

I remained in this position until the summer of 1994. At this point I was offered funding from my church to undertake a PhD abroad, while continuing to receive my income from administrative work in the Korean Presbyterian church. I felt that this would be an excellent opportunity to develop my knowledge of Buddhism through writing about Buddhist Christian dialogue in Korea. A number of my colleagues had spoken highly about the Department of Religious Studies at Barchester University. It was a large department with an impressive research record. Although there was no one who had a

Episode 2 First experiences

In April 1995 I began my research on Christian Buddhist relations in South

- Q1. Comment on Kim's experience so far**
Q2. What should Kim do now?

Episode 4 The selection and appointment of examiners

After making two further visits to Korea in which I interviewed a number of clergy and Buddhist monks and laity who were involved in interfaith dialogue, I wrote up my findings. On 1 August 1998 I submitted my thesis for examination to the graduate office at the recommendation of my supervisor. Prior to and following the submission of the thesis, Dr Peters assured me that my thesis was a good piece of scholarship and that I need have no fear about the outcome of the viva. He informed me that he anticipated that following the viva I might have to make some revisions to the thesis but this should not be a matter of concern to me because it is common procedure for successful candidates to revise their thesis in the light of the examiners' recommendations. Dr Peters' comments led me to believe that I would not be required to make major revisions to the thesis following the viva. Dr Peters further reassured me by telling me that examiners are in principle extremely

conduct themselves inappropriately in a situation as important as a PhD viva, they would undermine their credibility as scholars and risk the opprobrium of their colleagues. Furthermore, Dr Goodfellow's research contract was up for renewal, and it would be inconceivable that he should do anything that would be perceived to be unprofessional and in turn jeopardize his place in the department.

I was not, however, reassured by Dr Peters' words, and decided to go and see the director of research students, Professor Melvin Dobson. I explained the difficult history I had had with Dr Goodfellow and my concern about the appropriateness of Dr Goodfellow as the internal examiner for my thesis. Melvin Dobson was clearly concerned about the situation. He told me that he was unaware of the history of problems between myself and Dr Goodfellow; had he been aware of this situation he would not have appointed Dr Goodfellow as the internal examiner. When Professor Dobson asked me if I had discussed the situation with my supervisor, I told him that I had but that my supervisor had expressed the view that previous difficulties between myself and Dr Goodfellow should not have any influence on the outcome of the viva. I then outlined to Professor Dobson the reasons that my supervisor had given for believing that neither Dr Goodfell

Episode 5 Preparing for the Viva

The weeks before the viva were extremely difficult for me. My initial

At this point I decided to avoid as much as possible Dr Peters because I did not want to be seen to be associated with my examiner's perceived enemy, even though this 'enemy' was my supervisor.

Two days before my viva, on the morning of 23 November 1998, Dr Goodfellow came to my office and asked me if I knew at what time my viva would take place. I said that I did and gave him a copy of a letter from the departmental secretary confirming the time of the viva. He then said to me that he had come to see me on the previous Friday but I was not in. He said to me that he came to tell me that he had never shown my thesis to anyone. I asked him what he meant by this statement. He said to me that he had been

Episode 6 The viva

The viva had been arranged to take place at 1:00 on Wednesday 25 November. I arrived at Dr Goodfellow's office at 12:55 and waited outside until 1:00. At 1:00, Sally Richardson, the departmental secretary came to Dr Goodfellow's office and knocked on his door, but there was no reply. Ms Richardson then took me to the departmental coffee room, and at about 1:10 she took me to Dr Goodfellow's office. Ms Richardson opened the door and Dr Goodfellow introduced the external examiner, Professor Young, to me. We sat down at a table with Professor Young to my left and Dr Goodfellow opposite me.

Dr Goodfellow began asking the questions. Firstly, he asked how long it took me to complete the thesis. I replied that it took me three years and four months. I also told him that I had been collecting research data since 1993. Dr Goodfellow replied: 'Okay, so it took you three years and six months.' (I thought that this was a strange response since I had just told Dr Goodfellow that I had spent three years and four months on the thesis.)

