

Defining divinity

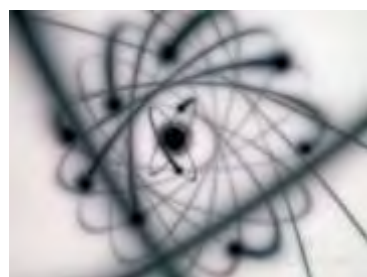
Matthew Huish

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The *Exposition of the Divine Principle* is not an easy book to read. I like to think that it was written for an audience of Korean Christian ministers born in the early twentieth century, people who were versed in theological debate, people who promoted Korean patriotism, people who were of the right age to be working with an emerging Sun Myung Moon as he expanded his own ministry in the 1960s. I'm not Korean. I was born in the late twentieth century. And the fact that I fully embrace my Catholic (and wider Christian) heritage is an anomaly in a population that is overwhelmingly illiterate Biblically and theologically. If the odds were stacked against me gleaning meaning out of this book full of technical language and challenging models of understanding reality, how much more difficult would it be for someone who is not religious nor cares too much for reading archaic volumes? Since most second generation Unificationists fit into the latter category, I worry about the relevance of the *Exposition's* text to ordinary members of the Unificationist community. The meaning needs to be unwrapped.

Take, for instance, the section about Universal Prime Energy. One of the shortest sections in the *Exposition of the Divine Principle*, this section defines the fundamental energy of God's being:



'God, the Creator of all things, is the absolute reality, eternal, self-existent and transcendent of time and space. The fundamental energy of God's being is also eternal, self-existent and absolute. It is the origin of all energies and forces that allow created beings to exist. We call this fundamental energy *universal prime energy*.'

That's it. Short, isn't it?

But why does this need to be defined? Why mention it in the first place? How is my life any better by knowing this?

I like this kind of questioning. It doesn't accept the text without questioning; a thorough cross-examination is required to stress test the principle being proposed. After all, as the introduction to the *Exposition* explains, the 'purpose of religion can be attained only when one first believes it in one's heart and then puts it into practice. However, without first understanding, beliefs do not take hold.' What is the practical application of the above-mentioned section?

When I read this section, the key differentiation being made is that between the energy of God and the person of God. All the energy we observe and experience in the universe stems from the fundamental energy of God, which the *Exposition* labels as universal prime energy, but it is not personhood of God. In a similar way, you can experience something about me from my face – my face communicates my thoughts and feelings, it represents my identity, to some it is an object of affection (even though it isn't very pretty!) – yet, my face is not me. You can take my face entirely away but my personhood remains. Every part of my body has me flowing through it, but take any part away and it isn't me any more; it is an external thing that had my essence in it. My interpretation is thus that God is not the energy, but the energy comes from God.



This distinction is important as it directs our devotion. For pantheists, such as Spinoza and Einstein, God is the energy that connects the universe. This god is not a personal god. This is a god of numbers, force, mathematics, energy; it sounds like something out of a sci-fi film, and yet it is quite an attractive idea. Perhaps its popularity rests with the impersonal nature of this god; this god doesn't care about suffering or injustice, because the universe is impartial. You don't need to worry about good and evil, because everything is just entropy. (Sort of.) But if one worships the god of energy, one misses the personality of the God who created the universe, the person behind the energy. If someone were to worship my face or my body – as incredulous as that might sound to those who know how ordinary my physical features are – they would be objectifying me, missing the reality of the person beneath the skin. I don't want to be worshipped for my external appearance, or for what I do, but for who I am.

And God is the same. What the *Exposition of the Divine Principle* is getting at is that God has a heart and God wants to be worshipped not because of God's energy, of God's power or greatness, or even because

of what God does; God wants to be loved because God is God. God's heart yearns to experience the joy of sharing love with an object partner, and when we choose to voluntarily engage with God we can begin loving each other in a 2-way relationship. The energy of the universe doesn't choose to relate with me, it just does, and it has no motivation or purpose behind doing so. The creator of the universe, the one God, does have a motivation and a purpose, and so this defines an original intended meaning for my life.

That is huge.



*'Education is not the filling of a pail
but the lighting of a fire'*
- W. B. Yeats

The consequences of accepting this understanding could transform everything in one's life. And yet this understanding is hard to get at when the text is rather opaque and impenetrable. But then most holy scriptures are like this. They all need interpretation and guidance. The reason that communities have priests, rabbis, imams, yogis, teachers, monks, nuns, monastic ascetics and elders is that those who are old enough to have had the wisdom of scripture unlocked to them by the previous generation will be able to then pass on such understanding to the next. What we need, then, is an emergence of teachers in our Unificationist community who can effectively take the rich content of our teachings, which may be unpalatable to many, and prepare them so that they are digestible. I'm afraid that such educators are few and far between, and

those we have are not supported enough. Unless we choose to prioritise education and empower those with the ability to equip the next generation to inherit God's word and make it meaningful to their everyday lives.

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