英文報告

Executive Director's Annual Report, 2008

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The 55th annual meeting of the Japan Society of Christian Studies (JSCS) took place on September 20-21, 2007 at Kyoto University. During the conference, the Board of Directors and the general meeting were held, where we frankly discussed about current topics of concern regarding JSCS. In recent years, the Society has focused on the issue of transparency regarding its internal operations, as well as increasing operational efficiency. At the same time, it has taken a fresh look at its perceived role within Japanese society as a whole and within Japan's Christian community in particular. At the Kyoto conference, the Society examined various matters centering on spirituality as an issue of importance to contemporary Japanese society. The question of what unique observations Christian Studies can bring to the table in this ongoing dialogue was addressed through a public lecture and a open symposium; and through these forums, some concrete conclusions were hammered out. Moving forward, the Society has decided to focus its activities on new inquiries and approaches that pay more attention to tangible and fundamental considerations. Specifically, it is thought that more effort should be dedicated to digitizing the academic society magazine and to maintaining its web page.

Additionally, the Society began collaborations with the Korea Society for Systematic Theology last year and co-hosted *the 2007 Korea-Japan Theology Forum*, through which intra-Asia research collaboration can be fostered at the Society level. The inaugural meeting took place at Chonkyo Methodist Church and focused on the topic of *Korean and Japanese receptivity to Christianity*. The forum took place on November 23-24, 2007. Approximately 90 participants took part in the two-day forum at which opinions were candidly exchanged during the five sessions. It was also decided to hold the 3rd meeting in Japan in 2009.

The following is a report of the 2007 JSCS conference at Kyoto University. As mentioned above, the theme of the conference was *Heart, Soul and Spirituality: Issues Concerning Christianity in Modern Japan*. Doctor Tan Sonoda, President of

Jin-ai University gave the keynote address entitled "On Japanese Spirituality." Symposium panelists were Masakazu Tanatsugu, professor at Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Kenji Kawashima, professor at Keisen University and Toshiyuki Kubodera, professor at Kwansei Gakuin University. Within the dual frameworks of Japanese Religious Tradition and Modernity, the questions of Heart, Soul, and Spirituality were addressed by expert lecturers and panelists in the fields of Religion, Theology, and Counseling. A topic that naturally presents itself for consideration by the field of Christian Studies in contemporary Japan is that of dealing with the general spiritual condition of Japanese in modern society. This assessment of the spiritual climate of Japanese society will no doubt remain an important component of Christian Studies.

At the conference there were 39 presentations spread out over two days and three venues and there was lively questioning and answering. Themes spanned ancient to modern Christian thought and touched on a variety of topics, including trends in modern Christian theology as well as biblical issues in the old and new testaments. The following two points outline the unique characteristics of the Society in recent years: 1) A rapid increase in research activity by young researchers. This trend is reflected not just in the number of presentations but also in the vigor of their research itself. This is a positive sign for the future of the Society. 2) As a new trend in research of recent years, presentations dealing with Christianity in Japan and other parts of Asia have sharply risen. This also is an important indicator of the direction of the future of the Society.

What follows is a report of the local chapters' activities for this year. The Hokkaido chapter held a public symposium on June 28 at Hokkai-Gakuen University. Professor Toshimasa Yasukata of Hokkai-Gakuen University and Professor Sadamichi Ashina of Kyoto University presented on the theme *Christian Studies and Systematic Theology*. The Tohoku chapter convened on June 14 at Shokei Gakuin University and heard a lecture entitled *The Meaning of "the Peace of God" Movement in Medieval Europe* by Haruo Watanabe, the former president of Shokei Gakuin University. The Kanto chapter convened on March 14 at Seigakuin University, with a keynote address entitled *Various Issues Touching on Karl Barth and His Influence on the Japanese Church and its Theology* presented by Seigakuin University Professor Hideo Ooki. The address was followed by talks from Tsuneaki

Kato, Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and Shozo Suzuki, the Executive Director of the NPO Christian East Asia Mission.

The Kinki chapter convened on March 28 at Doshisha Women's College and sponsored a public talk by Professor Manabu Murase entitled *Interpreting Noah's Ark: A Theory of Human and Animal Life*. The Kyushu chapter also convened on March 28 at Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University and heard a lecture entitled *Takizawa's Encounter with Karl Barth During the Bon Era (1934-35)* by Seinan Gakuin University Professor Yoshiki Terazono.

As a strategic feature of the Japan Society for Christian Studies, each regional chapter is autonomous and encouraged to actively pursue its own agenda. It is encouraging to see sharp growth across the board in the number of presentations at each chapter, and I look forward to the trend continuing throughout this year.

(Translated by Stig Lindberg)