Executive Director’s Annual Report, 2002

Kiyoshi TSUCHIDO

The Forty-Ninth Academic Conference of The Japan Society of Christian Studies was held at Seinan Gakuin University, on October 26–27, 2001 under the presidency of Prof. Dr. Isao KURAMATSU, with 110 members present.

The theme of this year’s conference was “Towards a Theology for the Twenty-First Century.” The keynote address, entitled “Towards a Theology for the Twenty-First Century from the East Asian Context,” was delivered by Prof. CHI Myong Kwan, (The Director of the Institute of Japanese Studies, Hallym Academy of Sciences, Hallym University, Korea). Prof. Chi emphasized with clarity the necessity of reconceptualizing Japanese theology not from the viewpoint of the West, but from an Asian perspective.

With Prof. Yasuo MORI (Professor of Seinan Gakuin University) presiding, three major papers were presented at the public symposium of the conference by Prof. Dr. Yasuo FURUYA (Professor of Seigakuin University), Prof. Dr. Teruaki UTSUNOMIYA (Professor of Hokkaido University) and Prof. Dr. Migaku SATO (Professor of Rikkyo University).

In his paper, entitled “Towards a Theology of Evangelism in Japan,” Dr. Furuya pointed out the tendency that theology in Japan is inseparable from trends in 21st century world Christianity, and delivered a convincing argument for the pressing concerns of (1) the need for active dialogue between theologians and scholars of Biblical Studies in Japan and (2) the need to clearly establish research for Puritanism as the origin of Japanese churches.

In his paper, entitled “Christian Theology in the 21st Century from the Perspective of the Sociology of Religion. Its Trends and Tasks,” Dr. Utsunomiya gave his radical conclusion that since Christianity and theology in its entirety are cultural institutions of a particular society, they are subjective accidents of history and are fundamentally without means to stop their further relativistic tendencies.

In this paper, entitled “Towards the ‘Humanization of Jesus,’” Dr. Sato, began
by pointing out the radical results of recent liberal research on the historical Jesus, he proposed that it would be necessary to all Christians to reexamine Jesus’ own convictions regarding his sins and the meaning of his resurrection, namely to reexamine the Chalcedonian definition regarding the divinity and humanity of Jesus. He forcefully argued his position by maintaining that we should regard Jesus’ consciousness of sin as the same as all other humans.

Twenty individual research papers were given in simultaneous sessions at this year’s conference with lively debate on each proposed theory. Subjects included the Old Testament, New Testament, church history, and systematic and modern theological problems. From these, three outstanding papers are included in this volume.

The first was presented by Dr. Takeshi YASUI, entitled “On the Problems of Understanding the ‘pro me’ between K. Takizawa and J. Moltmann.” After pointing out that Takizawa himself did not recognize that he had received influence from mysticism as anti-Orthodoxy, Yasui conclude that Takizawa was, in fact, significantly influenced by it. Thus through the dialogue between Takizawa and Moltmann, it was possible to connect Takizawa’s great academic achievement with John Hick’s in the field of interreligious dialogue.

The second paper, entitled “Fact, Myth and Hypothesis: John Hick’s Christological Transition,” read by Dr. Waichi OGURA, examined Hick’s Christological transition divided into four periods ranging from the early “substantial identity” period through the modern “pluralistic” understanding. He concluded that the pluralistic hypothesis and resulting pluralistic understanding of Jesus’ deity are nothing but the products of a realistic attitude toward the real world where a great variety of religious and secular experiences co-mingle.

The third paper entitled “The Prayers of S. Weil: The origins of commiseration” was presented by Dr. Shino MATSUBARA. Through an analysis of Weil’s prayers, Matsubara concluded that pray itself is not an instrument to move God, but that prayer itself can only be praising God in the midst of human suffering.

Local chapter meetings were held in Kanto, Kinki, Kyushu, Tohoku and Hokkaido districts. In the Kanto meeting, held on March 29 at Tokyo Kirisutokyo College, five scholars gave papers followed by three presentations for the main symposium on the theme “Public Theology and Post-War Democracy,” by Prof. Dr.
Tomoaki FUKAI, Prof. Dr. Naozumi ETO, and Prof. Dr. Hisakazu INAGAKI.

In the Kinki district meeting held at Doshisha University on March 26, eight scholars gave papers in two simultaneous sessions followed by the main presentation which was a public special lecture by Prof. Dr. Yasushi KOSUGI (Kyoto University) on the theme “Religion and Secularization: From the Viewpoint of Islam.”

The Kyushu meeting held March 29 at Seinan Gakuin University included six papers and a public lecture by Prof. Dr. Yoshiki TERAZONO (Kyushu University), on the theme of “The Post-War Era of Peace and the Theology of Karl Barth.”

The Tohoku and Hokkaido districts are presently making preparations for their meetings. The Tohoku meeting will be held on June 15, and Hokkaido on July 29.

Executive Director, Prof. Dr. Kiyoshi TSUCHIDO (Seigakuin University) presiding, the business meeting for the Society confirmed that the 50th annual meeting of the Society will take place at Seigakuin University in Ageo, Saitama on September 20–21, 2002 and that the officers of the Society ex officio as follows: Prof. Dr. Isao KURAMATSU (Tohoku Gakuin University), president; Prof. Dr. Kiyoshi TSUCHIDO (Seigakuin University), executive director; Prof. Dr. Seiichi YAGI (Toin University in Yokohama), editor of Theological Studies in Japan; Prof. Dr. Tetsuo SASAKI (Tohoku Gakuin University), secretary; and Prof. Dr. Kosuke NISHITANI (Tohoku Gakuin University), treasurer. It was also reported that the total membership of the society is 721.

Prof. Dr. Seiichi Yagi noted that the circulation of Theological Studies in Japan is satisfactory. He also reported concerning the result of the inquiry regarding the editorial policy of the journal. The conclusion is that the members are satisfied with the current policies. The Treasurer’s Report by Prof. Dr. Tetsuo Sasaki, in place of Kosuke Nishitani noted that the general state of the Society’s finances are very healthy.

(Translation by Paul T. SHEW)