

Dr. Paul Swanson

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We first met Dr. Paul Swanson in the early 1980's when Dr. Jenkins began a dialog with theologians in Chicago called the "Pastoral Research Association." At the time, Dr. Swanson was a professor of Marriage and Family Counseling at the Lutheran Theological Union at the University of Chicago. I first met Dr. Swanson when I did my seminary internship with Dr. Jenkins in Chicago during the summer of 1984. Dr. Swanson is really a simple and kind human being, but he holds a wealth of theological knowledge and as a result was always challenging our belief systems—not attacking, but challenging. I truly believe that because of these challenges we have all become better theologians. Yesterday my wife and I went to worship with him and his beautiful wife Cordie at their home church in Indiana. During the service I was able to stand up and introduce myself and mention that we were guests of the Swansons, whom we have known and fellowshiped with for over 30 years.

Over the thirty plus years that we have fellowshiped with Dr. Swanson, he has participated in just about every event you can imagine. The ICC Conferences in Korea, the various theological conferences that have been held all over America, the more personal theological conferences at UTS, the CAUSA and American Leadership Conferences, the True Family Values Banquets in Chicago and lastly, the monthly American Clergy Leadership Conferences in Chicago. There are far too many memories to put down on paper here, but I will try and reflect on some of the most significant.

Dr. Swanson grew up in Michigan. His Father was a Lutheran minister who was responsible for admitting the first African-American student into a Lutheran Seminary in America. His older brother became a Navy Chaplain. Dr. Swanson did his graduate work at Andover – Newton School at Boston College, where a surgeon introduced him to his daughter who six months later became his fiancée and then his wife Cordelia. That was about sixty years ago.

I remember walking down to the Hudson River with Dr. Swanson and another minister when they came for one of the famous "White Room" theological seminars at UTS in 1983. I remember this because the other minister nearly passed out from a heart attack during our walk on Father's Trail. Dr. Swanson would never just accept the Principle, hook, line and sinker. He would always ask probing questions and demand logical answers. I always felt that Dr. Swanson had a deep personal love and respect for Jesus—probably much more than many Unification members.

In 1984, I met him at the Lutheran School of Theology Christmas Party. While we were sitting and drinking some Christian eggnog, the School president came by and Dr. Swanson introduced me to him. It was still the time of the "Moonies" and he lambasted me for being in that weird cult which he had once encountered on the Berkeley Campus at the University of California. Until this day, Dr. Swanson still apologizes for the incredibly rude and inappropriate behavior of his school president.

Dr. Swanson taught at the Lutheran School of Theology for over twenty years. Eventually he would take early retirement, in part because of the ungodly attitudes that the newer students were taking. I remember especially how turned off he was by all the homosexual oriented texts in his own Lutheran book store.

Dr. and Mrs. Swanson adopted two children who have grown to be very successful adults. John has gone into business and Roseann is in the medical field. Cordie's email address is "Catlady of the Dunes" (they live near the Indiana Dunes State Lakefront). If there is ever an injured, sick or abandoned cat anywhere in Northern Indiana, the animal is deposited on Cordie's doorstep, where it is assured of being well taken care of. My children loved to visit, because at one time they had 37 cats in every shape, size and denomination. One time when I visited, Cordie was a few hours away at Michigan State University, where she had taken one of the cats for open heart surgery. In retirement they are down to 7 cats and a beautiful 13 year old Weimaraner.

One result of all this cat-sitting is that it has been very difficult to ever have Cordie leave home for very long. However, several years ago when True Father came to speak at a Banquet, we awarded Dr. Swanson the True Family Values Award and Cordie was at the banquet hall early in order to surprise him. The only problem was that since they were sitting up in front, Cordie was getting angry at Father, because he kept hitting Peter Kim during the translation.

At another time, I remember Dr. Swanson trying to follow Father's speech in the speech booklet. He kept flipping through the pages, trying to find the translation of what Father was saying. Of course Father's words were not in the booklet.

During Father's 50 city tour in 2001, Dr. Swanson and I went up to hear Father speak in Milwaukee. By then, Father was only reading the first couple of pages of his speech, before moving into an

extemporaneous sermon. After about three hours, Dr. Swanson got up and left. I followed him out of the room to see if everything was alright. When I asked, he stated that “if Jesus had spoken that long he would have gotten up and left.” As a Lutheran, Dr. Swanson would never preach for more than twenty minutes (usually more like eleven) and the entire service would never last more than one hour. When we would invite him to give a prayer he would always come with the prayer neatly typed out.

