

WEA Theological News

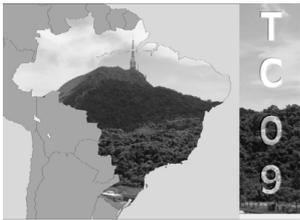


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<http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/commissions/tc>

Registrations open for TC-09 in Latin America



Registrations are now open for TC-09, the WEA Theological Commission annual gathering which will take place in São Paulo, Brasil, in July. The planning and strategy session will take place on July 22 and 23. On July 24 and 25 there will be a consultation on the theme, 'Evangelical Theology and Evangelical Movement in Latin America - Ways, Dilemmas and Perspectives.' The consultation is open to all those in Latin America who are interested in theological reflection, including seminary and Bible College faculty, students, pastors, missionaries and others. A special invitation is issued to people living in the Southern Cone.

The consultation will take place in a hotel situated in the centre of the city. Participants may make their own arrangements for accommodation or they may take advantage of the Theological Commission's block booking at the hotel. For more information about accommodation, program and costings, contact the TC (see below).

TC Executive Director, Dr Parker, said, 'We have been planning this event for a considerable period, and are pleased to see our

hopes being realised even though the global financial crisis and other factors have impacted negatively on us. However, we want to serve the church in Latin America through this event. We look forward to working with as many people, seminaries, associations and churches as possible to make this a significant consultation.'

He said, 'Our intention is to enter into serious theological dialogue with our friends and so to stand with them in their important task of witness and mission. Brazil, the fifth largest country in the world, accounts for half the land surface of South America and half of its population. The evangelical church is very vibrant in Brazil and elsewhere in the region, so we have much to learn. We are hoping to have contact with a range of ministries, institutions and theological fellowships in our consultation, making it a rich experience for us all. There are many strategic opportunities in this region and we hope that our visit will help network theologians internationally and strengthen the work of theological foundations and vision.'

For registration and more information, contact
Dr David Parker, Executive Director
tc@worldevangelicalalliance.com or
Dr Claus Schwambach, São Bento do Sul, Brasil,
diretoria@flt.edu.br.

TC and Lausanne Share Lead-up to Cape Town 2010

Twenty-five theologians, from 12 countries and 5 continents, met in Panama City, Jan 26-30, 2009, to discuss 'The Whole Church' in preparation for the third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization Cape Town, South Africa 2010. This was the third meeting of the Lausanne Theology Working Group (LTWG) in partnership with The World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission, previous ones being held in Kenya (2007) and Thailand (2008). The TC was represented by Chairman, Dr Justin Thacker (UK), Dr Rolf Hille (Germany) and Dr Daniel Salinas (Paraguay) (see picture).

The conference featured daily Bible studies from 1 Peter, and an intense program of plenary and small groups. Using a mixture of plenary papers and more specific case studies, topics covered included the whole church in the whole Bible, the church in its diversity as a transformed and transforming society committed to wholeness, and the church as a blessing to the nations. Dr Thacker said the viewpoints were diverse but 'what appeared as initially disparate perspectives often coalesced in surprising ways.' He noted that 'Other recurring issues included the ethnocentrism that often causes us to view one ecclesiological form as superior to others, the utilitarianism that leads us to champion pragmatics over virtue, and the syncretism that allows the gods of money, power and status to drive out the Christ-like qualities that

should characterise our communal life.' Yet he concluded that the group was sure that its beliefs 'must be grounded in and derive their meaning and purpose from our confession of the One God in Three Persons.' Therefore, he said, 'the church is not merely for keeping safe the elect till the day of judgement, or a spiritual welfare agency to deliver services to the poor. Rather, in God's sight, the One Church has an inherent goodness, meaning and purpose derived from its identity in Him.'

Dr Salinas said, 'Soon into the meetings we realized the topics were complex and if anyone had the expectation of a quick consensus it was deflated from the very start. Our world today evades easy characterizations and pat answers. It is very different from what it was when the Lausanne Covenant was written in 1974. There are so many new challenges and opportunities that demand theological analysis. Even to define "church" is not that easy much less to find what its mission is supposed to look like.' However he said, 'There was a consensus that the Holy Spirit might be doing some new things we are not aware of



J Thacker, R Hille, D Salinas

Continued on Page 2

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

ATA Consultation on Globalization and Religious Pluralism in Asia

The Asia Theological Association will sponsor a consultation on 21–24 July 2009 at the Seminari Alkitab Asia Tenggara (SAAT), Malang, Indonesia to focus on “Our Christian Response to Globalization and Religious Pluralism in Asia.” The faculty of theological institutions, pastors and members of mission agencies, lay leaders of churches, and businessmen and women are invited to contribute knowledge and experiences to help train leaders of the new churches for the 21st century.

