

WEA Theological News



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Successful First Visit to Africa for TC

The first meeting of the WEA Theological Commission to be held in Africa took place Sept 21–23, 2006 in Kenya and attracted an aggregate of about 60 people to its various study, fellowship and planning sessions. TC members from nine countries attended and apologies were received from others who were unable to attend. Many other local theologians also participated. Almost a dozen papers were given during the study sessions.

In the annual TC planning and strategy meeting, steps were taken to plan for new leadership of the organisation over the next few years as several of its key members rotate off. A special feature of the event was the participation of several people who are part of the new extended membership scheme introduced earlier in the year.

A mini-consultation on 'Religious Fundamentalism as a Global Issue' attracted about twenty participants and heard keynote addresses from Professor Yusufu Turaki (Nigeria/Kenya) and Dr Rolf Hille (Germany) (both of which are being published in the TC journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology*). There were also three other papers on relations between Fundamentalism and other forms of faith, learning from the problems experienced by those having difficulties with fundamentalism and the nature and background of the phenomenon in Latin America. A 250 word pastoral statement summing up the conclusions was prepared for international circulation (see p. 2).



Dr Yusufu Turaki

Another major feature was a symposium on African Theology, in which there were 30 participants from local seminaries. It was introduced by a insightful analysis of the current situation by Dr James Nkansah, head of Theology at NEGST, the host institution (also appearing in ERT). Other papers addressed Christology in Africa, interpretation of the Bible, trends and issues in West Africa and comparisons between Islamic and Christian approaches to Scripture.

During the business session plans were laid to fill vacancies in the TC. Dr David Parker was appointed for a further term as Director of Publications and Administration, allowing time to find a replacement for him. It was reported that the TC ended the year with an encouraging financial report, but its progress has been continually restricted by inadequate funding, resulting in the inability to take up many opportunities for growth. It is hoped that there can be much stronger financial backing for the TC in the future. A spokesman for the TC said that expressions of interest are welcome for ways in which greater support can be obtained and for additional

personnel, including those suitable for senior leadership.

The TC also took further steps in developing its dialogue program and explored further study units. One of the new projects involves cooperation between the TC and member Dr Tom Oden's newly developing Early African Christian Texts project which is now in Partnership status with the TC. It is also anticipated that there will be a study unit on hermeneutics and contextualization to assist in the process of relating Christian teaching and exegesis to local situations.

Reports presented to the TC Planning and Strategy meeting covered the recent meeting of evangelical theological educators in Thailand, and the initial session of the on-going WEA/Adventist dialogue also held in August 2006. The TC was also updated on developments in the Lausanne Theology Working Group and agreed to participate in its consultation to be held in Kenya, February 2007.

There were also extensive discussions with the leaders of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and the Kenya Evangelical Alliance on ways in which there could be cooperation with the TC and especially filling the vacancies for African representatives on the TC.

A workshop on HIV and AIDS was also held in conjunction with the annual session. About 16 people led by Dr Ken Gnanakan (India) and Prof. Danny McCain (Nigeria) with assistance from World Vision in Kenya, recognized existing programs and resources. A lengthy statement was prepared which includes details of an action plan for a continuing three year project which is to be an official TC study unit. This plan will develop a network of Christian resources and link into other existing networks, educate congregations and provide them

Continued on Page 2



Dr James Nkansah with a group of African Theologians

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

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with means with which to develop their ministries in this area of work and develop currucila for Bible colleges and seminaries (statement available on request).



Dr R Hille with Dr Yusufu Turaki

Dr Rolf Hille, Executive Chair of the TC said, 'The new format of the TC gathering with consultation, networking, and business together with fellowship and ministry in the local churches proved to be highly effective. So we will continue this pattern next year when the venue is expected to be USA. Plans will be developed over the next two years for a similar event in Latin America.'

The visit concluded with several TC members sharing fellowship and preaching in local churches.

