

## Harvey Cox Speaks and Feasts at the Unification Theological Seminary

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*Professor Harvey Cox dubs Warren Lewis 'Fool of the Year' highlighting 'Feast of Fools Festivities' following his lecture at UTS.*

On Sunday, April 24, the Unification Theological Seminary had the pleasure of hosting Professor Harvey Cox, widely known Harvard theologian. Dr. Cox, invited to the seminary by Dr. Lewis, became famous after the publication of his theological best seller *The Secular City* (1965) and is the author of numerous books and articles.

Dr. Lewis has called Harvey Cox the man who always writes the right books at the right time; and it is true that his books, e.g. *The Secular City*, *The Feast of Fools* (1970), and *The Seduction of the Spirit* (1973) among others mark major steps in the development of contemporary theology. Yet it is always difficult to say whether he creates them himself. But while the theological world still discusses the "death of God," the "secular city," the theology of festivity or autobiographical theology, the man who has been called theology's profoundest dilettante has already moved on to new fields of interest. This makes Cox one of the key figures for anyone who attempts to understand the development of American theology in the last twenty years.

Dr. Cox, in his opening remarks, noted that he considered it a significant event that he as a professor of the oldest American seminary came to speak at one of the newest. Recapitulating the development of Harvard Divinity School as context for his own theology, Dr. Cox noted that his own stimulus for theology derived at least as much from human relationships as from professional theological literature. In this way, Professor Cox integrated his development with that of Harvard Divinity School.

Harvard's development in the last 25 years has been from Protestantism to religious pluralism, according to Dr. Cox, and has derived from successive waves of students: First Catholics following Vatican II, then successively practitioners of world religions, Blacks, Jews, women, evangelicals and cults.

Dr. Cox noted each wave has represented for him a kind of theological "challenge and response" as his method has been "constantly to put myself in situations where theologians would not find themselves." A Baptist from Malvern, Pa., he has taken part in a Papal commission, lived in a Roxbury district of Boston during the sixties for seven years, and most recently has spent summers instructing at a Buddhist institute for westerners in Colorado.

While comfortable in and lauding a pluralistic setting, Dr. Cox, nonetheless, warned against a "too easy tolerance" trivializing important differences among traditions. Critical of "brotherhoodisms" emphasizing that all roads lead to the same basic truth, Cox called for a theory of unification that "accepts without relativizing" other traditions. He pointed out further that Christianity can have no global pretensions prior to reconciliation with Judaism.

In a lively question and answer period after his speech, Cox developed his contention that mass media and the advertising industry as presently constituted represents the most perverse counter-religion of our time as well as several personal articles of faith. In depicting Jesus as the one who opened the covenant of promise to those formerly not eligible, Cox emphasized his "totally and completely human" qualities. He termed God "precisely one who is present more than ever dreamed" and stressed training oneself to be aware of God's presence in ordinary, everyday relationships.

Although there were many more questions, because Dr. Cox's time was limited, they had to be cut short, and he was invited to a very unusual lunch: knowing his celebration of the festive, seminarians had prepared a gala feast of fools. Greeted at the dining room door by an exuberant court jester (Mike Jones) Professor Cox was crowned "Harvey of Cox," adorned in royal robe, given the scepter and lifted via divan to the head table for the festivities which featured skits, a Korean meal and the official announcement by Professor Cox of Warren Lewis as "Fool of the Year."

Following the feast, the entourage adjourned to the student lounge for another period of questions and answers before Dr. Cox's departure. Promising to return soon, Dr. Cox impressed the seminary both as a theologian and as a man.