

Comments

I. Comment on the Paper of Dr. Kyung Kyoon Chung; The Role of Christianity for the Asian Community and Unification Of Religions	Ramon C. Reyes	147
II. The Concept of Unity in Hinduism	A.N. Rao	151
Impressions from the Standpoint of Unification Thought	Sang Hun Lee	
I. The Asian Community and the Unity of Religions: A Confucian Perspective		161
II. Islam and the Unity of Religions: With Special Reference to Unification Thought		170
III. The Concept of an Asian Community and the Unification of Religious Movements: In View of the History of Chondogyo		176
IV. The Role of Christianity in the Asian Community and the Unification of Religions		178
V. The Concept of an Asian Community and the Unity of Religions : Especially Concerning Buddhism		184
VI. Hinduism		189
VII. The Thought of Shinto and Unification Thought		196
Special Thesis: The Similarity of True Worship in All Religions		201

Keynote Thesis

The Creation of a New Asian Culture
and Unification Thought

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Distinguished professors and scholars gathering from the different countries of Asia, and ladies and gentlemen. I am happy from the bottom of my heart that I am able to see you again here in this symposium. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for your participation amidst busy schedules in your public as well as your private lives. Now I would like to refer to the subject "The Creation of the New Asian Culture and Unification Thought" in the time period given to me.

As you know, the theme of the fourth symposium, which was held last year, was "The Plan for an Asian Community and Unification Thought." I remember that, based on the premise that it is possible to establish an Asian Community, the roles of the six different fields: politics, economy, education, art, religion, and philosophy, for the establishment of the Asian Community were discussed. I myself expressed an opinion on the Asian Community from the viewpoint of God's providence in my keynote speech.

The theme of this symposium is "The Concept of an Asian Community and the Unity of Religions." I intend to discuss the concept of an Asian Community, the center of this theme, from the viewpoint of the creation of a new Asian culture; show that in the course of creating the new culture there are several problems to overcome, such as cooperation among different religions, the unity of different views of value, and others; present a method for overcoming these problems; and introduce the views of Unification Thought on the unity of religions

and love.

1. The Situation of the Present-day World

Before entering into the thesis proper, I would like to consider together with you the present-day situation of the world. When World War II ended, the world was divided into the Free and the Communist Camps, headed respectively by the United States and the Soviet Union. These camps were consolidated fairly well internally, but from the 1960's on that solidarity began to collapse. This can be seen in the Sino-Soviet antagonisms, and in the fact that each country began to seek its own independent line among the Communist Camp. Also in the Free Camp, each nation has its own national interests, which do not necessarily agree with those of other countries. The national interests of each nation now come first for that country. The phenomenon of such division can now be seen not only in relationships among nations, but also in the relationships between different religions, different races, and between the advanced nations and developing nations. Such divisions and antagonisms take place on many levels because of the conflicting interests of the parties concerned, and have caused all kinds of friction, hostility, and conflict.

Thus, today the world has fallen into great chaos which cannot be easily handled. The entire world is afflicted with: war, terrorism, kidnapping, destructive acts, arson, social crimes, gaps between the rich and the poor, injustices, corruption, social irrationalities (inequalities), moral degradation, drug abuse, alcoholism, degradation of women, breakup of the family, and others. From the cultural point of view, this phenomenon signifies that the many fields of culture, including politics, economics, society, education, justice, philosophy, art, ethics, morality and so forth, have all lost their proper sense of direction. Today's cultures face a great crisis. Neither democratic ideas or communist ideas can solve the current problems, nor can any of the existing religions or philosophies with their conventional methods. If the present world is left as it is, then it will become a world in which the stronger prey upon the weaker, without justice, and only force will reign.

2. The Cause of the Present-day Chaos Seen from the Cultural Aspect, Merits and Demerits of Western Civilization, and Its Decline

What is the fundamental cause for the present-day confusion of the world? First of all, most of the areas of culture have been dominated by materialism and atheism. Politics, economics, education, philosophy, art, ethics, morality, and other fields of culture are influenced by materialism and atheism. Secondly, individual and individual have been separated, and nation and nation have been separated due to individualism, selfishness and humanistic ideas under the name of equality for all individual persons or nations. National egoism has already become a hindrance to world peace today. In other words, world chaos has been brought about due to the defeat of spiritualism in the struggle between materialism and spiritualism, and due to the defeat of religion in the struggle between religion and anti-religion (atheism, natural science, etc). Religion has been defeated, losing the leadership which it used to exercise over the human spirit.

