

## PWC AND ASIAN PENTECOSTALISM

The Pentecostal World Conference (PWC) has been perhaps the only Pentecostal global event whose beginning is dated even before the World War II. Its leadership including Donald Gee has successfully brought Spirit-filled believers from many church bodies and traditions together in one place and demonstrated the oneness that is found in the Spirit. Understandably, in early days this triennial event took place in European and North American locations. It was only in the 1970s that Asian churches began to host the event.

The beginning and growth of the PWC can be compared with the story of the development of the World Council of Churches (WCC). While the WCC eventually built an impressive organizational structure to strive to achieve “visible unity” of the church, the PWC is more like the Olympic games basically coming together for celebration, rather than organization. The PWC existed to celebrate the work of the Spirit. One distinct contrast is found in the emphasis given to theological reflection by the two bodies. As the streams of publication indicate, the WCC has invested greatly in theological reflection and education. On the other hand, the PWC has given very little space in its grand gatherings to theological events or activities. In view of the limited opportunities for Pentecostals to gather together, and in the absence in such gatherings to provide for theological interaction, it is no wonder that little attention has been given for significant reflection among Pentecostal scholars on the various issues confronting the Pentecostal movement.

When the PWC returned to Asia in 1998 (Seoul, Korea), a few young Asian Pentecostal scholars decided to have a one-day theological symposium. It is to the credit of the Yoido Full Gospel Church (Rev. Yonggi Cho) that more than a dozen Asian Pentecostals came together with four non-western Pentecostal scholars to bring diverse issues that Asian Pentecostal churches were facing, especially in light of the rapidly changing socio-political context. Some of the papers appeared in this journal and also in *Journal of Asian Mission*. When the PWC came to Los Angeles earlier this year, the same core planners from Asia invited representatives of Africa and Latin America and hosted another

successful theological symposium on non-western Pentecostalism. To continue the same tradition, the event took place a day prior (May 28, 2001) to the opening of the PWC. Fourteen quality papers were presented from three non-western continents. Friends representing the European Charismatic Research Association and the (North American) Society for Pentecostal Studies participated and rendered their warm support. More significantly the occasion provided a rare opportunity for Asian, African and Latin American Pentecostal theologians to meet with, and learn from, each other. The impetus for global networking took place in the very first face-to-face contacts. The representative of the South African Pentecostal church has enthusiastically agreed to host a similar symposium in Johannesburg in 2004, again a day before the PWC. But this time all the continents will be represented. Something good indeed has come from that first meeting in Asia.

The new century for the movement calls for networking among theologians, historians, and missiologists within the movement. There is no doubt that this will be another small but significant step toward unity in the Spirit.

As announced earlier, the issue continues to publish historical studies of the Pentecostal movement in various Asian countries. Although this is a small way to celebrate the birth of the modern Pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century (which is now contested as more historical studies become available), this effort will continue in the future. The two issues of volume 5 (2002) will include papers presented during the Theological Symposium on Non-western Pentecostalism. Studies from Latin America and Africa will certainly enrich our understanding of the Spirit's work in Asia. The editors are privileged to invite our friends from the two continents to join our reflective work in Asia. Thus, the *journal* provides a space for such inter-regional dialogue, and this is exactly why the *journal* exists.

Editors