

Richard Rubenstein Honored with Honorary Doctorate by Unification Theological Seminary

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October 24, 2013



Dr. Richard L. Rubenstein, Former president of Bridgeport University

Dr. Richard L. Rubenstein, a distinguished professor of religion at Florida State University and the former president of Bridgeport University was awarded an honorary doctorate for his lifetime contributions to scholarship and to public service by the Unification Theological Seminary at 4 W. 43rd St. in New York City on Oct. 21, 2013. Dr. Rubenstein had been a close friend of Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon since 1976 and had defended the Unification Church and the Founders of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) for nearly 40 years. He told the audience of scholars and students that knowing Rev. Moon and working with him had been one of the most “formative experiences” of his life.

In introductory remarks by Dr. Kathy Winings, Vice President for Academic Affairs, at UTS, the audience learned that Richard Lowell Rubenstein was a native of New York who gained his undergraduate education at the University of Cincinnati, his Master’s Degree of Hebrew Literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, his Master’s Degree of Sacred Theology from the Harvard Divinity School as well as a PhD from the Harvard Graduate School of the Arts and Sciences. Dr. Rubenstein distinguished himself as a subject expert on the Holocaust, Jewish-Christian relations and the sociology of religions. He made his mark as a theologian and historian with the publication of *After Auschwitz* in the 1960’s, as well as *My Brother Paul*, *Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, and numerous other titles.

In 1982, Dr. Rubenstein was invited to become a founding member of the editorial advising board of *The Washington Times*. He says, “Rev. Moon felt a conservative voice was needed in what was the capital of the free world at the time...he finally said, ‘I’m going to create a newspaper.’ And he did.” Dr. Rubenstein continues, “Today it is a respected, high-level newspaper; certainly one of the best conservative newspapers in the country. I realized that it had established itself when *The New York Times* started to quote from them.”

Additionally, Dr. Rubenstein shares about a visit he made to Rev. Moon while he was at Danbury federal correctional institution in Danbury, CT. “Like others that visited him there, I was struck by his quiet dignity and his good humor,” he says. He asserts that he thought the government’s case against Rev.

Moon was both “flawed and politically-motivated.” Even though the charges could have been thrown out if Rev. Moon returned to Korea, Dr. Rubenstein explains that Rev. Moon remained to serve out his term because “he [Rev. Moon] knew that America was important to his [providential] work and he was willing to pay whatever price was involved in doing it.” Dr. Rubenstein adds admiringly, “You have to respect a man who has such a conviction and is willing to follow that conviction.”

“I will never forget one event in particular,” continues Dr. Rubenstein in testimony about Rev. Moon and his visit to Moscow in 1990. “We were in Moscow and Rev. Moon sent word inviting me to accompany him to the Kremlin to meet with Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Soviet Union. Naturally, I went along.” He says, “It was really something to be there because what I saw was the emotional interchange between the two men. You could see that they liked each other...How many American professors get to visit the Kremlin under circumstances like that?”

Dr. Rubenstein concludes his testimony with a brief word about the theology of the Unification Church and Rev. Moon’s self-understanding. Although the latter is based upon Rev. Moon’s claim that he was tasked to complete Jesus’ mission by Jesus himself, Dr. Rubenstein admits that it is a claim that non-believers, including him, can find difficult to understand. Dr. Rubenstein then adds: “Claims of divine revelation, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim, invariably seem strange to outsiders. Nevertheless, they provide the motivating energy and power, which is the basis of which religious tradition is energized. Moreover, Rev. Moon and his follower have provided a theological elaboration of their understanding of the classic themes of biblical theology--Creation, the Fall, and Restoration. All of these are based on Rev. Moon’s revelatory experiences.” So, without Rev. Moon’s revelatory experience, none of this — the awarding and acceptance of the honorary degree—would have happened, Dr. Rubenstein states. He then says, “The real question isn’t ‘Is it true or false?’ The real question is ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ And the fruits of Rev. Moon’s revelatory experience are to be held all around. So, for me, certainly one of the most important events of my life is meeting and coming to know Rev. Moon and to have found a basis for a relationship to him, with which I could be both true to him and true to myself.”