Before reporting on specific activities of the Japan Society for Christian Studies (JSCS) between 2008 and 2009, I would like to briefly outline the current status of the organization.

As stated in Article Three of the society's bylaws ("this society shall be devoted to the promotion of Christian Studies and shall serve as a forum for communication among academic researchers in the field"), JSCS has focused since its founding in 1952 on the twin pillars of publishing its journal *Nihon no Shingaku* (*Theological Studies in Japan*) and sponsoring academic conferences as practical means of fulfilling this mission. However, over the course of a half-century, the society has grown significantly in membership; and in the process of expansion, various changes have been deemed necessary. It is the general view that the society has made considerable progress in formalizing its organizational structure, in continuation of the efforts of the previous executive office situated at Aoyama Gakuin University. Examples of this are the development of its bylaws, the rationalization of office procedures (converting from paper to electronic communications), the attainment of financial stability, the digitizing of the society's journal archives and the revision of its accounting system. The significance of these concrete reforms notwithstanding, they are simply the first step toward realizing the society's goal of developing the field of Christian Studies, and there is yet much work to be done. Members' expectations and requests vary widely, and it is by no means a simple matter to adequately address them.

As referred to above in Article Three of the bylaws, this society exists to serve as a forum of open communication among members whose interests include the academic research of Christian Studies, and there is a very broad spectrum of ideas represented by these members. I feel it is precisely this diversity that constitutes the defining characteristic of this society and which is therefore an important aspect to preserve. At the same time, this diversity also poses obvious challenges in
organizational operations. This quandary is particularly acute in the area of defining “Christian Studies.” Members’ perceptions of what constitutes “Christianity” vary widely, and the subject does not necessarily fit neatly into a tidy definition. Defining the field of Modern Religious Studies is an ongoing endeavor which undergoes repeated scrutiny and revision. A couple popular paradigms exist in the form of “Religion as a language game,” or, alternatively, “Religion as compared to family relations in which mild bonds of affinity and shared tradition form a definable network.” Whether regarding the form of this religious phenomenon known as Christianity or its multitudinous interpretations — on either level, the academic discipline of Christian Studies is faced with the thorny issue of diversity. Coordinating and promoting communication among researchers in the field of Christian Studies is itself a complicated matter, as the dangers of incongruent planes of discourse, the resultant misunderstandings, and of mutual disinterest are increasingly present. This is an important matter to address as, left unattended, it may well lead to a diminishing level of scholarship within the society. Before launching out into a discussion of organizational reform, however, it might be advisable to first take advantage of the inherent strengths of JSCS — namely diversity in areas of specialization and in regional diversity — and by so doing, to raise the level of scholarship.

With that in mind, let me recap the events of 2008. The 56th annual JSCS conference took place from September 16-17 at Kanto Gakuin University and was well attended, providing much spirited discourse. During the conference, the national board of directors convened, as did the general body of members. The theme of the 56th annual conference was Modern Civil Society and Christianity, and the keynote speaker was Meiji Gakuin University President Haruki Onishi, whose public lecture was entitled The Significance of the Sekte-type Church in Modern Civil Society. There were also symposia on the Reformation, on Puritanism and on Baptism. Panelists were Dr. Akira Demura who was a board director of Miyagi Gakuin Women’s University, Professor Tsuneo Imazeki of Doshisha University, and Professor Anri Morimoto of International Christian University. There was meaningful discussion on the Religious Reformation as experienced in England and its significance in the formation and development of modern society; and as the role of Christianity in the modern world was thoughtfully considered, many more points...
for consideration were brought to light.

There were over 40 presentations at the conference and, considering this large volume, the quality of research and inquiries from peers was impressive. Presentation themes were textual (Old and New Testament scholarship), chronological (examinations of the Christian religion from its inception all the way up to contemporary expressions) and geographic (Christianity in Europe and in East Asia), thus reflecting the diversity of the Japan Society for Christian Studies.

Herewith, I shall give a report on the activities of the local chapters. The Hokkaido chapter has decided to host the upcoming 57th annual conference at Hokkai-Gakuen University and, in that connection, has published a book entitled *Christian Studies: a Reexamination*, which will be handed out at the next conference. The book is a culmination of the chapter's public symposia over the last two years.

The Tohoku chapter hosted a conference on June 20th at Sendai Shirayuri Women's University. Mr. Kazuhiko Demura, who was an associate professor of Okayama University, gave a special lecture entitled *Church and Monasticism in the theology of St. Augustine*.

The Kanto chapter sponsored a public symposium March 27th at Seigakuin University with the theme *What, in fact, is Theological Studies?* Panelists were Professor Masami Kojiro of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, Professor Renta Nishihara of Rikkyo University, Professor Tomoaki Fukai of Seigakuin University and Professor Kenji Kawashima of Keisen University.

The Kinki chapter sponsored a public symposium on March 23rd at Kwansei Gakuin University on the theme *The Centennial of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference: Toward a New Chapter in the Ecumenical Movement and Missiology*. Professors Toshimasa Yamamoto and Kenji Kanda of Kwansei Gakuin University were the presenters, and their lectures were followed by a period of Q&A.

Closing out the regional report, the Kyushu chapter hosted a conference on March 30th at Seinan Gakuin University. After a series of personal research presentations, President Tsuyomi Makiyama of Japan Catholic Theological Seminary gave a special lecture entitled *Japan Catholic Theological Seminary: Regarding the Founding of the Seminary and the Significance of the Bishopric Resolution*. 

(28)
The staff of JSCS is intent on continuing its mission of facilitating communication among its members and promoting the discipline of Christian Studies in 2009 and beyond. We look forward to working closely with individual members in achieving these goals. Thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

(Translated by Stig Lindberg)