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WEA Theological Commission

Pastoral Statement on Fundamentalism

Nairobi, Kenya, 23 September 2006

The term "Fundamentalism" is used in popular media to communicate a negative view of certain groups who hold various kinds of radical, political positions toward others including the use of violence and terrorism.

As evangelicals, we respect every human being as created in the image of God. All humans, everywhere, are obliged to protect, to promote, and to defend the dignity and value inherent in this image regardless of the persons social status, religious background, or ethnic origin.

The teaching and example of Jesus Christ calls us to show love and reconciliation toward all people. We are motivated to show love to those who oppose us and even to those who declare themselves to be our enemies.

Based on the apostolic teaching and experience of the early church, we hold that the gospel cannot be forced on any person by economical, political, or violent pressure. Christians should respect the freedom of conscience of others. Conversion to Christ is always through the power of the Holy Spirit and not through coercive means.

We call on the evangelical community to pray for peace in the world and to work for the reconciliation between the different religious, ethnic, and political groups.

We must be ready to proclaim faithfully, even under suffering or persecution, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as Good News to the whole world. Promoting social care, justice, and love for all human beings are integral aspects of this proclamation.

Bridge the Church-Seminary Gap!

Dr Carver Yu, Vice-President of China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong, was the official representative of the Theological Commission at the International Consultation for Theological Educators, held at Chiang Mai, Thailand, August 7-11, 2006, sponsored by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE). He was also one of the plenary speakers where he spoke on the divide between the church and the theological school as to relevance and role.

Yu asserted that this debate stems from two sides of the same problem which may be stated in terms of three questions: What is the Church? What is Theology? What is Theological Education? Theology's proper and necessary role, he posited, is to examine the Church's proclamation to test whether it is faithful to the Word of God. Yu defined the church as the 'eschatological, charismatic, covenantal, Eucharistic community', and said that, while it is theology's duty to examine the extent to which the church truly lives as this kind of community, these matters are mostly absent from theological curricula. There seems to be little sense of where history is moving in our theological endeavour and little cultivation of the sense of community in theological scholarship. He argued that theological schools fail if they do not help the church to maintain a prophetic edge with reference to these attributes.

The theme for the consultation, attended by 144 delegates from more than 40 nations, was 'Global Christianity and the Role of Theological Education.' The consultation opened with Dr. Andrew Walls' plenary message on the theme 'Global Christianity and the Role of Theological Education.' Other speakers included Dr. Lamin Sanneh, whose paper, 'Global Christianity: Whose Christianity' stressed the importance of Christianity being localised and expressed in the everyday languages and cultures of the various peoples of the world. Carlos Pinto (Sao Paulo, Brazil) addressed the topic, 'Forming World Christians: Our Task?' Dr. Chris Wright, of Langham Partnership International, speaking on 'North/South Issues: Addressing the Global Divide', noted some progress on problems of inequality in terms of resources and educational opportunities between Northern (Western) and majority world (Southern) Christianity.

(Based on a report by Dr C Yu)

New MTh Program in African Christianity at Daystar University, Kenya.

Africa is often viewed through a dark lens, with the focus being on poverty, disease—especially HIV/AIDS, bad governance, corruption, crime, and ethnic violence. While these are undeniable realities across the continent, they hardly represent the total picture. For those who have eyes to see, who view Africa through the lens of God's Kingdom, another reality emerges. Throughout the 20th century, the Church in Africa has grown faster than almost any place or any time in all of Christian history. As a result, Africa is now acknowledged to be a heartland of the gospel and the central zone of theological activity in the world. How are we to understand these divergent realities? Why has the gospel spread so dramatically across sub-Saharan Africa, and to what extent does it impact life in local communities? What is the significance of African Christianity at this point in history, within its own contexts and within the wider sphere of world Christianity?

