

## UTS hosted its Second Theologians' Conference on Unification Theology

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On April 14 through 16, Unification Theological Seminary hosted its Second Theologians' Conference on Unification Theology. Coordinated by Dr. Darrol Bryant of the University of Waterloo, Ontario, this two-day conference focused on position papers developed by some of the visiting theologians as a result of the First Conference in February. Ten North American theologians and fifteen seminarians took part in the discussions.

At the February conference, the visiting theologians were impressed by the comprehensiveness and versatility of the Divine Principle. For the April conference, papers were prepared by four of the returning theologians as the focus for discussion, as Darrol Bryant noted, "to continue a conversation, to further dialogue already begun."

The theologians arrived at the Seminary late Thursday, April 14, the first working session beginning after breakfast Friday morning. The topic of prayer was introduced as a starting point with group discussion on the nature and purpose of prayer and the question, "To whom do we pray?" The question arose as to the significance of praying "in the name of" someone, particularly Jesus. It became clear that among the various Christian traditions represented by guest theologians, opinion differed as to the nature of mediation in prayer. One seminarian remarked that in perfection man will speak with God directly, without mediation.

Henry Vander Goot (Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan) then presented his paper, "The Humanity

of God and Divinity of Man: Reflections on Unification's Theology of Creation." The paper dealt with the relationship between God's sovereignty over creation and His reflection in creation. Dr. Vander Goot explored the issues ranging from the doctrine of creation/restoration as understood in Reformed Calvinist tradition and the idea of the duality of God's nature on the analogy of the created order in Unification Theology. The central Calvinist concern for the majesty of God and the "absolute void between God and what He calls into being" was placed in perspective as one of many Christian understandings. The group recognized that Unification Theology bridges the creation/emanation dilemma, and the question of whether both the integrity of God and the divinization of creation could be maintained consistently was left to further speculation.

During lunch, as at all meals, the theologians ate in the common Seminary dining room and engaged students on a wide variety of topics. In Friday afternoon's session Elizabeth Clark (Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Va.) presented a paper, "Women in the Theology of the Unification Church." Examining Unification Theology from a feminist viewpoint, Dr. Clark explored several possible implications of Unification Theology. Reacting to a 2,000-year-old tradition of the "denigration of women" in Christian society, Dr. Clark made it clear that the injustice against women which historically has been associated with Christianity must be rectified for complete religious renewal to take place. At the same time, Dr. Clark was impressed by Unification Theology's emphasis on individual perfection for both men and women and by the leadership roles which women do take in Unification Church. She expressed hope that Unification Theology would not fall into the prejudice which has plagued other religious traditions.

Friday evening focused on Rod Sawatsky (University of Waterloo, Ontario) who delivered a paper on "The Unification Church: Some Preliminary Suggestions for Historical and Social Scientific Analysis." He discussed the relationship between sectarian and movement aspects of the Church, pointing out that, "Unification... is less an institutional entity than a dynamic, directing existing institution to their rightful task." He lauded the "mood of openness" with which seminary students were able to carry on theological discussion. The guest theologians were particularly interested in the way Unification Church leadership would be maintained in coming generations.

On Saturday morning participants discussed Darrol Bryant's paper (untitled) on Unification eschatology. Ever problematic for Christian theology since the original delayed Parousia, so many viewpoints on eschatology have arisen in Christian history that there is no normative doctrinal formulation on the doctrine of last things. Most of the elements of most Christian eschatologies were found by those present in Unification theology, with the exception of "eternal damnation." Moreover Unification eschatology, centered on the Kingdom of God on Earth, was seen to lead directly to considerations of practical application.

The final session on Saturday afternoon attempted to wrap up several loose ends, especially on the nature of the Divine Principle book itself. Participants attempted to formulate a position which recognized developing revelation in Unification Theology. Most considered Unification Theology to be still in its formative phase with all interested to see how a theology of the book develops.

The Second Conference resulted in all participants thinking more deeply about the issues raised by Unification Theology. In some ways, the April Conference was more difficult than the first one in February as it was more of a working session. At the same time, it produced more substantial results. Those who had written papers promised to re-work them and return in the fall. All participants look forward to continued and mutually fruitful dialogue in the future.