

## History of the Unification Theological Seminary

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*Professor Boslooper leads faculty and guests in "The Star-Spangled Banner." In rear, Rev. and Mrs. Moon. Foreground, left to right: Academic Dean Therese Stewart, Prof. Matczak, Dr. Kim, Dr. Elmo*

The May issue of the magazine *Christianity and Crisis* carried the response of twelve religious thinkers to the question, "Whatever happened to Theology?" All agreed that theology is in the throes of serious decline. Rosemary Reuther, a liberal Roman Catholic thinker, said, "The pioneering edge of thought will come not from traditional institutions, but from places on the edge with little prestige." Harvey Cox of Harvard University commented, "Theology is being done today in curious places under unusual sponsorship... unnoticed by those who read only the right journals." History will judge the accuracy of these observations.

If today's date were September 20, 2001, or even 1985, it would be considerably easier to recount the history of this seminary. Its history to date is brief if age is reckoned from the day last October when Reverend Moon announced his plan to begin a seminary. But in fact what we might call the "prenatal" history of the seminary brings us back at least to 1954, when in a small dwelling in Seoul, Korea, the founder of our seminary gathered together five trusted disciples and drew up the outline for an organization today known as the Unification Church International. Today there are daughter churches in 120 nations.

The history of the seminary cannot be separated from the history of that Church. A deep desire of Reverend Moon from the earliest years of his ministry was to build a university; to find learned men who would not be confounded that God should continue His revelation to men in the 20th century, men who could understand his message which, in unlocking many of the cryptic meanings of the Bible, revealed God's hope and plan for the unification of mankind in these critical times.

This dream of Reverend Moon included working with these learned men to raise up young men and women who could renew their own lives, revive their nation, and rebuild a rapidly deteriorating world by centering on the will and heart of God.

As early as 1957 Reverend Moon sent out pairs of missionaries to villages throughout Korea in a pioneer witnessing and training effort. Out of this came the establishment of 30 new churches. He spoke to his followers of God's grief resulting from man's alienation from Him, of the deeper cause of man's inhumanity to his fellow man, and he spoke of the return of all men to God. All through this time Reverend Moon worked to build a foundation on which he could prepare young men and women who would be able to change the course of history.

In 1959 Reverend Moon sent missionaries to Japan and to the United States; two of these missionaries are with us today in the seminary. Dr. Young Oon Kim, now professor of systematic theology and Unification Theology, began her mission in America in Eugene, Oregon. Through her tireless effort she gathered a following during her two years there, then continued her work in California where the Church was incorporated. In 1965 she established the national headquarters in Washington, D.C. Mr. David Kim, the acting president of the Unification Theological Seminary, is the only living member of that small group surrounding Reverend Moon at the Church's inauguration in 1954. Mr. Kim, too, has worked in various cities throughout America, especially in the West.

In 1965 Reverend Moon traveled throughout the United States, the first of 40 nations which he visited and in which he blessed certain plots of ground as a condition for the eventual restoration of each of these nations to God. On that tour ten years ago he spoke again of the need to establish a university in which to prepare men and women to communicate with leaders in every field, to talk with theologians, with economists and politicians, with educators and statesmen. His desire was to share with them and with others through them, the vision of a new world, and the way to build it which he had discovered through his search of the Scriptures and his deep prayer.



Since 1971 Reverend Moon has worked primarily in the United States, bringing to America hundreds of young men and women from many nations of Europe and Asia, giving them and their American brothers and sisters personal direction for the revitalization of Christianity in America. His three Day of Hope tours in 1972, 1973, 1974 brought Rev. Moon to every major city in the United States.

It may have been the problems and needs common to those cities which motivated his decision to establish the long-awaited seminary without further delay. In October 1974, Rev. Moon spoke with Mr. Kim and Mr. Warder about beginning the seminary in Barrytown. The Church had purchased this facility and its 260-acre estate less than a year before from the Christian Brothers.

Mr. Warder immediately began planning. He set up an office, promptly recruited two expert librarians to begin the monumental task of building a library, prepared legal papers, acquired information and assistance from the New York Office of Education and the American Association of Theological Schools, prepared literature, and began the complex process of recruiting faculty members.

I was privileged to join the seminary staff in March of this year just in time to help prepare the detailed application for a charter from the Board of Regents of the State of New York, and to assist in the selection of faculty. Mr. Warder and I interviewed many professors, and numerous telephone calls and letters came from all over the nation in reply to advertisements in professional journals.

A frequent question was, "Are you really opening a seminary?" They were amazed at our project. Today many seminaries are closing or consolidating as secularism and financial crises erode spiritual and physical resources.

After diligent examination of a number of persons with outstanding backgrounds, several exceptional candidates were appointed to the faculty in June by Reverend Moon. The curriculum was further developed in a series of faculty meetings during the summer, additional staff positions were assigned, courses were designed, and offices, classrooms and dormitory rooms were prepared. Nearly 400 applications for admission to the program were received and examined. Out of these 56 top quality students from nine nations were chosen. On September 15 they arrived, and with them all the elements were combined. Today a seminary -- indeed a university -- is born.

The personal histories of students, faculty, administration, staff, and -- in some sense the citizens of this community became interwoven with the history of this seminary. We are challenged to begin a history of the revitalization of theology and theological education in America. In response to those two thinkers mentioned earlier who dealt so honestly with the question, "Whatever happened to theology?" we are challenged today to fulfill their prediction to provide the "pioneer edge of thought" for a new depth and direction for theology in America and in the world.