In its cultural aspect, it can be paraphrased in the following way: Eastern civilization, which emphasized the spirit, has been continually overwhelmed by the material aspects of Western civilization. Western civilization, in its origins in the Middle Ages, was a spiritual civilization under God-centricism. But Christianity was overwhelmed by materialism due to the development of science in the modern period. Thus Western civilization has fallen to the level of a materialistic civilization under the influences of humanism and individualism. In spite of Christianity's contribution to the Orient, Eastern civilization today is also being influenced in this direction by contemporary Western civilization and has lost its vitality.

To trace back their origins, capitalism, which gave rise to disparity in wealth, and communism, which agitates class struggle, are, so to speak, the twins of Western civilization, which has turned into a materialistic civilization. In fact, these two 'isms'

are both driving the world into confusion while disseminating materialism and atheism.

Western civilization (culture),* while overwhelming religion (Christianity), has brought about the development of great leaps forward in each of the fields of culture such as: politics, military, society, scholarship, industry, etc. It has also advanced to Asia to help modernize the Orient, thereby to greatly contribute to the culture of mankind. However, religion was belittled or disregarded in the name of separation between religion and politics; consequently, a vacuum was created within the human spirit, and today values are collapsing. This is the fundamental cause of the fact that the world cannot get rid of confusion today, even though it has achieved marvelous economic development. The cultural crisis of today can no longer be overcome with existing Western patterns or methods (by which I mean humanistic methods).

This suggests that the decline of Western civilization is near at hand. When we look back on history we find the following case often occurring: when a culture in a specific region that once prospered on the basis of religion came to belittle that religion, or brought about such a situation that religion could no longer fulfill its proper function, then that civilization declined. It can be said that Western civilization is coming to its last days together with capitalism and communism, the twins it spawned.

* (I use civilization and culture without differentiation, in the same meaning.)

3. A New Culture and God-centricism

It is difficult to save the existing culture from its crisis today by means of Western, humanistic methods. Then, does this mean that there is no other way to save present-day culture? No, it doesn't. There is one way. That is the way of establishing a new God-centered ideology to create a new culture. Since materialism and humanism are human-centered, they degenerate into individualism or egoism, which makes it difficult for people to reconcile or to harmonize with one another. On the other hand, a God-centered ideology is centered

on God; so it guides people to harmonize with one another centering on God's love. Looking back on history, we can find that, in order to control the confusion in a particular region, a new religion with a God-centered ideology would arise to resolve the many divisions or antagonisms in that region, bring about unity there, and become the mainstream in the task of creating a new culture there. Concretely, we could recall the fact that when the Roman culture was falling, God-centric Christianity overcame the confusion in that situation. Christianity unified the divided views of value of those days, and made a new culture bloom: the medieval culture of Western Europe. When the ethnic division between the Arabian tribes and antagonisms among the miscellaneous religions brought about disorder in the Middle East, Islam of Allah, which was a new form of God-centricism, emerged to manage this confusion, bring about unity, and cause a new culture to blossom there: the Saracen culture. In line with these historical precedents, and in order to save mankind from today's cultural crisis, the time is ripe for the coming of the era of a new religion with a God-centered ideology.

What kind of religion will that religion be? That religion does not necessarily need to be exclusively either Christianity or Islam or any other. This is because any religion which recognizes that the fundamental being of the universe is the subject of love would be included in the concept of the God-centered ideology. The ultimate being of the universe does not necessarily need to go by the name "God." It only has to be "the subject of love." In that sense Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism are all included in the concept of God-centricism in the wider sense. Tathata, or Mahavairocanasatathagata in Buddhism, Brahman in Hinduism, and "Heaven" in Confucianism are all expressed as "the subject of love," as is well known. The same applies to other religions too. If those religions had not been overwhelmed by the materialism or humanism of the West, but fulfilled their original missions properly, according to the direction of their founders and their scriptures to "Love one another," while rearranging their positions to fit to the contemporary period, then the sphere of a unified

spiritual culture, namely the sphere of a culture of love embracing Western civilization would have already been formed in Asia. It is because these, including Christianity, are all Asian religions, and Asia indeed is a continent of religion. We know that these religions with long histories have each given birth to brilliant cultures in definite regions once or even several times. Therefore, the religions of Asia should be awakened to save mankind from the present-day cultural crisis. It is now the time to act, to create a new culture based upon God-centrism.

