

WEA Theological News



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TC to Discuss Providence and Political Engagement in 2007

The WEA Theological Commission has announced plans for its 2007 Annual Session. It will be held from July 30 to Aug 3, 2007 in the Philadelphia area of the United States and will incorporate a mini-consultation on the theme: 'How does faith in Providence affect our Political Involvement?' The format will follow the same pattern as the successful 2006 meetings held in Nairobi Kenya. Monday July 30 will be arrival day, followed on Tuesday by the consultation; August 1 will be a symposium including networking with local seminaries and other theologians, church and mission leaders and interested people, with the annual planning and strategy sessions taking place on August 2. Participants will depart on Friday August 3.

It is hoped that the consultation will attract wide interest and will be able to draw on the considerable resources in the area. Submissions and expressions of interest are now invited for this part of the program. The TC is looking for key speakers who can address aspects of the topic from a local, regional and global perspective. It is planned that a summary statement will be made at the conclusion of the conference and that keynote addresses and other papers will be published.

The consultation will be open to a wide range of participants and those interested in attending are invited to contact the Theological Commission as soon as possible to register their names so they can be advised of full details which will be available at a later date. Those who are part of the TC's extended Global Membership scheme (see below) are automatically invited to attend and are requested to indicate their interest as soon as possible to assist with planning.

For more information, submission of ideas and preliminary registration, contact Dr David Parker, tc@worldevangelicalalliance.com

TC Global Membership Scheme Begins Second Year

The Theological Commission's extended membership scheme is about to enter its second year. This scheme was inaugurated in January 2006 and attracted considerable interest with an encouraging number of people and institutions signing up. It is a means by which seminaries and similar institutions, national theological commissions and individual theologians and others interested in theological work at the global level can become an integral part of the life and work of the WEA TC by paying an annual subscription.

The annual fee covers a subscription to the TC's flagship journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, its quarterly *Theological News* and other news media. It also entitles members to participate in the annual TC consultation, symposium and planning session and to be involved in the study units and other activities of the TC. In particular, it is a means by which national Theological Commissions can be directly and actively related to the WEA Theological Commission through the advisory body which those holding Affiliate status constitute.

Membership is on a calendar year basis, so renewals and new subscriptions are invited from January 2007. The three categories in the scheme are Affiliates—Theological Commissions or like bodies affiliated with National and Regional Fellowships of the World Evangelical Alliance; Partners—institutions such as seminaries, churches, missions and denominations; Associates—individual theologians.

The annual membership fee is US \$75, \$150 and \$250 for personal and small, medium and large organizations respectively. For more details, an application form and information on payment methods, contact the Director of Administration tc@worldevangelicalalliance.com

ATA Focus on the Prophetic Voice of the Gospel.

The Asia Theological Association has announced that the theme for its next General Assembly will be 'The Prophetic Voice of the Gospel' in Contemporary Asia. The theme will be related to various aspects of Theological Education, globalisation and nation-building in a multi-cultural society. Acting General Secretary, Dr Bruce Wintle, announced that the Assembly will take place August 6–10, 2007 in Manila, The Philippines. For more details bcwintle@ataindia.com

Yes
it's that time again
Subscriptions are due!
Renew for 2007
See back page for details

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

Contextual Theology Study Unit for WEA Theological Commission

Arising out of its successful symposium on African Theology held in Nairobi in September 2006, the WEA Theological Commission is setting up a Study Unit on contextual theology. It will be composed of about eight theologians from around the world and will be led by Dr Matt Cook of La Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de l'Alliance Chrétienne in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Dr Cook says, "The goal of this potential study unit would be to state clearly an evangelical position on issues that impact contextual theology and offer guidance in how to produce contextual evangelical theologies that avoid syncretism."

The Study Unit, which will operate largely electronically, will begin work by dealing with relevant theological positions that conform to Evangelical principles important for the task of a contextual theology. This preliminary task will cover such areas bibliography, epistemology, and hermeneutics. Following this foundational work, the Study Unit will then tackle particular questions such as: What is contextualization for? How do we attain it? How will we recognize it once we get there? What (and how much) of the biblical authors' worldview must be maintained? What are the distinctions between contextualization and syncretism? What are some models of evangelical contextualization?