These are urgent questions that require serious study. Therefore Daystar University has launched its new Master of Theology (MTh) in African Christianity program, which concentrates on this new phenomenon within world Christianity. The 48 credit-hour, 2 year programme is under the leadership of MTh Coordinator, Dr Diane Stinton, who said, 'I am impressed by the words of our external reviewer for the Commission of Higher Education, Prof. Jesse Mugambi, who highly commended Daystar University, as an evangelical university, for having taken the initiative to design such a programme. He feels that this will have a ripple effect on evangelical theology in our region, so I pray that God will truly prosper the work of our hands in this regard.'

On August 4, 2006 a public lecture was delivered by Prof. Kwame Bediako, and orientation began on August 16, 2006 with Prof. Andrew Walls giving a week of lectures. During the preparations several developments occurred which gave considerable encouragement to the University, including funding for library and teaching equipment, and bibliographic software available for use by all postgraduate faculty and students. There was also a book project initiated by Acton Publishers, in which 400 copies of core textbooks are donated for long-term student use in exchange for serious academic engagement with the African theological writings.

The overall aim of the programme is to foster within students an increased sense of African Christian identity, an enhanced ability to engage rigorously with theological issues in African contexts, and a deeper commitment to accountability for authentic Christian witness. In keeping with African worldviews, the program takes a holistic approach to theology; that is, it aims to nurture and equip students for ongoing personal formation, church reformation, and social transformation. The program is suitable for theological educators in formal and informal (e.g., TEE) settings, for those in pastoral ministries within church and para-church organizations, and those in Christian NGO and development agencies.

For further information and for offers to funding to assist students with the cost of the programme, contact the Postgraduate Faculty office or the MTh Coordinator, Dr. Diane Stinton, at dstinton@diansys.co.ke



Dr Diane Stinton

Adventists and Evangelicals Meet in Dialogue

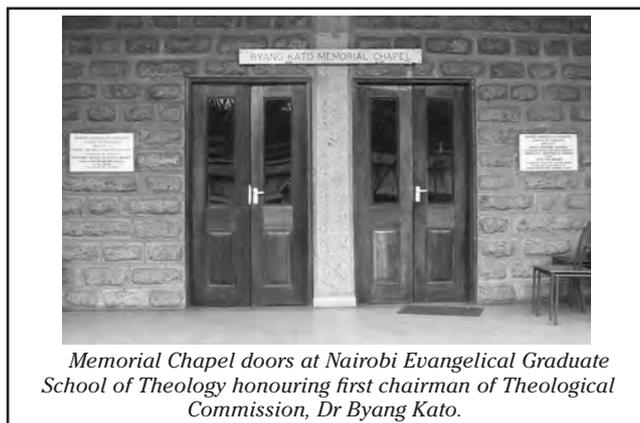
Representatives of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church and the World Evangelical Alliance met in dialogue August 8–11, 2006 at the International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic. Although informal contacts had occurred during the past 50 years, this was the first official meeting of the two groups. The purposes of the dialogue were to gain a clearer understanding of the theological positions of each body; to clarify matters of misunderstanding; to discuss frankly areas of agreement and disagreement on a Biblical basis; and to explore possible areas of cooperation.

The WEA was represented by Dr. Rolf Hille, chairman of the Theological Commission, WEA; Dr. Juerg Buchegger; Pastor James Kautt; Dr. Herbert Klement; Dr. Ian Randall, and Dr. Reinhard Hempelmann, while the Adventists were represented by a team of eight led by Dr. John Graz, Secretary of the Council on Interchurch/Interfaith Relations. Drs. Hille and Graz co-chaired the discussions. The Alliance represents some 420 million evangelical Christians in 127 countries drawn from many denominations. The Adventist Church has 15 million members in more than 200 countries.

The dialogue proceeded via several papers and presentations that described the respective profiles of Adventists and the Alliance. Representatives discussed the platform of beliefs held in common by Evangelicals: the Holy Scriptures, the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ, justification by faith, the new birth, the unity of the Spirit, and the Resurrection. They also considered Adventist presentations on the interpretation of Scripture; Gospel, Law, and the Sabbath; and relations with other churches.

