



DISCUSSANT RESPONSE

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to Carol J. Voisin's

TO WHAT DOES EDUCATION LEAD--TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES?

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RESPONSE TO CAROL VOISIN'S
TO WHAT DOES EDUCATION LEAD - - TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES?

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After recalling the general topic of the present committee, one would assume that the question stated in the title of Voisin's paper implies a balanced approach for discussing the major tenets of the Unification Theory of Education (UTE) or its truth aspect, and the practical application of that theory as it is alluded to by the term "consequences". However, my hopes for such a balanced approach were not fulfilled. Rather, the three major parts of Voisin's paper as stated in the abstract and the introduction turned out to be one major part followed by two smaller sections. When evaluating the external structure of the paper, we find that part one uses more than 18 pages for the presentation of a critical assessment of the presuppositions that undergird the UTE. In fact, that critical assessment turns out to be quite limited since it focuses mainly on the scriptural compatibility of about three pages of text from a 36 page chapter on the Theory of Education as presented in the Fundamentals of Unification Thought (FUT). Part two of Voisin's paper takes up about three pages in which she mentions the theological education in the Unification Church and how that case study is paradigmatic for problems connected with the application of the UTE to a practical setting. The third part consists of a concluding statement in which suggestions and guidelines are offered for developing improved foundations for an educational theory within the bounds of Unification Thought.

The question arises: Why does Voisin use the major part of her paper for critiquing a selected text of the Theory of Education as stated in FUT, rather than addressing the whole theory and exploring its application to practical issues related to problems in education? Voisin's answer is simple: There are serious problems with the foundations of the Unification Theory of Education (UTE), thus any practical application of that theory is at fault (p. 19). In her opinion, only a thorough revision of the foundations of the theory would open the path for improving its practical application.

Let us first analyze part one of Voisin's paper in order to understand her charge that the foundations, of the UTE have serious problems. She explains her critique with the assumption that "the notion or practice of critical thinking is not evident in the UTE" (p. 20). Since critical thinking is accepted as the methodological tool for analyzing the UTE text, one should wonder why Voisin did not explain the criteria of critical thinking at the beginning of her paper. Instead she offers some explanation on page 12 in terms of the "quadrilateral" approach after having already argued from an exclusively scriptural viewpoint that the UTE cannot claim to be related to the Hebrew Bible. The point I want to make refers to a certain inconsistency in Voisin's hermeneutical method. On the one hand, she seems to apply to the first twelve pages a rather narrow interpretative criterion by asking whether or not the UTE text is truly or literally "biblical" (p.5). On the other hand, in the remainder of the first part of her paper, she introduces the method of the "quadrilateral", namely, to prove the claim to revelation through experience, reason, tradition and scripture. It seems that the quadrilateral is one possibility of defining critical thinking and Voisin uses it as her criterion for testing the revelatory content of the UTE text (pp. 12,23). In short, one would expect a consistent interpretative approach for all parts of her paper, especially when considering her overall emphasis on critical thinking.

At this point, I will respond to major points of Voisin's argument as presented in the first part of her paper. It seems to me that Voisin chooses a highly critical approach in her reading of the UTE because she cannot make sense of the Biblical references cited in the FUT text. The reason for this dilemma lies in the lack of direct Divine Principle (DP) quotations in FUT, despite the fact that the first subheading of the chapter in question speaks of "The Divine Principle Foundation for a Theory of Education". Since the FUT text uses the DP understanding of the Bible, nonbelievers of the DP find it obviously difficult to understand a direct Unification Thought interpretation of Biblical texts. Thus, Voisin conducts her analysis of Biblical quotations in the FUT text based on the

criterion that she "must proceed according to the letter of the text" since there is no reference to the DP, (p.8). As can be expected such an evaluation of the Unification Thought interpretation of Biblical quotations based on "the letter of the text" turns out to be unfairly critical. All there is left for me to do is to offer the DP understanding to some of Voisin's major criticism in the hope that she would use the "quadrilateral" as criterion for critical thinking rather than textual literalism.

Let me briefly focus on four issues in the first part of Voisin's paper, namely, (1) the interpretation of Gen 1:27, (2) the understanding of heart as central to Divine Character, (3) the exegesis of Gen 1:28 and (4) the notion of God's perfection in relation to Mt 5:48.

(1) Voisin presents the criticism that the interpretation of Gen 1:27 according to the UTE presents a serious distortion of the biblical text, (p.3). The question seems to be whether God's creation of man in His own image includes the understanding that human beings are indeed God's objects. In my view, this "image vs. object" controversy can only be solved by looking at the relationship between God and human beings. In fact, here lies one of the most fundamental revelations of the DP, namely, to perceive God's love for man in terms of a subject-object relationship. In other words, the relational character of love shows itself as an active interchange of love and beauty. God manifests His love in the primordial order by creating man in His own image but that creative act of God's self-communication puts man into the position to be a qualified object for God's love. In this way, human beings in their original createdness are able to return beauty to God, thus allowing the unfolding of God's love in creation to reach its fulfillment. However, such a reciprocal understanding of the communication of God's love implies that love and beauty are also interchangeable. God, as a loving parent, shows beauty to human beings and assumes an objective position towards the love men and women have for God (FUT, p. 35 and note 13).

