

Thomas Selover visits UTS to talk about the Cheon Il Guk Academy

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Discussion participants live and via video-conference. Dr. Selover is fourth from left.

On Saturday July 16, UTS Barrytown hosted Dr. Thomas Selover, member of the class of 1977, the first graduating class of UTS.

Dr. Selover convened, with the help of Dr. Wilson, an afternoon discussion about a new venture: the Cheon Il Guk Academy (CIG Academy) to encourage projects, sponsored research, academic proceedings, and publications, in the fields of arts and sciences.

Dr. Selover, who currently teaches at the Cheong Shim Graduate School of Theology in Korea, after many years of teaching in North America, is serving in a liaison role between Asia and the West to help this academy be launched.

After hearing the overall case for an academy the floor was open for the kind of discussion for which UTS is famous: critical and insightful thinking that turns optimistic and visionary endeavors into reality with a concern for the need to tie theory to application for the sake of policy-making at the institutional, societal, and world levels. The discussion revolved around issues and obstacles that could affect the launch of the academy: vision v. practical implementation, funding; scope of research; gender balance; international and interracial inclusivity; academic freedom; and collegial - hierarchical balance in the organizational structure.

Dr. Selover acknowledged the success of the Applied Unificationism blog and Journal of Unification Studies. He sees the development of the CIG Academy as a corollary to the academic rigor of these UTS publications.

UTS is a natural place through which to connect with many graduates who have gone on to pursue advanced degrees. Currently there are some 70 alumni who have earned doctorates in a wide range of disciplines. Of course many have earned doctorates in religion and theology, but there are also UTS graduates who have doctorates in education, in the humanities, in the sciences, and in the social sciences.

Thom Selover was one of 70% of the Class of 1977 who aspired to be selected for further graduate study. The Class of '77 had slightly over 50 students - after 2 years at Barrytown, most had been stimulated to seek even higher educational achievement. Eight were selected to receive scholarships to pursue doctoral studies. Thom was not among them. Instead he went to "the field," first as a fundraiser and then as a missionary in Mississippi.

While in Mississippi, a telephone call from UTS president David S.C. Kim told him that he had been "picked up" by Father Moon, meaning that he had been called to undertake further graduate education. Thom was able to secure a place at the Harvard University Divinity School. He thinks it was the quality of education at UTS that helped him be accepted. He graduated Harvard with a Th.D. in Comparative Religion and Confucian Thought in 1984. Thom taught at the University of Saskatchewan for several years with a sabbatical year spent in China. He also went on to experiment with college advisement after a move to the East Coast. His true calling remained teaching, however, and in 2013 he landed a position at the Cheong Shim Graduate School of Theology.

Attending the afternoon meeting in person were:

Mark Barry, David Burton, Kathleen Burton, Abdou Gaye, Tyler Hendricks, Michael Mickler, Keisuke Noda, Hee Hun Standard, Alison Wakelin, Andrew Wilson.

Connected via video conference were:

Josie Hauer, Hugh Spurgin, Thomas Ward.