The selected topics will be assigned to various participants who will prepare an initial study to be discussed by the group by e-mail and hopefully in a face to-face consultation associated with a future WEA TC meeting. The last part of the project will be publication of results. Dr Cook said, "The final stage is to use the results of our work in assembling something that would guide theologians in theologically developing nations in how to do contextual evangelical theology that would help the church and not diverge into syncretism."

For more information on this project contact tc@worldevangelicalalliance.com

Theological Educators Affirmed and Enriched at ICETE Conference

Theological educators at ICETE's 2006 International Consultation heard the noted scholar of world Christianity, Professor Andrew Walls, state: 'I can think of no more important ministry at this juncture than the one in which you are engaged.' The ICETE Consultation, held 7-11 August 2006 in Chiang Mai, Thailand was the largest ICETE Consultation to date, and highly diverse, with participants from almost 50 countries.

Professor Andrew Walls of Edinburgh University addressed the delegates on the theme: 'Global Christianity, and the Role of Theological Education', while Professor Lamin Sanneh of Yale University spoke on: 'Post-Western Christianity: Whose Christianity?' Accompanying them were presentations by leaders of the two primary structures of global evangelicalism today, Geoff Tunnicliffe, International Director of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and Doug Birdsall, Executive Chair of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE). This unique foursome then engaged in the first of the Consultations two panels on crucial implications raised by their presentations. Chairing the panel was Chris Wright, Director of John Stotts Langham Partnership International (LPI).

On the final evening of the Consultation, ICETE's Chair, Dieumême Noelliste, announced the appointment of Paul Sanders as the new ICETE International Director. Sanders presently serves in Beirut, Lebanon, with the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary. He is also chair of EEAA, the ICETE member association for European evangelical theological schools. Dr Noelliste also announced that ICETE's next International Consultation for Theological Educators will be held in 2009, at a venue probably in Europe. Some two dozen participants stayed on after the Consultation to attend an ICETE-sponsored professional development workshop for academic deans and other academic officers.

ICETE News October 2006 icete@bellsouth.net

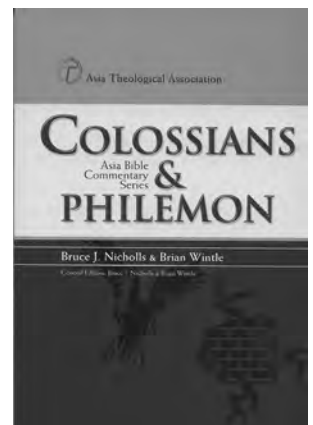
Bible Commentary Projects in Africa and Asia

Biblical scholarship and exposition is being advanced in Africa and Asia with two significant projects. In Africa, the first one-volume commentary, of almost 1600 pages, written exclusively by African theologians was launched on July 5, 2006 in Kenya. Edited by Dr Tokunboh Adeyemo, former General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), with nearly 70 contributors—all of them from Africa—it adopts a section by section approach geared to local needs and interests.

The main commentary is supplemented by more than 70 articles on biblical backgrounds, introduction, and especially on cultural issues facing the African church, such as HIV/AIDS, persecution, angels/demons/powers and funeral rites. There is also an extensive glossary of terms, and biographical details of contributors. The 7-year project was strongly supported by SIM and many Christians around the world. It is published in Africa in English and French by WordAlive, with another edition for the rest of the world by Zondervan [http://www.zondervan.com/media/samples/pdf/0310264731_samptxt.pdf]

Meanwhile work progresses on the ambitious Asia Bible Commentary Series. The 45 volume series sponsored by the Asia Theological Association with Dr Brian Wintle and Dr Bruce Nicholls as general editors, is aimed at providing high quality exegetical material interpreted in terms of local Asian cultures and presented in common English which is suitable for a wide readership. With each volume prepared by a team of at least two writers from Asian, Pacific and Middle East seminaries, the series is being made available in an Asian edition priced for wide circulation in the region and another edition for the global market.