Here, Voisin's question whether God could be acted upon as an object would be answered by the DP in the affirmative, (p.4). Moreover, in my view, the self-understanding of human beings as

qualified objects for God's love does not reduce the theological meaning of being created in the image of God to the notion of "mere objects", as Voisin argues (p.4), but rather it provides the key for believers to fathom the mystery of the love of God.

Voisin's charge that the UTE "tries to capture the spirit of Gen 1:27 but instead seriously distorts it" (p.3) leads us to the question : what in fact is the spirit of the Old Testament? To summarize a possibly long answer, I suggest that it is the renewal of the covenant between God and His people in terms of an intense loving relationship that is characterized by purity, holiness and faithfulness as described through the use of marriage imageries by Hosea and other prophets. (Hos 2:15-17). If we allow the interpretive principle of the quadrilateral to have its say, I would then argue that the DP definitely captures the spirit of the Old Testament since the DP confirms that the creation of men and women in the image of God includes the notion that human beings are created with the original endowment of becoming qualified objects for God's love. That is to say, judging from experience, reason, tradition and scripture, Voisin's charge that the UTE reading of Gen 1:27 presents a serious distortion is unwarranted.

2) The UTE defines the educational process in terms of raising children towards the goal of attaining resemblance of God (FUT, p. 197). The question of how to resemble God is answered in Unification Thought with reference to the Theory of the Original Image in which the notions of Divine Image and Divine Character are explained in terms of a philosophical systematization of Rev. Moon's teachings, (FUT, pp. 3,16,32,197). Thus, in discussing the theory of education, the FUT assigns one major section to "The Divine Principle Foundation for the Theory of Education" (pp. 196-203) and presupposes from the reader some familiarity with the DP. Such familiarity can be easily obtained if we focus on the most essential part of Rev. Moon's revelation, namely, that God's innermost character is heart. If we further consider the definition of heart as "the emotional impulse to obtain joy through love" (FUT, p. 32), we discover the connecting lines to our previous discussion of the creation of human beings as qualified objects of God's love.

A careful reading of Voisin's assessment of the foundations of the UTE shows that she insists on the discontinuity between Rev. Moon's teachings and the Bible. In particular, with reference to the goal of education "to inherit the Divine character, namely, Heart", she states that the UTE is not based upon Hebrew scriptures but it is based upon the life and thought of Rev. Moon, (p.7). However, Voisin also observes that the revelation received by Rev. Moon needs to be related to something that is familiar and known, "otherwise the revelation or what is unknown to us could not be received as such", (p.12). With reference to the understanding of the Divine character in the Hebrew scriptures one can say that Rev. Moon's teaching about God's heart fits the above criteria of revelation as stated by Voisin. This means, in the Hebrew scriptures it is familiar and known that God is a God of heart as it is shown through texts like Gen 6:6 or Ez 36:26-27. On the other hand, human beings are largely ignorant of God's heart and we need a revelation about God's essential character to confirm what we all along expected in our subconscious mind. In short, Voisin's insistence on the discontinuity between Rev. Moon's revelation and the Hebrew scriptures is simply unjustified.

3) Without going into all details in Voisin's exegesis of Gen 1:28, I will explain her question of how in the UTE the three blessings can also be seen as three commandments (p.9). According to the DP, the first blessing "be fruitful" refers to individual maturation, the second blessing "multiply" indicates the establishment of godly families, while the third blessing "have dominion" relates to mature stewardship over creation. However, it is important to notice that in the DP these three blessings can only be accomplished based on another blessing, namely the endowment of human beings with free will and personal responsibility. The DP states that in creating men and women, God shared his own freedom and creativity with them so that they may resemble God to an ultimate degree, thus being the best qualified objects for God's love by exercising their free will in responsible and creative actions. To attain individual maturity, a godly family, and lordship over creation then becomes the result of fulfilling one's responsibility through the rightful exercise

of freedom. Thus, according to the DP, God's three blessings are not understood merely as a wish or sanction for happiness, but the term blessing includes above all man's endowment with free will and responsibility, a divine gift which allows humans to reach the state of being complete objects for God's love. Subsequently, the term blessing in the DP includes the call for responsible action on the part of human beings. In that sense the three great blessings can also be understood as three great commandments. In my view, Voisin's assertion that the UTE interpretation of Gen 1:28 is a serious misreading of the text (p.8) can be largely explained through a lack of understanding of the comprehensive nature of the DP and Unification Theology (not Unification mythology, the term used by Voisin in her paper).

4) Our final issue concerns the interpretation of Mt 5:48 and how it relates to the concept of God's perfection in the UTE. Before starting our discussion it is important to keep in mind that the UTE is part of a philosophical explication of the DP. Thus, the first step in our analysis of scriptural exegesis should concern the interpretation of Biblical texts from a DP perspective.