The dialogue revealed a large measure of common ground as agreement was found between the beliefs of the Alliance Statement of Faith and the Adventist Statement of Fundamental Beliefs; further, the two groups shared a spirit of devotion and piety, a strong belief in the inspiration and authority of Scripture, and a common concern for united Christian witness in an age of increasing secularism and religious pluralism.

The meeting concluded by planning for a second round of discussions to be held August 6–10, 2007, on the campus of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, USA



Memorial Chapel doors at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology honouring first chairman of Theological Commission, Dr Byang Kato.

Verbum

Why Single Women in Mission?

By Beulah Wood



Beulah Wood, D.Min., a New Zealand member of Interserve, based in Bangalore, India, who has worked in Nepal and India as both a married woman and a widow, teaches and writes on preaching and family.

Is there any special reason for single women in mission other than the work they can do? This question keeps raising its head for some women, and harries them even more when the women and men in the communities where they go fail to accept their status. 'Why doesn't your family arrange your marriage?' they ask, not only curious but almost demanding. It is 'improper' to be single, almost as if a woman is only half human. And yet again the hurtful question invades the spirit: Is there a purpose in the pain of aloneness that some, though not all, feel?

Let me tell a story. I was invited to teach on issues of women and men at a country annual conference of my mission; I spent part of one session on the accountability before God of both men and women. That sounds obvious, said like that, but this Bible truth is theory rather than practice in thousands of homes where women must obey their husbands, and the more so in Asia and the Middle East where our mission works.

To show up the flaw in the thinking, we examined three Bible marriages, imagining the couple later standing before the judgment seat of God as in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, 'For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.' First, Hannah (1 Samuel 1:1) would not stand behind Elkanah and say to God, 'My husband made the decisions in our family.' She made decisions without her husband and won God's approval. Then, Sapphira could not stand behind Ananias and tell God, 'I obeyed my husband. Isn't that what you wanted?' Acts 5 shows in no uncertain terms that God made a wife accountable for her actions as much as a husband. In contrast, Joseph the husband of Mary put himself out for the good of his wife and child, leaving his vocation as a carpenter for two years to take his family to Egypt because his wife had a task to do for God. Surely this is one of God's models for family.

I was teaching about couples and the respective roles of individuals within such relationships, but a strange thing was happening, as I learnt later. A 38 year-old woman doctor told how she learnt for herself as a single. 'Yes, I am responsible. We all are. This society thinks there is something wrong with me when I am not married, but I'm valid and valued.' Two days later this woman asked me to talk to a group of single women on coping in Asian society as a single and as a foreigner. They wanted answers. We talked of spiritual exercises, physical exercise, hobbies, but the question still hung in the air. 'What is God's purpose for as singles?' We needed more than a work answer. They pushed harder.

Then came the corollary of the teaching two days before. *If in God's economy all women, married or single, with or without men in their lives, are equally valid compared with each other and with men, then we are here to make that point. Women around us need this truth of God visible and modelled in front of them. We are here in this Asian society to say, 'You do not have to be married to be somebody for God, and to be somebody God loves.'*

A sigh of relief escaped. We had reached a significant insight. To male readers it may seem a small matter, but to our half of the human race, we had a deeply necessary conclusion. Women in Christian work, whether single or married and carrying out a task in their own right, have the vital task of demonstrating that God asks service, good decisions and accountability of all humans. Let us take this on board in the valuing, commissioning, employment and salary structures wherever we go in God's work.

Further Reading:

1. *Wed Only to their Master*, <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/1999/08/single.html>
2. *Gender, Work and Zeal: Women Missionaries in Canada and Abroad*, Rosemary Gagan
<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/llt/53/gagan.html>

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Contributions from readers of ideas and articles (700 words) are warmly welcomed.

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