Executive Director's Annual Report, 1996

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Nanzan University hosted the annual general meeting for 1995 on October 9 and 10 under the general theme of Christianity and Religions. Papers were read in two parallel morning sessions on the first day and in three on the second day. In total 18 papers were read with topics widely ranging from NT and OT exegesis, Patristics, systematic theology, practical theology to Christian impact on Japanese culture. Following the usual scheme of an annual meeting, a symposium was held in the afternoon on the first day under the heading of "Is Christianity the Only Way for Salvation?", while in the afternoon of the second day a public lecture was given by Prof. Van Bragt of Nanzan's Institute for Religions. The members of the board had a working lunch to hear the head office's reports, approved the preceding year's account and the coming year's budget on the first day, and in the evening a social gathering was held for those who attend.

The following are the papers read in last year's annual meeting. Mr. Muto Shin'ichi of Kyoto University read a paper on Ephrem the Syrian and Chrysostom, in which he compared the former's exegesis with the latter's, and pointed out the predominance of visual images in the former and that of auditory images in the latter. Mr. Haraguchi Takaaki of Meiji Gakuin University read a paper on the influence of the Septuagint on the Hebrews, in which he pointed out instances of direct dependence, and Greek usages deriving from the Septuagint; the Septuagint's influence is over all except Chapter 6, where the topic is on the doctrinal matters, which had already been formulated in the early church. Mr. Yamada Nozomu of Nanzan University reported for the second time on Pelagius, this time on Pelagius's central ideas of Christ as our model and of divine justice, in which he saw a synthesis

of Western and Eastern theologies particularly in the idea of divine justice. Other topics reported are the Old Testament canon and its relevance (Prof. Ōsima Chikara, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary), the Royal Psalm 110 and Melchisedek ideology (Prof. Ōgushi, Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary), commutative justice according to St. Thomas Aquinas (Mr. Sasaki Wataru, Nanzan University), and the ecumenical Wesley, (Prof. Shimizu Mitsuo, Shizuoka Eiwa Jogakuin Junior College).

In the field of systematic and philosophical theology, Mr. Imai Naoo of Kyoto University read a paper on Tillich's metalogical approach to discuss culture and religion. Similarly inspired by Tillich, Prof. Ashina Sadao of the same university discussed in his paper the linguistic and symbolic model of God for contemporary theology; it was his intention to go after establishing the conceptually clear framework of God onto the establishment of relevance to contemporary ethical problems. Prof. Tobo Yoshinobu of Aoyama Gakuin University reported on Christology in narrative theology against the background of contemporary Angloamerican theological trends, in which he emphasized that narrative Christology does not purport to go back to Jesus' personal history but to discover his figure as is identified in the Gospel narrative. Papers were read on Barth's Trinitarian theology (Prof. Sasaki Tōru, Zion Junior College), on Teilhard Chardin's relevance to the understanding of religions (Prof. Kishi Hideji, Eichi University), and on practical theology, theological education, etc. In the field of studies on Christianity in Japan, a paper was read on news related with Japan in *The Missionary Herald*, 1821-69 by Prof. Shiono Kazuo of Seinan Gakuin University and on the relation of Takesita Yumeji, illustration painter, with Christianity by Prof. Sekiya Sadao of the same university; it was shown that Takesita had diverse relations with many leading Christians.

The theme of "Christianity and Other Religions" had been taken up in an annual meeting held at International Christian University, Tokyo (1982), but it was taken up in a symposium: Is Christ the Only Way to

Salvation this time in a different perspective with new participants with different backgrounds, chaired by Prof. Furuya Yasuo of International Christian University. With nearness of her position to the Kyoto Philosophical School, Prof. Hanaoka Eiko of Osaka City University approached the problem rejecting absolutization of religious experience. To Prof. Yagi Seiichi of Tōin Gakuen Yokohama University, who is involved with dialogue with Buddhism, salvation is the recovery of the total human person or wakening to one's true self, where the meeting of the divine and the human takes place. Prof. Eto Naozumi of Japan Lutheran Seminary seems somewhat cautious about abandoning Christocentrism and adopting theocentric theology of religions now strong in Angloamerican theology. In the public lecture "Christianity and Buddhism," Jan Van Bragt urged Japanese theologians to be more active in dialogue with Buddhist scholars and accept challenge from Buddhism to assimilate Buddhist doctrines in theological tracts.

The editorial board for our journal *Theological Studies in Japan* met on December 26, 1994, and accepted two papers read at the annual meeting: Muto's and Yamada's (see above) and about 24 books for reviewing in the fields of Christian studies published in the previous year. It was decided to commission a critical survey on recent works on missiology. To mention a few subjects of these books in order to indicate what is going on in Japan's theological circle, they include Thomas Aquinas' trinitarian theology, theology of death, narrative theology and Christian ethics, Romodoca's theological legacy, Hegel's Christology, religious pluralism, language of religion, etc., not to mention new critical translations of the OT and NT.

On the regional level annual meetings were held, too, under respective general themes: narrative theology (Kanto branch), Hokkaido frontiers spirit and Christianity (Hokkaido branch), Modern Japan and Christianity (Tohoku branch), nature and human heart (Kinki branch), and theology of the university (Kyushu branch). These were either symposium topics or those of public lectures. At branch meetings several papers are usually read in the morning and a symposium or

public lecture concludes the meeting.

When this issue of our journal comes out at the annual general meeting for 1997, the headquarters for our society will rotate, and with that the change of officials will take place after six years.