

Disassembling the European Cheon Il Guk Assembly

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Immediately after the European Cheon Il Guk Assembly finished, I found myself sitting in the hotel café having an engaging conversation with someone far later than I had originally planned. With my flight home scheduled to depart from Prague airport at 18:35, I only managed to begin my tram-and-bus-journey to the airport a couple of minutes before 5pm, at which time I should have preferred to be at the airport. As things transpired, the journey to the airport was smooth and punctual and I was able to board my flight with time to spare. I mention my slightly panic-inducing story in order to illustrate how meaningful the conversations at the assembly had been: I enjoyed many profound discussions with precious brothers and sisters during the Assembly between 9-12 March in Prague.

At these assemblies, one of the most important things I experience is the fellowship with brothers and sisters from across Europe who are investing on their front lines in a variety of ways. It's inspiring to hear their stories and to share with each other about the work we're all doing. We might meet only annually, but the camaraderie is real and I enjoy rekindling old friendships while seeking to make new friends.

For that reason alone, I would encourage folks to consider participating at such international meetings. But the 2017 European CIG Assembly had been significantly better than previous assemblies in a number of ways, and I have great hope that the 2018 Assembly will be even better.

There were some fantastic plenary speeches from a variety of speakers. (See below for a list of links to view the videos of these and other presentations.) I don't enjoy listening to lengthy reports at such meetings, but thankfully the length of each speech was short (around 10 minutes each) and the content focused far more on transferable principles and motivational inspiration. The break out sessions offered a promising variety of topics, although in my opinion I found the groups to be too large facilitate effective discussion and I fear there was insufficient time to prepare these sessions so that they could formulate meaningful plans of action. Despite these limitations, I was inspired by the appetite for constructive outcomes from the many other Assembly participants with whom I spoke; if everyone is thinking the same way, I'm sure that things will certainly continue to improve as we seek to raise the standard of our meetings.



One of the highlights of the conference, for me, were the closing remarks delivered by Rev. Young Shik An, who spoke about the meaning of *hyo jeong* which translates roughly into English from Korean as the

heart of filial piety. He explained that filial piety (hyo) can be demonstrated even without one's heart (shim jeong) being fully invested. He observed that it is natural for parents to feel compassion for the suffering of their children and to willingly sacrifice for their benefit; by comparison, it is unnatural for children to feel such compassion for their parents' suffering and to sacrifice for the parents' sake. I reflected that purely from a biological and evolutionary perspective this a lot of sense. However Rev. An testified to how True Parents have demonstrated hyo jeong towards God, our Heavenly Parent, and that we – as filial children – should strive to cultivate hyo jeong towards God and True Parents. He added that the best way to access the heart of True Parents – to get into their thoughts and feelings – was to practise hoon dok hwe (daily scripture reading & discussion).

There's still a lot of room for improvement to make future Assemblies even better than this year's. I hope that preparations can begin much earlier so that the break out sessions can be prepared more thoroughly, and so that the purpose of the Assembly can be clearly defined and pursued throughout the Assembly; although the theme for this year's Assembly was Europe Can Do It: Breaking Through in Tribal Messiahship and Blessing I found that in reality the content reflected a melting pot of all Unificationist activities, which didn't necessarily link back to the Assembly's theme.

Having said that, there was a fantastic family spirit which grew in depth and power throughout the long weekend. For me, this was epitomised by the family evening which we celebrated together on the final night. In all honesty, I was considering to skip this part of the programme – I had been tempted to spend my time “more usefully” – but I decided to give it a go, and I was rewarded for my faith: It was a magical evening of genuine entertainment from some very talented brothers and sisters, coupled together with the pure intoxication of being drunk on the love of God. The final group song couldn't contain the enthusiasm of the crowd who demanded to sing another song, and another song after that, until we had to be reminded that we had an early start the next morning and needed to rest! Young and old, spanning the territories of Europe, felt united centring on our love for God and True Parents; that felt special and hopeful.



You can have a look at the [Assembly programme](#), as well as examine the [video and slideshow presentations](#) delivered during the plenary sessions. You might be interested in browsing through the [photographs taken throughout the Assembly](#), but I highly recommend looking through the [videos of the plenary speakers](#); in particular I would recommend the talks delivered by [Young Shik An](#) (for the content I mentioned above), [Yebuny Hanna](#) (who spoke emotively about approaching the development of youth), [David Hanna](#) (who spoke about the blessing in a very fundamental way) and [Dieter Schmidt](#) (who shared about the recent We Can Do It workshop about tribal messiahship in Germany).