4. Problems in Creating a New Culture

However, I must point out problems to be overcome in the course of religion's fulfilling its original mission (the practice of love) in order to create the new Asian culture. Some of the problems are:

- a) Cooperation among different religions,
- b) Unity in values,
- c) Harmony among the regional, traditional cultures,
- d) Dissolution of the conflict between science and religion,
- e) Providing direction to all cultural fields,
- f) Overcoming Communism,
- g) Interpretations of the Lord of the Second Advent.

I would like to offer my brief explanations to each of these items (problems).

a) Cooperation among Different Religions

All religions have a common core in the teachings of their founders, or in the teachings of their scriptures, which is to "love one another." Accordingly, the followers within each religion easily harmonize and unite with one another. But mutual harmonization between religions is sometimes not carried out well. Between one religion and another, we even find that conflicts take place. In creating a new culture, such things must be liquidated, and mutual respect and harmony should take place not only between the faithful

of one religion or sect, but also between all of the different religions and sects.

b) Unity of Values

When we see the cause of today's confusion from the perspective of value, we find that the standard or criterion of goodness is not unified. Thus, to manage today's disorder, the basic standard of goodness has to be identical among all people. Specifically, when one person sees a certain fact as good and another person sees it as evil, cooperation will be difficult between those two persons. Since each different religion or sect has its own doctrines, rituals and commandments, and faith is apt to assume an exclusiveness, the standard of goodness cannot be said to be identical among them. Here arises the problem of how to unite the different values of the different religions.

c) Mutual Harmony among Regional, Traditional Cultures

We need to create a new culture. This new culture must be a unified culture in which there is no war or conflict between nations or religions. However, traditional cultures are limited to one nation or one region, and each traditional culture has its own definite values. Accordingly, friction can arise due to the differences in cultural values. How to harmonize such friction is the question.

d) Dissolution of the Conflict between Science and Religion

It has been understood since Galileo was brought before an inquisition for his heliocentric theory that religion and science cannot get along with each other. Religion (Christianity) has withered in inverse proportion to the progress of science. This withering of Christianity was further accelerated as the miracles and wonders in the Bible that could not be explained scientifically came to be regarded as superstitions. This is one of the main reasons why religion has been overwhelmed by today's materialistic civilization. In

the age of the new culture religion will again gain the upper hand; religion and science should not only get along with each other but also cooperate with each other. For the sake of this relationship, religious facts should come to be explained scientifically, and scientific facts need to be explained in religious terms. Whether this level of understanding can be developed is the question.

e) Offering Direction to Each Cultural Field

Today's great worldwide chaos is partially derived from the fact that all cultural spheres, including politics, economics, society, law, education, philosophy, art, science, logic, media, etc., have lost their sense of direction. Therefore, in order to create the new culture, religion should guide those cultural fields which are devoid of their own direction, so that they may serve in one and the same direction. This is the question.

f) Overcoming Communism

Another task which religion should accomplish in order to create the new culture is to criticize and overcome communist theory, which is based on the logic of the materialistic dialectic that asserts that struggle is necessary for development.

Communism today is aggravating disorder even further by instigating wars and conflicts the world over, covertly as well as overtly, under the name of revolution and liberation.

g) Interpretations of the Lord of the Second Advent

In order for all religions to mutually cooperate for the purpose of the new culture, it is first of all necessary to mutually understand the doctrines of each religion.

Among the doctrines of Christianity there is one concerned with the second coming of the Messiah (Jesus). The Messiah is supposed to come again. Other religions seem to have no idea of a second advent of that kind. (Buddhism, however, has the idea of the second coming of

the Buddha, or the Maitreya Buddha) Accordingly, the question will be how other religions understand the second advent of the Messiah which is asserted in Christianity. Questions will include: whether the second coming of the Messiah is necessary for the formation of the new culture; what kinds of things the Messiah will do after coming; the relationships between the mission of this second advent (of the Messiah) and other religions, etc.

