

Being at the Unification Theological Seminary

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Here is an excerpt from my chapter on being at the seminary. I will have the full chapter posted this week with the others at the Facebook Page "Book of Following SMM"

"I am incredibly grateful for the two years I spent at the seminary. In some ways they were two of the best two years of my life. It was a time to learn what others had believed and taught about the existence of God and just how the different teachings of Christianity had developed and changed over history. It was a time to really examine the teachings of the Divine Principle and see how they measured up. It was time to reflect. It was a time to try to learn about and meet God.

I still, after all these years, consider my time at the seminary a wonderful blessing.

I had never actually thought that I would return to Barrytown, for I honestly had felt that I was not pure enough or holy enough to attend the seminary. For many, many months my daily survival struggles with satan, police, hostile people, and parking lots of volcanic temperatures had limited my world view.

I had been living one day at a time. My days were broken down into two hour segments of rushing to make the goals I had set for raising money with flowers or candy.

When I first arrived at the seminary, I placed my one suitcase in the lobby downstairs and I went up to the chapel.

Even now as I write this over twenty years later I can almost feel what I felt when I went to the chapel; it was such a warm feeling and so substantial that it was almost physical. I felt embraced by God. It was almost like I had come back to his living room and He was so happy to see me. I know that sounds silly, but it's true -- it was what I felt. The really amazing thing was that as soon as I started praying, I immediately remembered that night so many months before when it seemed that I felt His Heart for a moment, stumbled out of the chapel, and was reduced to tears in the snow outside.

It was like God was telling me now that even He remembered that moment as something special, and He was happy that I was back in Barrytown. It's moments like these that kept me in the Church, that kept me believing in Reverend Moon. I know that many people may think this sounds silly or self-delusional. I know that people who have really had religious experiences know what I mean.

There's been many times, I must admit, that I have been so frustrated by these experiences later. If I had never had such experiences, it would have been so easy so many times in the last twenty plus years to leave Unification Church, and to leave the issue of "who" SMM is completely up to God, and go live my own life. But the fact that these various religious moments have been so incredibly real haunts me, and makes me a prisoner of my own conscience.

Then another thing happened that I will never forget. When I went downstairs to get my suitcase there were people sitting in the student lounge reading newspapers and magazines. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't believe it! How could church members be wasting time like this!

Thus began two years of learning that God loves each and every one of us, and not because we work 12 to 16 hours a day in parking lots begging for money...

...Perhaps the most amazing thing about the seminary that SMM had established was that the seminary classes were about other religions. We had an ordained Jewish Rabbi teaching Old Testament studies, an ordained Lutheran teaching New Testament studies, a Catholic Priest from Fordham teaching us philosophy, a licensed psychologist teaching psychology, and a Greek Orthodox and a wild liberal Unitarian from Harvard teaching church history. The only Unification Church member of the faculty was Dr. Young Oon Kim, a very early member who had been one of the three missionaries that Father had first sent to the United States, and she had been a theology professor at a Presbyterian university in Korea before she had met Father. Even then, the main course she taught was World Religions.

That's the confidence that SMM had in his own teachings. He wanted his own followers to study all the other religions of the world. He wanted us to study all the angles, all the teachings, all the religious philosophies of all of history -- and he was sure that he would prove that he was right, that what he was teaching was indeed from God."