

My Dream Concerning Seminary Education

Young Oon Kim
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Some years ago, I urged Reverend Moon to start a seminary for the training of our future leaders. At first there was no way to see that dream realized but we never gave up hope. So you can imagine how happy we were with the purchase of Barrytown (1974) and the actual establishment of Unification Theological Seminary (1975). But there is more to a seminary than buildings, textbooks, the hiring of professors and selection of students. As necessary as all these are, even more important is the purpose we have and the spirit we seek to create.

In my opinion, there is no need for another theological seminary like those the traditional churches now have. What value would there be in duplicating Harvard, Union, Chicago or Princeton? We must provide something different, something extra, a superior education for a new way of life.

To help you to understand what our seminary's function should be, could be and must be, let me briefly remind you of what education has been in the past.



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Because of the numerous barbarian invasions and the fall of the Roman Empire, the church was forced to become a school teacher. In the Dark Ages there was nothing but the church available to keep the light of learning from being extinguished. Therefore in the monasteries or attached to the cathedrals, schools were set up to preserve the wisdom of the past and transmit it to the younger generation. These schools were often only modest creations but they provided the foundation for what was to follow.

As Christians, men of the Middle Ages believed that one should "love thy God...with all thy mind" like Jesus taught. Religion involves what you think as much as how you pray. So the schools were connected with the church, financed by the church and usually staffed by clergymen. In addition to such external characteristics of medieval schooling, education even in the humanities was built upon a spiritual foundation and was designed to realize a spiritual quality of life. Until our own time the motto of Harvard University was "For Christ and His Church."

Something similar could be said of the great and much more ancient universities of Europe: Oxford and Cambridge in England, Heidelberg in Germany, Salamanca in Spain, or the University of Paris. They were all begun for religious reasons.

In the United States too, most of the colleges and universities were founded by the churches. Congregationalists started Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and others. Baptists started Brown University in Rhode Island and the University of Chicago. Episcopalians started Columbia. Presbyterians organized Princeton. Methodists founded Wesleyan Colleges in Connecticut and Iowa, American University in Washington, D.C., and Boston University. So American education like European education has religious roots.

There is no need to spend much time showing how secular education has become in the 20th century. Very little of the religious spirit which created the colleges and universities still survives in the average classroom today. However, as soon as the spiritual underpinning of education disappeared, the schools found themselves in trouble. There was no overall guiding purpose which bound faculty members to each other or which united the students. Without a religious philosophy of life the young people who enrolled in colleges were only interested in getting their diploma as easily as possible, getting passing grades by whatever methods were convenient, and getting out of school quickly. At best students learned facts but they were deprived of a noble purpose for putting the facts to good use.

Today our institutions of higher education spend more money than ever before. They fill the students with more information and graduate more Ph.D.'s. Yet we have fewer and fewer well-integrated, creative or

noble human beings as a result. As many critics have pointed out, professors are better able to pour out information than to instill wisdom. For all our talent, energy and lavish outlay of money, we seem to be producing more unhappy families and miserable individuals. The quality of men and women turned out by our education factories, as they have been called, is not superior to that of the past and often inferior. What went wrong? How can we change the situation? What should our role be as future Unification Church leaders?

In the Far East, several wise men recognized the flaws in Western education. While they granted the scientific and industrial superiority of Europe and America, these Asian sages doubted the lasting value of a soul-less education. If a man is to be fully human and a child of God, he must do more than learn how to use a can opener, or drive a car or read x-ray plates. Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo in India, for example, insisted on the need for spiritual training as well as technical education.



Dr. Young Oon Kim with Reverend Moon

Gandhi stressed the value of the traditional Hindu ashram as a model for character-building education. Young people will grow morally, spiritually and socially if they live in close contact with a great teacher. By being with him, living with him as well as hearing what he says, students can develop their latent abilities and mature properly. According to Gandhi, the spiritual environment of an ashram was far more useful than big buildings, modern classrooms and the latest educational techniques. Above everything else, he insisted upon the centrality of spiritual training and moral development.

Unfortunately, in Gandhi's case, his educational philosophy was anti-scientific and anti-industrial. Quite romantically and unrealistically, he extolled the age of the spinning wheel and oxcart. That sort of return to the past was impossible, as Nehru quickly recognized.

With Tagore and Aurobindo, however, there was far greater appreciation for Western methods and inventions, combined with devotion to man's essential spiritual nature. Aurobindo had won fame as a fiery Indian nationalist but at the height of his popularity he gave up politics and started an ashram where he lived until his death. When asked why he abandoned public life and his promising career as an Indian freedom fighter, he replied that he wanted to work out an educational model for the Indian people to build a great nation once they had won their political rights. For Aurobindo, a man's freedom is only a necessary means to the full flowering of his abilities.