In Chicago we have been having a monthly prayer breakfast for the past 15 years. Until most recently, Dr. Swanson had attended roughly 95% of these breakfasts. This means he would either drive in from Northern Indiana or take a train to the University of Chicago where someone would pick him up. Most often, because of the nature of Chicago’s ministers, Dr. Swanson would be the only main-line white minister in attendance. Given his family history, he never had a problem with this, but years ago he commented that if we really wanted to change the world and be a significant influence in the religious make up of America, we had better expand to more mainline churches.

Yesterday, Ilse and I visited Dr. and Mrs. Swanson. He was about to join us for the Holy Ground Ceremony in Chicago, but some people felt that standing in the hot sun for an hour after a three hour prayer breakfast might be a little too much for an 86 year old gentleman. So, Dr. Swanson invited us to worship with him the next Sunday. We drove about two hours to Indiana to listen to their new Indian Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dr. Lloyd A. Sewdin. He delivered an excellent sermon and thus, I am including it as the conclusion to this article.

Don’t stay trapped in your problems—pray”
God needs us to keep in touch.
We need to pray
We need God
A prayer-less person doesn’t think he needs God
Our prayer is to God—not to man
Pray to God—for whatever you need
Where ever you emptiness is, there will be your answer
You must be as an empty vessel
If Peter didn’t pray—God wouldn’t have gotten him out of jail
Samson prayed—God, give me a second chance
Hezekiah prayed—and God gave him another 15 years to live
Hagar prayed—and God found her and Ishmael a place to live
Hana prayed and God allowed her to give birth
Solicit others to pray for you
The value of family participation
We must pray for one another
After you use your brain, skills and training
It is in the hands of God
Sometimes, our prayer request is not grant it
If our request is wrong
If the timing is wrong
If the prayer is wrong
If the request and timing are right
God will grant our prayer

See How They Love One Another

Dr. Paul R. Swanson
Professor Emeritus, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

As I reflect upon the road that you have taken and upon my experience as a Lutheran pastor and theologian walking that road with you, it takes me back to the 1980s, when a small group of pastors and theologians began to meet monthly for dialogue. Through your vision and support, we began to realize that we held more in common than any of the theological positions that separated us. I recall later conferences in Chicago and Washington, DC, which brought together those with similar feelings. Sometime later, you made it possible to gather together others like us from the many regions of the United States. A conference was held in the Bahamas, and much of the time was spent in small groups. Although our biases initially distanced us, slowly but surely we began to feel less threatened and began to listen to each other and communicate more constructively, and with greater respect for each other. As each of us started to feel understood, we experienced ourselves coming more closely together as persons. We began to feel that it was good for us to be there, coupled with the desire to meet together more often. The more I participated, the more I felt the barriers between us breaking down. What really started to come through to me, and which was closely related to my values and goals as a pastoral theologian teaching family counseling in a Lutheran seminary and as a marriage and family therapist supervising the

clinical counseling of pastors in a Doctor of Ministry Program in Marriage and Family Counseling, was your strong emphasis on the unity of the family as an essential educational institution for future life. Later, Mrs. Moon began to speak about love as the manna for a life of sacrificial service, both for individuals and as a nation under God.

What drew me into the fellowship and work of the American Clergy Leadership Conference is the love that I have experienced from those you have taught, which seems to radiate directly from the heart of Reverend Moon. It is a living example of the New Testament statement and dictum: 'see how they love one another.'

As the movement grew and began to reach a more diverse group of pastors and religious leaders, three high points have stayed with me. The first of these was a ceremony of Marriage Blessing in Madison Square Garden, in which I was called upon to give a prayerful statement as to the principles of marriage as seen by mainline Protestant denominations, even as representatives of other religious faith groups brought their prayerful statements and wishes with respect to marriage. A second highpoint was the conference in Moscow meant to bring together the youth and future leaders of three world powers that hitherto remained apart—Russia, China and the United States. As I walked off the stage, arm-in-arm with professors from Russia and India, my heart was beating a heavy refrain to a worldwide message and witness.

The third highpoint was the experience and mission at the 38th parallel in Korea. Here we felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to pray for our brothers and sisters both in North as well as South Korea that they may find unity and peace. Our prayers were accompanied by peace doves, even as we heard in the distance the helicopters and guns in the target practice of the North Koreans.

Yes, these are the experiences which you, Reverend Moon, have envisioned and to a large degree made possible to ever enlighten and broaden the vision of Jesus' disciples as well as those of the East and West who may pray to the one God and Father of us all in a different names.