Six volumes are already available, while five more are at an advanced stage of preparation. Some are prepared in local languages and will need translation. General Editor, Dr Bruce Nicholls, recently made an extensive tour of 18 participating seminaries, and expects steady progress by the time of the ATA General Assembly in August 2007.



Theological Education in Israel and the West Bank

Leaders of the World Evangelical Alliance met in Israel Dec 1–5, 2006 to review the work of the Alliance and its many arms, and to plan for future developments. The Theological Commission was represented by Dr David Parker, Director of Administration and Publications. Reports indicated that the WEA has made considerable progress during the previous year, and has expanded its activities and consolidated its operations. Significant plans are in hand for development in the near future, including a General Assembly to be held late 2008.

A feature of the meeting was an excursion to Bethlehem and Jerusalem for learning about conditions in the West Bank and to share fellowship with evangelical Christians in the area. This event was highlighted by the formal reception into the WEA of its 128th national body, the Evangelical Local Council of Churches of the Holy Land (ELCCHL)

During his visit to Israel, Dr David Parker visited three theological institutions in the area. Bethlehem Bible College, <www.bethlehembiblecollege.edu> the only such institution in the West Bank, is an interdenominational college preparing leaders for the churches and society within the Arab community, headed by Dr Bishara Awad, and with a strong faculty. It also serves the local community with a range of activities including a counselling centre, the Shepherd Society which meets humanitarian needs, Bethlehem's first public library located at the college, a program for teaching English as a second language, a Tour Guide program and a Mass Media centre which trains students for this work and also present programs on the local media. The college also has a strong music ministry with an attractive choir. In operation since 1979, and located in Hebron Road since 1990, Bethlehem Bible College is accredited by the Palestinian Ministry for Higher Education and by MEATE (Middle East Association of Theological Education). It has an ambitious building program to allow it to fulfil its aims more effectively.



Dr Bishara Awad, Rev Alex Awad, BBC



Dr Erez Soref, Rev Adam Focht, ICB

Israel College of the Bible <www.israelcollege.com> established in 1990 (then under a different name), is located in the heart of West Jerusalem with extension campuses elsewhere in the country, and mainly serves the Israeli Messianic community, but it also has programs for international students. The current president is Dr. Erez Soref, a native Israeli from Haifa, with a Doctorate in clinical psychology. The college is accredited with both the Asia Theological Association and European Evangelical Accrediting Association. Its faculty of



Library, ICB

more than 30 is made up of full and part-time instructors, most being Israelis and covering a wide range of disciplines.



Dr Paul Wright, JUC

Jerusalem University College (The American Institute for Holy Land Studies) <www.juc.edu> is located by the Old City of Jerusalem and specialises in programs which enable international students to study the Bible, its languages, cultures and contextual setting in the Holy Land itself. It acts as an extension campus of about 100 academic institutions in USA and elsewhere whose students attend courses of varying duration at JUC. It is also accredited by Asia Theological Association and is authorised to grant degrees in Israel. It was established in 1957 and is now headed by Dr Paul Wright, supported by an extensive faculty of local and visiting professors.

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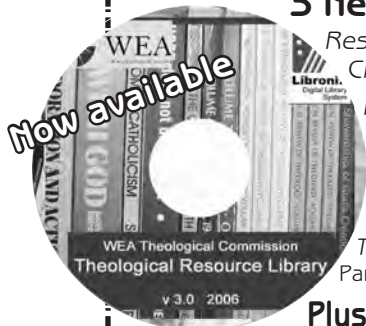
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William Carey University Established in Meghalaya

Dr Ken Gnanakan, Vice-Chair of the WEA Theological Commission, has announced that the Gazette of Meghalaya No. 76 William Carey Act 2005, authorizes ACTS to establish the William Carey University. The name was chosen to honour the pioneer missionary educationist who gave himself to establish education in India. The objectives of the University are to provide instruction in selected fields of professional development and make provision for research with a focus on the development of North East in general, and Meghalaya in particular. It will also institute academic awards at various levels, and collaborate with other similar bodies to develop specific educational, research and training programs. For more information: gnanakan@vsnl.com

Attention!!!