These illustrations from India may seem quite irrelevant in our situation. But let me remind you that probably part of the popularity of Indian religion on American campuses these days comes from the fact that Hindu and Buddhist spirituality satisfies a need which students recognize — a deep need unsatisfied by secular education.

So far we have looked at the historical background of Western education and mentioned briefly some of its Asian critics. Both factors are useful as we look at our own educational efforts. Where are we going? What resources must we employ to pioneer adequate education for our movement?

First, let me emphasize the crucial importance of seminary training as an intellectual discipline. Our faculty are experts in their specific fields. They offer you what you should know and must learn about Old Testament history and literature, New Testament exegesis and criticism, church history, the development of Christian doctrine, religious education, philosophy and ethics. No seminary in America has ever been started with such a capable faculty, I've been told. So you have expert professors, an adequate library and a suitable place to stay. Certainly, how much you learn will determine how effective you can be as tomorrow's leaders. You will not be a good spokesman for Divine Principle or even truly Christian if you fail to love God with all your mind.

Having said this, I must insist on something even more important. I want you to have an epoch-making experience in your life meeting the living God face to face, a heart warming experience of the truth of Divine Principle. This kind of experience will be the fountain for a passionate desire to share God's love and truth with others. When you go out from this seminary, you should be burning inside with missionary zeal. This is far more vital for the seminarian than book learning. As you look around at the Christian

world, you see declining churches, empty pews, spiritless laymen and discouraged clergy. The conventional churches are not ailing because they lack seminaries, libraries, buildings, money or sophisticated theologies. They are sick for lack of a lasting spiritual fervor.

Christianity cannot be restored and the Kingdom of Heaven cannot appear on earth because you know all about the doctrines of Augustine and John Calvin, or because you have read Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann, or because you can tell the difference between form criticism and source criticism. Only through spiritual development based on direct confrontation with God and only through your magnetic personal quality can you become instruments God can use. As John Wesley would say, you have to get your “heart strangely warmed” and keep it warm. In the last analysis, Unification Theological Seminary will succeed or stumble on the basis of its spiritual atmosphere.

I hope seminary will be for you the most memorable time in your lives, providing you with the dynamic vision and inner resources by which you can continually be inspired in the years to come. Seminary can be and should be not only a fountain of knowledge but also the source of lasting joy and inspiration. Use this time to seek truth and rededicate yourselves to noble goals. Become bosom friends with your fellow students. Share your hopes and dreams. Sustain and strengthen each other in your times of doubt or difficulty. When you create a spiritual and intellectual atmosphere around you, you will experience great joy and be filled with dynamic power. That is the kingdom you can have now and create for others wherever you go even when you have to struggle alone.

The eagerness to help others, a genuine concern for people, a sensitivity to others’ needs and a readiness to serve others — these are the ingredients which create a magnetic personality. All these are derived from one’s deep experience with God and passionate love for Him. If you really feel what Albert Schweitzer calls “reverence for life” and if you have a burning desire to love others, you will have discovered the secret of radiant living. If you can cultivate that kind of faith, then God can entrust you with any kind of mission.

If we were able to graduate 50 such dynamic leaders from our seminary, think of the effect they would have on our movement. Let me conclude with a few words about the need for magnetic leadership on the local level. Each center should be a close-knit, caring, growing and vital family built around a spiritual guide as well as an organizational leader. As you all must be well aware, the Abel-Cain model can easily be misused and often has been to foster an egoistical authoritarianism. When people lack inner spiritual power, they resort to external things like their titles, positions or regulations in order to exercise influence. They try to force obedience rather than convincing people to cooperate voluntarily. Such coercive methods only arouse resentment and sooner or later make the leader despised rather than respected.

The ideal leader should never think of himself as the dictator. Instead the ideal leader should function as a wise, considerate and loving parent. Sensitive to his children’s needs, providing them with intellectual and spiritual food, inspiring them to grow in the warmth of his affection, the leader serves as a father and mother figure for the center members. Can you imagine what that kind of leadership could do for our movement? Can’t you see what value you would be for God if you became that kind of leader?

In Korea, we have a proverb: “If you plan for your life for one year, plant grain; if you plan for your life for 10 years, plant fruit trees. But if you plan for 100 years, then plant people.”

Dr. Young Oon Kim (1914–1989) was a leading theologian of the Unification Church and its first missionary to the United States, arriving in 1959. She incorporated the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSA-UWC) in 1961. From 1975-1988, she was Professor of Systematic Theology at Unification Theological Seminary and the first Unificationist on its faculty. Prior to joining the Unification Church, she was a professor of New Testament, Church History and Comparative Religion at Ehwa Women’s University in Seoul.