

Dietrich Seidel the Theologian of Mediation, passed away

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December 8, 2016



Recently Dr. Seidel, our beloved UTS alumnus, passed away. I attended his Seonghwa Ceremony which took place at Barrytown.

He was my classmate in the very first class of UTS when it started in 1975. I remember I saw a very tall, handsome gentleman originally from Austria, and it was Dr. Seidel as a young man. We studied together, lived together, and ate together on campus. In those days we were full of great dreams (and I hope we still are now as well).

From among UTS graduates, twenty-five to thirty of us were asked by the Founder to go to Ph.D. programs outside of UTS. Out of them, Dietrich Seidel, Jonathan Wells, and I specialized in pure theology, which is theology in the narrow sense of the term. After we obtained our doctorates, both Dietrich and I returned to UTS to teach. (Jonathan, too, taught theology at UTS, albeit briefly.)

What I want to say here is that Dr. Seidel was really a theologian of mediation. According to Paul Tillich, any great theologian is a theologian of mediation or synthesis through mediation. Thus, Dietrich was a great theologian.

During his Seonghwa ceremony this time, many people gave testimonies about him, and I was deeply moved and humbled when they unanimously stated that he was a man of loving-kindness who always cared for people and tried to bring unity and harmony among them, and also that he was a man of patience who never got upset.

Indeed, this point was actually reflected in his theological approach as a theologian of mediation. He was able to teach Unification theology in the context of Catholic theology. As is well known, Catholic theology has been a great attempt to synthesize God and human beings, grace and nature, faith and reason, and religion and science. There were, of course, two major, slightly different Catholic schools of theology: Franciscan and Dominican; but their aims were always to reach a point of mediation or integration. Catholic theology, therefore, is similar to Unification theology in many ways. And Dr. Seidel, who obtained his doctorate from St. Michael's College, Toronto, a Catholic school, was able to explain the Unification teachings in the context of Catholic theology so well. (I understand that he had a Catholic background as well.)

Even when he dealt with the area of Protestant theology, Dr. Seidel chose to study the theology of the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) very seriously. I understand the reason. It was because Schleiermacher himself was a theologian of mediation, trying to synthesize between Pietism and the Enlightenment of the 18th century.

As is well known among Unificationists, the medieval Catholic theological synthesis was disintegrated into the Reformation (an Abel-type view of life) and the Renaissance (a Cain-type view of life), and these two different traditions were respectively inherited to Pietism (a Abel-type view of life) and the Enlightenment (a Cain-type view of life) in the 18th century. But then, Schleiermacher emerged to mediate and reintegrate between the two opposing traditions of Pietism and Enlightenment. Whether Schleiermacher himself was aware or not, it was to establish the "foundation of substance" between Abel-type Pietism and Cain-type Enlightenment in order for the world to eventually receive the Messiah.

Dietrich! It was a good choice! I, too, love Schleiermacher. When I go to the spirit world, I want to have theological discussions with you continuously up there, perhaps by enjoying a surrounding of quiet music and beautiful flowers. Thank you so much for your friendship and comradeship which I enjoyed here on earth. We all love you!