Sign up now for TC Global Membership

Enquiries—see page 4 for contact details.

Verbum

The Church and its Mission, according to the Apostle Paul

By Dr. Robert L. Plummer, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.



Popular missiological literature often reduces the church's missionary motivation to one major factor—the Great Commission, for example. While this sustained focus on one concept can have pedagogical value, it runs the danger of flattening the rich diversity of reflection found within Scripture. Thus, although scholars have commonly assumed that Paul's personal evangelistic fervor was transferred to his churches, little has been done to articulate an actual *Pauline* theology of the church's mission. Indeed, it should be noted that Paul rarely, if ever, commands the recipients of his letters to evangelize.

In assessing this lack of explicit missions imperatives in the Pauline letters, recent studies have reached highly divergent conclusions on Paul's expectations of his churches involvement in the missionary task. To oversimplify the debate, on one side are those scholars who assert that Paul failed to envision an active, outward-directed missionary task inherited by local Christian communities (W. P. Bowers, S. Chambers, J. P. Dickson, T. L. Donaldson). On the other side are those scholars who find the debatable Pauline imperatives and other incidental evidence sufficient to demonstrate that Paul did envision an active missionary role for his congregations that in some way mirrored his own (P. T. O'Brien, I. H. Marshall, R. L. Plummer, E. J. Schnabel, J. P. Ware).

As one of the writers supporting apostle-church missions continuity, I must thank the writers on the other side for directing our attention back to the biblical text. They have demonstrated that simplistic appeals to the Great Commission or Paul's expectation of the Holy Spirit's work do not provide a convincing Pauline basis for church missionary involvement. And, while it is true that there is a surprising dearth of explicit Pauline imperatives to evangelize, there is not a complete absence—at least on my reading. In his recently published revision of his dissertation, J. P. Ware has made a cogent case that one should understand Philippians 2:16 ('hold *forth* the word of life') as a climactic appeal for the Philippians gospel proclamation in a letter that regularly highlights their partnership in the gospel's advance. Also, when read within the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul's commands to imitate him (1 Cor 4:16; 11:1), appear to have evangelistic implications (see my article in *JETS*, June 2001). Furthermore, Paul's command to have 'feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace' (Eph 6:15), with its clear allusion to Isaiah 52:7, is best understood as a command to preparedness for gospel proclamation. Finally, while not explicitly imperatival, Paul approvingly speaks of gospel proclamation by both ordinary Roman Christians (Phil 1:14) and Thessalonian believers (1 Thess 1:8).

This list of debated references to congregational evangelism, nevertheless, fails to provide a convincing over-arching Pauline theology of congregational evangelism. Such a theological supra-structure, however, is found in Paul's understanding of the gospel as God's dynamic word. Paul makes numerous explicit references to the gospel as a powerful entity from God that accomplishes the divine purpose. Thus the gospel, whether present in apostle (Rom 15:18–19; 1 Cor 14:36; Col 1:57; 1 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 2:89) or congregation (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 15:12; 16:15; Col 3:16–17; 1 Thess 1:8; 2:13–16; 2 Thess 3:1), will continue its triumphant advance. This often overlooked theme highlights both the sovereignty of God and the power of the gospel, while providing continuity with Old Testament references to the effective 'word of the Lord' (e.g., Isaiah 55:10–11; Jer 20:7–9; 23:29).

As we seek to be biblically-faithful missionary Christians in our day, we must allow Paul's understanding of mission and the church to fill out our own evangelistic reflection and practice. If the gospel truly is God's powerful and effective word of salvation, how important it is for us, like Paul, to declare it confidently and clearly—trusting that God's gospel will bear fruit in all the world (Col 1:6). Furthermore, as we allow Paul's reflections to shape our own, we will see each local church as rightful inheritors of the missionary task. Indeed, as entities created and governed by the dynamic gospel, local churches can be nothing other than missionary by their very nature.

Further reading: Plummer, Robert L. *Paul's Understanding of the Church's Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* Paternoster Biblical Monographs (2006). ISBN: 1-84227-333-7.

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

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