I have discussed the problems that must be overcome as religion pursues the practice of love, which is their original mission for the sake of establishing the new Asian culture. I feel it necessary to call into consideration such problems when dealing with the concept of the Asian Community. Next I'd like to present answers to those problems from the position of Unification Thought in a separate section under the title of "Creation of the New Asian Culture and Unification Thought"

5. Creation of the New Asian Culture and Unification Thought

Unification Thought is the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's thought, as you know. The Rev. Moon received the substance of this thought directly from God through revelation and called it Unification Thought or Godism. I will deal point by point with the content of Unification Thought, as my reply to the above-mentioned questions.

a) The True Founder of Religions Is God.

Unification Thought considers the true founder of all religions in history to be God the Creator, who is the Absolute Being. Unification Thought also declares that God chose all of the founders who established those religions on earth. Unification Thought also considers the object of faith in all religions, or the fundamental essence (entity) of the universe, to be one and the same God, though its description varies. In other words, the object of faith in each religion is God's expression of himself by changing His image so as to correspond with each specific time and region.

Unification Thought regards Jehovah in Judaism, Allah in Islam, tathata or Mahavairocanasatathagata in Buddhism, Brahman in Hinduism, Heaven in Confucianism and Ch'ondogyo, Amenominakanushinokami in Shinto, and so on, as all expressions of the same God, the Creator, which is the same as God in Christianity, only in a different form.

b) The Central Truth of the Doctrine of Each Religion
Is the Teaching of God, Who Is the Absolute Being.

Thus, the core part of the doctrines of all religions is the teaching of the same God. It is merely expressed differently so that it may fit into each regional situation.

Compassion in Buddhism, mercy in Islam, highest love in Hinduism, jen (benevolence) in Confucianism, and love in Judaism are all seen to mean the same as Christian love. And yet, the purpose for which God established each specific religion in each specific region is to awaken the people in that region from their own ignorance through a definite truth, to make them practice love, and ultimately to restore the sinful world, the result of the Fall of the human ancestors, thereby realizing a unified world of love on earth (a world of a unified culture = the Kingdom of Heaven on earth).

c) Regional Restriction of Religion in General and
the Universality of Christianity

The religions that emerged before Christ (ex. Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and so on) were intended to enlighten the people of a specific region, to lead them properly. Therefore, even though the doctrine may have been the truth, set forth by the same God, its expression was not free from regional limitations. In order to establish the world of one unified culture, God will establish a universal doctrine at the consummation of history, which means the same as to have accomplished the unification of the essences (quintessences) of the different religious doctrines. He will promote the providence of harmonizing all

existing regional religions into oneness. Under such a providence, He sent Jesus as the Messiah on earth. However, due to the faithlessness of the Israelites, Jesus was crucified without preaching all of the universal truth he intended to. Thereby, the task of realizing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth was postponed until the time of the Second Coming of the Messiah 2,000 years later.

d) Religions in the Contemporary Period as the Time
for the Second Coming, and the Appearance of the
Universal Truth

During the 2,000 year period of the postponement of the providence, God directed all religions to keep spreading through their peripheral areas to enlighten the people in an ever wider area (thanks to that, even the overlapping of religious spheres took place), and finally to enter into the time of the Second Coming. It is for this reason that most of the religions that appeared before Christ have remained until today. (However, in the Middle East region, in the place of Zoroastrianism, Islam emerged and has enlightened that region and its peripheral regions as well.) The survival of these religions until today was God's providence to connect, at the consummation of history, all of the regional religions to the Universal Truth.

Today is indeed the last days of the sinful history. As I pointed out, the world is in great confusion now, even to the degree that it can be hardly brought under control through traditional methods. In overcoming this crisis, even religion has exposed its complete powerlessness.

Today's consummation of history means the very period of the Second Coming. In other words, it means the period when the universal truth is supposed to appear. At this time, God has actually already made this truth known on earth. It is the truth that God taught the Rev. Moon through revelation. It is none other than Godism and Unification Thought. Through the Unification movement, which the Rev. Moon has been promoting up to this day, it has been proved that this truth is the universal truth that can harmonize all religions. Furthermore, it has been proved that this truth is the

key to solve all problems. I introduce the Rev. Moon's testimony concerning this matter for your information:

e) The Rev. Moon's Testimony Concerning Unification Thought

Once I finally met the existing God in a life of long prayer and meditation, and was given this absolute truth. It had an amazing content which revealed all the secrets hidden behind the entire universe, human life and history. When this content was applied to society, social problems could be solved, and when it was applied to the world, world problems could be solved. Not only that, the unsettled problems of religion and philosophy could be solved. In particular, when it was applied to a critique of the communist theory, all the fictitiousness of communism was disclosed, and at the same time a counterproposal to communism could be established. This was an unprecedented view of life, a world view, and a new view of God's providence and of history. This truth was the principle of integration which can embrace everything in oneness while preserving the special features of all the religious doctrines and philosophies. I named this thought 'Unification Thought' or 'Godism.' (Speech at "International Rally for Freedom" delivered on December 16, 1985)

