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POSTMODERNISM AND ASIAN PENTECOSTALS

Three years ago (Oct 1999), about one hundred delegates of the Asia Pacific Theological Association gathered in Sydney, Australia for its general assembly. Being a network among Pentecostal Bible schools and seminaries in Asia, the delegates represented around seventy schools throughout Asia and Pacific islands. Standing at the twilight of the new millennium, the excitement for the future was well blended with a sort of anxiety that all the delegates were sensing. Its Theological Commission undertook a series of group brainstorming workshop sessions to identify the top ten challenges that were in the minds of the Asian Pentecostal theological educators. To our surprise, the top agenda was “postmodernism,” way ahead of items like “poverty,” “Spirit baptism,” “globalization” and others. It amazed those who organized the sessions, partly because many of them came from schools in rural areas, islands and provinces. Many of them did not have any internet access, simply because that’s not there. Their students regularly worked in pig pans to supplement meager food supply of the school kitchens. I imagine that many of them had almost no idea what this monster of “postmodernism” was. (Even today, one of average intellect could be so confused by it, that he or she would not be much better off than one of a simple “ignorant” mind when it comes to postmodernism.) Personally, I have been wondering if the warning signal in the minds of those pre-millennium delegates and educators would really turn out to be true.

The current issue of the journal seems to prove this point. Postmodernism was not a topic on our original agenda (as you may remember that we are supposed to publish a special issue on “Japanese Pentecostalism,” which regrettably becomes a delayed promise). But two contributions (both by Asians) directly deal with the subject matter, while a few others, in the course of their discussion on spirituality, reckon with the postmodern context of our time, present engaging discussions. By the way, the link between postmodernism and spirituality appears to be more than casual, and Asian Pentecostalism will have to wrestle with these themes in the near future. Asian socio-religious

context provides more challenges and promises when it comes to spirituality.

The fourth annual meeting of the Asian Pentecostal Society has become an important part of this issue, as three of their presentations in Bangalore, India in August 2002 are included here. Indian Pentecostal colleagues have much to offer to the future of Asian Pentecostal theology.

The publication of the long awaited revised and expanded version of the *Dictionary of the Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements* (Zondervan, 1988) has been finally available. (See a book review for this publication.) The Asian representation, although less than satisfactory, is a leap from the original version, and for this, Asian Pentecostals are grateful to the editors. The collection of papers presented during the Birmingham Conference on Asian Pentecostalism (Sept 2002) is about to appear in a book form. This may become the very first resource book for Asian Pentecostal studies. The upcoming International Symposium on Pentecostal Mission (Baguio, Philippines, Feb 2003) may produce more engaging reflections of Pentecostalism in various socio-cultural settings, while the long-planned scholarly session during the Pentecostal World Conference (Johannesburg, South Africa in Sept 2004) prepares to have a two-day conference on "Pentecostal Contextualization." It is encouraging that Pentecostal mission scholars are finally organizing themselves.

With these exciting developments, the *Journal* continues to commit itself to play an encouraging role to the emerging Asian Pentecostal minds. The first five-year index reveals God's marvelous hand upon the publisher, editors, editorial board and faithful subscribers. Thus, the editors register their praises and thanksgiving to the good Lord, and appreciation to the valuable contributors and supporters of the journal.

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