Dr Goodfellow then asked: 'How many words are there in the thesis?' I replied: 'My thesis has about 100,000 words.' Dr Goodfellow then said: 'Okay,' laughed and turned to the external examiner. (I found Dr Goodfellow's laughter disconcerting because it seemed to suggest a flippant attitude to the occasion. It also reminded me of the way in which Dr Goodfellow had made me feel threatened before the viva and made me feel under even more pressure during the viva.)

At that point Professor Young asked his first question. I do not remember the exact way in which the question was phrased. As I recall, Professor Young first of all stated that my methodology was based on a historical analysis of Buddhist-Christian relations in Korea; he then continued by asking me why I had not used books about Korean religious history written by western scholars. I replied that there were very few books written by Western scholars on Korean religion.

I also told Professor Young that I had read some books on Korean religious history that had been written by Korean scholars. Professor Young asked me: 'Which ones?' I replied: 'Sun, Hai-won's A Religious History of Korea.' Professor Young then asked me: 'Is this Hai-won Sun?' I said: 'Yes.' Professor Young then asked: 'Anyone else?' I then told him that I could not remember any more but as a student in Korea I had read quite a number of

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After I answered Professor Young's question, Professor Young said that the

Q1. Were normal viva procedures followed in this case?

Q2. What should Kim do now?

contents of the thesis; this leads me to question whether he had actually read the thesis or, if he had, had given its contents any serious thought. Moreover, he endeavoured to intimidate me during the viva through his abrasive manner and, in my view, to prejudice the external examiner against me.

6. Professor Young's questions and comments were ill informed, unfair and intended to misrepresent the thesis. This is apparent through an analysis of each question or comment:

- i)The thesis' methodology is based on historical analysis. Why does the thesis not use western scholars' books about Korean history?

In asking this question, this is the only time in which Professor Young explored the methodologica

I would disagree with the view that newspapers should not be used as a source of information on the grounds that a particular newspaper represents a particular point of view. The fact that a particular newspaper has a particular perspective does not mean that the information in the newspaper is going to be incorrect. Moreover, newspapers are not unique in presenting a point of view. Academic journals, books, television programmes, and even government documents represent points of view. If one were to confine academic research to consulting material that was completely value free (if such a thing is possible) all research would be greatly impoverished.

- iv) Some of the terms ('soteriology,' 'suffering,' 'reincarnation,' 'rebirth,' 'impermanence, 'self') which are used in the thesis should be more precisely defined because such terms might not be clear to the non-specialist.

The work being examined is a graduate thesis. It is not written for the non-specialist; it is written for the purpose of being examined by specialists with a highly developed knowledge of the field. It should not be necessary to define terms such as 'soteriology,' 'suffering,' 'reincarnation,' 'rebirth,' 'impermanence,' 'self' to scholars who hold positions of seniority in their

thesis, I believe that these criticisms were not carefully thought through or justified. I consider that I have not been treated fairly by the examiners and that the criticisms made against the thesis by the examiners are not sufficient to deny the thesis being recommended for acceptance as a PhD. For these reasons, I would request that the viva be declared null and void and that the thesis be allowed to be resubmitted and examined by a new set of examiners.

Q1. From this account, do you expect an appeal to be successful? On what grounds?

Q2. What would be the outcome of a successful appeal in this case?

Episode 8 The outcome

The final outcome of the appeal process was in favour of Kim il Sung. The University of Barchester identified the confrontational behaviour adopted by the internal examiner towards the candidate two days before the viva as an incident that distressed the candidate and prevented him from properly defending his thesis during the viva and, therefore, prejudiced the outcome of the viva. The conduct of the external examiner was not criticised. The thesis was re-examined by a new set of examiners in May 1999, and it was recommended for acceptance as a PhD without major amendment.

Team task

On the acetate(s) provided please list the three main issues that

- 1. Supervisors**
- 2. Departments**
- 3. Barchester University**

should address to improve the quality of postgraduate research programmes..