6. The Unity of Religions, Love and the Position of Unification Thought

a) The Unity of Religions and Unification Thought

Next I'd like to expound upon the view of Unification Thought concerning "the unity of religions," within the theme of this symposium. In Unification Thought, unity or unification means for the subject and object to become united by loving each other centering on the common purpose or through a harmonious give and take action. Accordingly, the unity of religions means that different religions engage in give and take action harmoniously, centering on a common purpose, in other words, it means cooperation. The common purpose refers to the "realization of a good world (Kingdom of Heaven)

through the practice of love." Important here is that the subject and the object recognize each other's existence and respect each other's views. In order to establish the common purpose, I feel each religion should recognize the following points: i) that all religions were established by God, the only absolute being; and ii) that God established religions in order to lead mankind with the proper purpose (ideal) of realizing the good world based on love on earth, in other words, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

This is because God is the Absolute Being, so the purpose of creation is also absolute, and the purpose for which He established religion is absolute. Thus, the views of value (especially the view of goodness) find accord among the different religions, and the common purpose for mutual cooperation can be established without difficulty.

In other words, establishing the purpose common to all religions is possible only by recognizing God the Creator's purpose of creation.

b) Religious Love and Unification Thought

Next, I'd like to introduce the position of Unification Thought concerning the matter of love in uniting those religions. As I mentioned before, religions teach different expressions of practicing love. The practice of love in Unification Thought is "to realize God's love." God's love will be realized through the family in the form of parental, conjugal, and children's love, or in the form of family love. (This family love does not belong to the secular world.)

Then, family love will expand to the society, the nation, and the world. God's love expanded to the world level is the love of mankind in the true sense. In other words, the true love of mankind is that with which mankind will love one another in the relationships of brothers and sisters, attending God as their Parent.

Love has the following functions:

- i) First of all, God's love is a strong harmonizing and reconciling power, and at the same time a broad embracing power. Once God's love is practiced, any kind of conflict or collision

(conflict) will turn to reconciliation, and any enemy can be embraced and become a friend.

- ii) God's love is a tranquilizing power to appease resentment and hostile feelings, and also a consoling hand to all of one's sorrow, pain and loneliness.
- iii) God's love is also the source of life. It resurrects the spirit from a dried up life, and gives the injured soul hope for rebirth.
- iv) God's love is also the power of equilibration to level out all differences. When God's love is manifested, differences between the rich and the poor, racial discrimination and gaps in knowledge will all disappear.

Thus, God's love is stronger than any other force in this world, than any political power or any weapon. Only through such love (God's love) will true peace get firmly fixed, the unity of the world and the unity of cultures be accomplished, and the Kingdom of Heaven on earth be realized.

I have spoken concerning the problems arising in the course of creating (establishing) a new Asian culture, the unity of religions, and love, from the standpoint of Unification Thought.

The Asian Community and the Unity
of Religions: A Confucian Perspective

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Introduction

As far as its original intention is concerned, religion is supposed to be a communal organization aimed at enhancing the spiritual sublimation of humanity. But, it has occasionally been misinterpreted that its sole purpose is to show the way to acquire one's blessings in the life to come. This may be considered as promoting the idea that one should abandon one's possession of this life in favor of the next. We may call such an interpretation as "the religion of leaving the mundane world," which is engendered through people's experience of despair, annoyance and pains in this life.

On the other hand, there is another trend of interpretation that can be labeled "the religion of active involvement in world affairs," which is upheld by the wise and the sage after much reflection. It affirms not only the survival of one's life after death, but also the positive value of one's present life in this world. Indeed, the search for happiness and its fulfillment is a process that includes both this life and the next; it covers both time and eternity.⁽¹⁾ Man has an incessant strong will to pursue happiness.⁽²⁾ His thirst will never be quenched until he attains that goal.

Among the religions of active involvement in world affairs, Christianity, as founded in the Western world,