As earlier mentioned, the DP focuses on the heart of God as his essential character and perceives the creation of man as the realization of joy through love based on the original impulse of heart. Moreover, we have seen that humans are created with the potential to be qualified objects for God's love, a qualification that is based on resembling God's attributes of perfection. In short, perfection describes all characteristics of God that are operative in the process of realizing God's ideal of love centered on the original createdness of man and woman. Thus, according to their original endowments, human beings are capable of resembling God's perfection.

In my opinion, certain parts of the exegesis of Mt 5:43-48 as set forth in Voisin's paper (pp. 13-16) are fully in agreement with the DP notion of God's perfection and the subsequent call for human beings to resemble that perfection. In particular, Voisin's careful analysis of the word "therefore" in Mt 5:48 (You, therefore, must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect) supports the DP position, namely, to define divine perfection in terms of a totally

self-giving quality of love. According to the DP, human beings in their fallen state are, above all, estranged from their original potential to respond to God's self-giving love. Thus, men and women are called to restore that broken potential by practicing unconditional sacrificial love even to the point of loving one's enemies.

In some way it is surprising that Voisin's inquiry into the notion of perfection in the UTE leads to the assertion that "this new revelation of God's perfection has very little if anything to do with Mt 5:48", (p.16). As I see it, the outcome of Voisin's exegetical analysis of the FUT text with reference to MT 5:48 illustrates the fact that an attempt was made to establish Biblical compatibility with a text which is a philosophical formulation of a theological issue in the DP without first considering the continuity of the DP with the Biblical message and the Judeo-Christian tradition. This lack of a fair assessment of Rev. Moon's original teachings and Voisin's consistent agenda to seek an almost literal compatibility of a philosophical text with scripture leads to her verdict that the UTE has no direct or even an inferred relation to the Hebrew scriptures, or the New Testament, (p.19). Moreover, such an uncompromising divorce from Biblical teachings gives rise to further charges on the part of Voisin, namely, that the UTE seems to be unrelated to the history of ideas or religious traditions and that it is filled with a confusion of images and language. Thus, she concludes that a mistaken theory can only lead to a faulty praxis, (p.19), a conclusion which she attempts to prove in the second part of her paper. However, her argument seems to be inconsistent.

Concerning the practical application of the UTE, Voisin chooses as her example the theological education of doctoral students who are members of the Unification Church. In her view, these members underwent intense indoctrination in Rev. Moon's thought, thus supposedly losing their ability to think critically about Unification teachings. As Voisin tells us, critical thinking ought to be used as a kind of norm for education because it enables us to analyze self-evident truths, (p. 20). But these doctoral students when first encountering Unification teachings during their undergraduate studies

did they not apply critical thinking before joining the Unification Church? Did they not examine the DP based on experience, reason, tradition and scripture, to use again the quadrilateral as a possible form of critical thinking? Does Voisin imply that critical thinking as a norm for education does not apply for undergraduate students? Obviously, the evaluation of new revelation goes beyond the parameters of indoctrination or critical thinking. Indeed, the foundations of Unification Thought are a matter of faith, but to be a believer does not mean that one disqualifies as a critical thinker.

With regard to the question of authority, it seems to me that Rev. Moon's words are more authoritative to members of the church than Unification Thought. In my view, Unification Thought is in a stage of development and critical thinking that is guided by the desire to express better the truth content of the DP is certainly welcome. Voisin's comment that the survey of traditional theories of education in FUT needs improvement is a point in case.

Voisin raises the question whether Unification scholars think uncritically because they want to preserve their good life ,(p. 21). She seems to overlook that accepting the DP means to live a pioneer life against the mainstream of society. Religious convictions are not adhered to because of some resulting good life, but because they are rooted in personal religious experience that may well include a searching path of critical thinking.

In the final part of her paper, Voisin offers personal advise for strengthening the UTE. After discussing the theistic and revelatory foundations of the UTE in more than 18 pages of her paper, one wonders why she suggests to purge the content of the theory of revelatory content and replace it with purely secular ideas, (p.22). Such a new theory of education would certainly not strengthen the UTE but it would simply undermine its identity.

Voisin's concern to train Unification scholars in critical thinking is well taken and the proposed role change of having "outsiders" defend the Unification Thought viewpoint while Unificationists would offer a critique of certain issues could prove to be a good learning experience for everyone involved.

We have seen that Voisin's paper does not directly deal with the major tenets of the UTE and their possible practical application. However, her study of the foundations of UTE and the implications for practical considerations could open new avenues for expressing Unification Thought more effectively. In her final remarks she admits that after all the UTE provokes critical thinking, thus affecting the daily lives of Unificationists. In closing, I want to thank Professor Voisin for her total investment in writing her paper and for her genuine desire to create an effective mirror through which Unification Thought is able to discover more adequately its areas of improvement.