by him to teach Unification Thought. One of the most important things I learned was how much Dr. Lee loved and honored the Divine Principle itself. So my own appreciation of the Principle was elevated by Dr. Lee's education. I have to say that that was a very important experience and realization for me. It was a kind of turning point in my appreciation of the Principle.

I also learned from the Unification Thought Theory of Education that the most important form of a person's education is the education of heart and that this happens when one can grasp the three hearts of God - these are the heart of hope (or expectation), the heart of sorrow (or grief) and the heart of pain (or suffering). I realized that these three correspond to the Principle of Creation, the Human Fall, and the History of Restoration. This new awareness grew and grew within me and transformed my understanding of the Divine Principle from an intellectual one to an emotional ("heartistic") one. My teaching of the Principle began to change accordingly, as I understood God's heart within the Divine Principle. I can't forget that I once was called to Hyo Jin Nim's office in the Manhattan Center, because of the teaching I'd been doing. He sat me alone in his office and asked me what I thought of Abonim, himself, and the Divine Principle. And I explained that, to me, the Divine Principle is the greatest epic saga in the universe - that it is the explanation of one person's hopes, dreams and everything they lived and longed for; and then the account of the calamitous tragedy that devastated it all; and finally the story of that person's whole life afterwards, trying repeatedly to pick up the broken pieces of their dreams, hopes, and heart. Perhaps that was the first time anyone had asked me to verbalize what I had come to feel about the Principle. In any case, it was the most important time. It had been building up until I finally could understand "God's story".

Sometime during my study, I remember that one lecturer wrote the word "history" on the blackboard as "His-story", and that stuck with me. It resonated with what my own feeling about the Divine Principle was becoming. And through Unification Thought, I could grab on to that and reflect on the entire Principle itself; I began to see that beneath the translation, beneath all the principles, laws, biblical and historical examples was the story that had gripped Abonim's heart, and Jesus' heart before him, and made it impossible for them to not do and not give anything necessary to come to the aid of their God, their Divine Parent. Their hearts were shaken, taken so hard that there's nothing they would hold back from God in order to fix this and restore the beauty of life as it was intended to be.

I remember that one presenter likened a Divine Principle lecture to "God's prayer to man", and that also penetrated my awakened heart. He meant that, even as we kneel to God in desperate supplication, God's heart mirrors that very feeling when a Divine Principle lecture is given to us...

Years later, as I was guiding students to give their own "napkin" lectures, we were reading the Divine Principle textbook together and I found this sentence that I'd overlooked for decades:

"Can we ever grasp the Heart of God? The new expression of truth should be able to reveal the Heart of God: His heart of joy at the time of creation; the broken heart He felt when humankind, His children whom He could not abandon, rebelled against Him; and His heart of striving to save them throughout the long course of history."

And then I realized where the Unification Thought idea of the "three hearts of God" comes from.

Just as Dr. Lee had explained, everything starts with the Divine Principle.

Through the Principle of Creation we are given a brief look at the original vision of how beautiful life was conceived to be, not only in this world, but even in the world after it. It is a snapshot of an exquisite dream that Heavenly Parent had for us.

The Human Fall is a look at the disastrous catastrophe that brought God's dream to sudden and utter destruction and desolation.

And the largest portion of the Divine Principle - the history of restoration - has become a recounting of HP's entire life of trying to pull things back together, time-after-time, following the disaster that shattered it. For this reason, it is called the heart of pain. For a starter, it explains the heart of God in Adam's family, Noah's family, Abraham's family, and in Moses' and Jesus' lives. All these accounts are stripped of symbols and interpretations, and the focus is solely on how God felt during the hardships of these figures' lives. In only a few pages, a narrative of emotional experience is painted for us, that tries to help us feel what God was feeling throughout the lives of these heroic figures. It is an impassioned appeal, meant to strip things down to the very basics of God's emotional experience. And it transformed my entire understanding of hundreds of pages about the topic of "restoration" in the Divine Principle. Though I had understood that the entire 2nd part of the DP has enormous emotional implications, the sheer number of insights into the meanings, implications and historical consequences of things usually obscured the emotional narrative underlying it all. But Unification Thought stripped that all away so that the course of one person's life could be laid bare. And it finally had the impact on me that surely was intended all

along: my heart could break for God.

Unification Thought then goes on to suggest that it's not just the Bible that opens the door to this understanding, but - if we at least understand this perspective that the Divine Principle provides - any of the world's great scriptures, myths, or legends can be read with new eyes that see, and a new heart that feels more deeply.

For years, then, my heart towards the Divine Principle has been transformed: where it once was a book that contained the doctrine of the church - an utterly remarkable compilation of innumerable revelations and insights into the mysteries of the Bible - it also became the most dramatic and epic of all historic sagas. It encompasses all the drama extending from the beginning of time, through all the eras of pre-human existence, through the entire account of the human race, into the vision of the end of this world and the beginning of the new, that so many scriptures herald.

Which led me - as Unification Thought so often does - to notice a small passage in one of the newest of our scriptures (Cheon Seong Gyeong) that I might otherwise have overlooked:

"...to be a son or daughter of filial piety, you have to know your father and mother's heart. ...the heart of God before creation, His heart during the process of creation, and His grieving heart after the Fall. ...the sorrowful heart with which He has been leading human history toward restoration, and His heart of hope for a new world after restoration is completed." (14-174, 1964.10.03)

There is one last thing: although Unification Thought explains the three hearts of God, and the importance of knowing them in order to understand God and fulfill the first Great Blessing, there is an emphasis on bringing a child to understand one of these hearts. My natural expectation was that a child should be led to understand the heart of joy/hope/expectation. But no says the Unification Thought text:

"Through an education of heart, children should come to understand the three kinds of God's heart as described above, especially the heart of God in the course of the providence of restoration."

- New Essentials of Unification Thought, p. 253

That was a disturbing surprise, so I had to reflect on this and it soon became apparent. The deepest knowledge we can have of a dear friend is not only what gives them the greatest joy, but it's knowledge of the most painful, long-borne secrets of their life. Only when we come to that level of intimate knowledge do we understand the depth of another person's soul. And so it is with God: knowing the joyful heart of God is to know God only partially.

My hope is that - as the memory of restoration fades in our human memory some generations into the future - the need for this knowledge of God's pain will recede in importance. But for now, and for the near future, it is this knowledge that moves us to want to come to the aid - we even call it the defense - of our HP's heart. It's an important motivator for us: when we love someone and we know what hurts them, we become adamant about protecting them from anything that touches or aggravates that open wound.

Unification Thought asserts that it's the heart that must be the center of mind-body unity. And that's true: after stretches in life where I've tried to unite mind and body by intellect or will, in the end, it's what's in my heart that brings my mind and body to act in concert. And this is a key thing that Abonim and Omonim have been striving for: to bring God to becoming the very center of our hearts.