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## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON ASIAN MISSION

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Manila was the site of the International Symposium on Asian Mission held January 28, 2002. This was a first-ever scholarly forum of this kind held for Asian and Western missiologists. The aim was “to discuss ways to encourage, prepare and empower Asian Christians to be at the center of God’s great harvest.”

While the primary audience consisted of missiology specialists, mission executives and seminary missions students were also invited to participate. The inclusion of seminary students was a significant contribution to spreading the insights of missiology specialists to a new generation of largely Asian leaders.

APNTS was the best represented seminary at the conference. A group of nineteen attended including fifteen of our Asian students, and three from our faculty: Dr. Robert Donahue, Dr. Hitoshi Fukue, and Professor Mitsuko Fukue. Adjunct faculty member, Junias Venugopal, led one of the fourteen workshops offered.

We heard two major addresses presented by Paul Pierson, former Dean of the Fuller School of World Mission, and Melba Maggay of the Institute for Asian Studies. Dr. Maggay spoke in place of Andrew Walls who was not available until January 31 when he gave an address at Asia Theological Seminary. There were fourteen workshops, all led by outstanding missions specialists. The three general session speakers each made significant points in their addresses.

Dr. Pierson postulated a present change of context in which missions is done—to a postmodern and post-western era. There are now more than 100,000 cross-cultural missionaries sent by evangelical

churches in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. This represents an astounding change in missions in the past thirty years. New forms of the Christian church are arising which are often more vital and biblically oriented than western models. There is a kind of evangelical ecumenism across the world which has gathered momentum since the 1989 Lausanne II meeting held in Manila. Two-thirds of all evangelicals now live in Latin American, Asia and Africa. This is a percentage increase from 1% in 1800, and 10% in 1900! The understanding of missiologists around the world today is: “the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.” The shape of the Christian church is being changed more so now than ever before in history. Evangelical ecumenism is networking to do missions—to spread the gospel.

According to Dr. Pierson, The Fourth Era of missions has been entered. It is the era of the challenge of the cities. There are now more than five hundred cities with one million or more people, and 25 cities with more than ten million. There is tremendous need for community in the city. Christian *koinonia* is very much needed. New forms of the church in the city will be needed. Cell-prone churches coupled with regular celebration is a model emerging in places like Columbia, where a one hundred thousand member cell church rents a stadium for celebration.

Dr. Pierson notes that leadership is a great challenge for the church today. There are only a few leaders with doctorates and masters degrees, but there are two million pastors with no formal training at all. We must find ways to help those at the bottom of the training scale who are doing cutting edge evangelism and discipleship. They specifically need to be helped to grow biblically and theologically so that they can better disciple people.

The Western missionary enterprise has been changing. In 1900 80% of all missionaries were sent from the mainline churches. By 2000 that percentage had dropped to 6%. Newer agencies are usually multi-national and often very focused, such as concentrating on Muslims. Currently the majority of missionaries serving cross-culturally do not come from the traditional Western nations, but from Latin America, Asia and Africa. There is an overwhelming percentage of Evangelicals,

Pentecostals and Charismatics who fill the ranks of missionaries both from the Western and non-western worlds.

A new relationship between Asian and Western missions is developing. The relationship is no longer hierarchical but characterized by partnership and sharing of specialization. The new relationships are being defined mutually.

Dr. Pierson noted that new models of ministry education are emerging. There is a tendency toward short-term courses taught by leaders who are in touch with the realities of the pastors. The courses are characterized by interaction rather than lecture. Dr. Pierson cited George Hunter of Asbury Theological Seminary to the effect that every pastor ought to be trained as a missiologist. Paul Pierson emphasized his own belief that every seminary (or theological school) ought to teach missiology.

Dr. Melba Maggay gave an insightful address in the afternoon general session dealing with the interface of text and context. Her model was the Philippine church. She spoke about the inadequacy of a secularized and privatized religion as against a wholistic and communal spirituality.

Fully 80% of people attracted to the Four Square Church in the Philippines, she noted, came through interest in personal healing. Filipinos are interested in potency (power), not in guilt and salvation. Filipinos have an accommodative and harmonizing instinct versus the American boundary-keeping approach. Filipinos have loose, flexible and non-linear ways of doing things as against highly organized ways favored by most Westerners. Sin in Filipino thought is an alienation from your neighbor (or perhaps a disharmony or brokenness of relationship).

Two conclusions were drawn by Dr. Maggay. First, there is a need for an Asian Gospel with its own historiography. What was the history and ministry of the Eastern Churches in Asia? Secondly, there must be a shift from a multi-national to an incarnational model of missions. Missions must not continue as a handmaid of economic power, but out of voluntary poverty and powerlessness!

Andrews Walls spoke on the following Thursday, January 31, 2002, at Asia Theological Seminary. He had originally been slated as one of the keynote speakers at the International Symposium on Asian Mission. Dr. Walls is the director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He formerly worked in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, and has held posts at Aberdeen and Yale Universities. He is widely recognized as one of the leading missions historians of our time.

He titled his address: "20th Century Transformation of the Church and the Future of Christian Scholarship." He discussed the vocation of Christian scholarship. He noted that we are facing a completely different context than before. However, he said that Christian scholarship always arises from mission.

The ministry of the Apostle Paul was an example of scholarship arising from the doing of mission. A close relationship exists between mission and scholarship. Every time the gospel crosses cultural barriers scholarship is called for, just as it was in the first century with a mission to the Hellenistic world.

Christianity is in recession in the West. In Europe it has dwindled out of recognition. The balance of Christianity has shifted to Africa and Asia. Africans, Asians and Latin Americans will be the representative Christians in the world. Scholars from these continents will determine the quality of Christianity. Christian scholarship will continue to arise from the churches in these continents as the churches there continue to be forcefully engaged in missions. If such scholarship does not arise from the these quarters there will be no theology that is worth much.

In Walls view, the Western academy is sick! The universities there find themselves "pensioners of corporations." Trivia is pursued. Universities are coming into bondage to mammon. Scholars have become a guild characterized by individualism, striving, and competition. In the United States even theological research has become largely an enterprise for personal advancement.

Dr. Walls believes that the university was and should be a community of cooperation, doing scholarship for the glory of God. The

Western academy has become corrupt, and completely corrupted in some places. There is hope in the emergence of new scholarship arising from Africa, Asia and Latin America that will put community above personal interests, and God's glory above our own.

The International Symposium on Asian Mission was an excellent first step in what is hoped to be a series of annual symposiums by practicing missiologists from the academic community. Perhaps more effort should be made to include church lay and pastoral leaders as well as missions students. The participation of our own APNTS students and faculty was a significant exposure to the current thought among missiologists, especially in the Asian context. A major presentation was made by our own adjunct faculty member, Junias Venugopal, on "Prolegomena to a Historical Perspective on the Use of Education as a Mission Strategy in Asia." We look forward to more participation in similar settings by our faculty and students in the future.