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Christian Mission and Scholarship
(In appreciation of
Professor Emeritus Andrew F. Walls)

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The cover design is based on *Adinkra* symbols, which are found in West Africa, especially in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Each symbol has a distinctive proverbial or religious meaning. 'Adinkra' means 'farewell' and *Adinkra* cloth, that is, cloth stamped with *Adinkra* symbols, is usually worn at funerals as a way of bidding farewell to the deceased.

Christian Mission and Scholarship

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Themes of future issues:

Vol. 10, No. 1 (June 2007)

Methodology in Gospel and Culture Research

Vol. 10, No. 2 (December 2007)

Christianity, Slavery and the Slave Trade



Editorial

This issue on 'Christian mission and scholarship' is a special one for two reasons. It includes the maiden lecture of a new annual lecture, the Asante-Opoku-Reindorf Lecture, initiated by Akrofi-Christaller Institute to commemorate three outstanding nineteenth-century indigenous pioneers in mission, ministry and scholarship, namely, David Asante, Theophilus Opoku and Carl Christian Reindorf. By honouring their achievement, the Institute hopes to contribute to the rescuing of the memory of the current generation of Ghanaian Christians, with a view to arriving at a deeper insight into the contemporary challenges of mission and ministry and the Christian scholarship needed to undergird them.

It was entirely fitting that the maiden lecturer should be the Institute's Chancellor, Professor Emeritus J.H. Kwabena Nketia, founder Director of the International Centre of African Music and Dance in the University of Ghana, Legon, and a distinguished ethnomusicologist. An octogenarian who is still very active in research and writing, his academic roots lie in the tradition of scholarship established through the Basel Mission pioneers in Akropong and their indigenous colleagues and successors. His own research into indigenous music exhibits the quality and depth that the Institute seeks to emulate in the fields of theology, mission and culture. His lecture, 'Oral tradition in a new mode: The shaping of indigenous scholarship and literary style', is agenda-setting for a theological scholarship that takes culture seriously in the service of mission and of a theology that is at the service of culture and society. It is a clarion call to all African Christians, and not merely Ghanaian Christians, to delve deep into their indigenous languages for the cultural values they express and which can enhance understanding of the gospel. In its exposition and interpretation of the history of indigenous language scholarship in Ghana, the lecture reveals a model, and charts a course, for others to follow in parts of the continent where such scholarship is rudimentary, or has not yet taken off.

The second reason why this is a special issue is that ACI, through the *Journal of African Christian Thought*, wishes to show appreciation to Professor Andrew F. Walls as probably one of the greatest exemplars of authentic Christian scholarship in the service of mission alive today. Professor Emeritus of the universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh, and also of ACI, the founder Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, Professor Walls directed the doctoral studies of three ACI staff members (Prof Kwame Bediako, Prof Gillian Bediako and Dr Allison Howell), as well as helping to mentor a good many other staff and students of the Institute. Indeed, the vision of ACI itself owes much to his inspiration and encouragement over more than twenty years. He maintains as a priority an ongoing commitment to the upbuilding of ACI through his regular teaching and mentoring presence and his spiritual support.

Professor Walls' impact ranges far and wide around the world, including places that one might consider to be

'the back of beyond'. In a recent feature on Professor Walls in *Christianity Today*, Tim Stafford observes that Professor Walls 'may be the most important person you don't know'.¹ This is truer of the Western Christian and theological scene than it is of the Non-Western scene. For while the insights into the nature of Christian history that emerge from his lectures, seminars and writings are luminous to those concerned for God's mission in the world, these same insights are not conducive to any Western self-flattery. In the Non-Western world, his insights have the quality of truth that sets people free. For they point to the non-partial patterns of God's working in history; they encourage Christians of all cultures to expect to see Jesus 'grow in stature' as he finds a home among them, and on that foundation they inspire Christians of all nations to work for the discipling of their cultures, by which is meant their conversion. As a result, Professor Walls becomes a revered and appreciated elder wherever he goes, not just for his teaching, but as is the case with all true elders, for his comportment and manner of life, and especially for his incarnation of the way of Jesus.

Several of the articles in this issue are seminar papers that Professor Walls gave in April 2006 to doctoral students of ACI under the general theme: 'Mission and scholarship, scholarship in mission: Some passages of Christian intellectual history'. Through their close reflection of the inter-relationship of scholarship and mission in earlier centuries of Christian history, these articles help to cast a vision and chart a course for the future that apply to ACI and beyond. The first two, 'Scholarship under the Cross: Thinking Greek and thinking Christian' and 'New mission, new scholarship: Exploring the old faith in new terms', are adaptations of articles published (with different titles) in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, (Vol. 23, No. 3, July 1999 and Vol. 21, No. 4, October 1997, respectively). They are reprinted with permission. The third, 'Scholarship and the missionary movement: The China experience', is an inspiring tale of two missionary scholars in China. The fourth, 'Scholarship, mission and globalisation: Some reflections on the Christian scholarly vocation in Africa', concluded the seminar series. It constitutes the considered reflections of a seasoned historian of mission, gathering up the threads of the past and applying them to the present and future challenges for Christian scholarship in a world where African Christianity has become representative Christianity.

The article by Moonjang Lee, another former student and also subsequently colleague of Professor Walls, on 'The Asianisation of theological education', has been written specifically in appreciation of him. Its inclusion constitutes a reminder that the issues facing Christian scholarship in Africa are replicated elsewhere in the Non-Western world as it explores some implications of the shift in the centre of gravity of Christianity for theology in Asia. In particular, it identifies several Asian perspectives on the purpose and goal of theology and theological education. Lee argues for corresponding new methods in theological research which would take seriously those religious dimensions of Christian faith that resonate most deeply with Asian religiosity.