Topics to be covered include the impact of globalisation on humanity and community, the challenge of religious pluralism, the evangelical world view for the restructuring of Asian societies and cultures, and the Church as Christ’s appointed agent of transformation. There will also be a special interest in training leaders for the 21st century. All participants are encouraged to prepare brief case studies to accompany the various topics. The papers and findings of the conference will be published by ATA in a form that can be used by seminaries, Bible schools, churches and community organisations.

For more information, contact Dr. Theresa R. Lua theresarlua@hotmail.com or ataasia2004@yahoo.com

The Future of Evangelical Theology in Francophone Africa

A conference on “The future of Evangelical Theology in Francophone Africa” will be held at Bangui Evangelical School of Theology, Central African Republic 18–21 May, 2009 featuring as key speakers Dr Tite Tienou, Dr Henri Blocher, Dr Solomon Andria, Dr Isaac Zokoue and Dr Kamana.

The aim of the conference is to look at the theological work done in the last thirty years and then prepare the way for new efforts in the light of the current situation of the African society. An announcement for the conference said, “Thirty years ago, Dr Byang Kato published his book *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. In the same period, Dr Tite Tienou published his *Tâche théologique en Afrique (Theological Task in Africa)*. These two publications were the starting point for a theological reflection within the young evangelical association which was created, the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA). Thirty years later, the time has come to know whether the interest in theological thinking has disappeared. At the time of the creation of AEA and the publication of the above-mentioned books, the African continent was driven by theological thoughts imported from the West, namely Europe and America. Nowadays, Africa has its theologians, its specialists in different fields of theology. More than

cont. from page 1

this, the continent is going to be, in the next decade or so, the ‘stronghold’ of Christianity in the world. As some historians have pointed out, Africa will determine the future of Christianity for the two or three coming centuries. Is Francophone Africa ready to assume such an historic role?

There will be three stages to the conference: open discussion, round table for exchange and further development of ideas, and workshops where participants will be able to meet according to their interest groups. It is hoped that the conference will be an occasion for exchanges among theologians, but also an opportunity to create a common perspective for the beginning of deep evangelical reflection on the continent.

The conference is open to all who are interested in African Evangelical Theology. But for reasons of efficiency, the number of participants is limited to 35 to 40 people. Pastors, teachers, missionaries, leaders of Christian organizations, and students are welcome.

The TC will be represented at this conference by Dr Matt Cook of Côte d’Ivoire.

For further information about fees and registration, contact administration@fateb.net

TC Shares with Lausanne

and therefore we need to be careful in our definitions of what a church is in order not to leave out some of the people of God.’ Dr Salinas, who works with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Latin America and joined the TC team for the conference, concluded, ‘Even if we did not come to a common understanding of the magnitude and the identity of the challenges of today, we came to some clear recommendations. For example, in the need for a theological understanding of mission we recommend to put aside the pragmatism and goal oriented emphasis and work toward a more holistic approach to the mission of the church.’

Papers from the conference are being prepared for publication in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, and the findings are being synthesised for input into the planning for Lausanne 2010. The final consultation in this series will be held in Beirut early in 2010 with the topic, ‘The whole world.’ The results all four LTWG/TC gatherings will be integrated to form the theological grounding for the Cape Town Congress.

ERT Now Available Electronically

Evangelical Review of Theology, the flagship quarterly journal of the WEA Theological Commission, is now available in electronic form for regular subscription as well as, or as an alternative to, the traditional print version. ERT, which has been published since 1977, is aimed at scholars, students, church and mission leaders and others who are interested in a global forum of evangelical theology.

As of January 2009, Paternoster, who publishes the journal on behalf of the TC, has made new arrangements with AlphaGraphics, Nottingham, for its production and circulation. New features include on-line subscriptions at <http://www.paternosterperiodicals.com/>, multiple and joint subscriptions at reduced rates and the choice between electronic and print versions. The email contact is periodicals@alphagraphics.co.uk.

Dr David Parker, Executive Director of the TC and editor of ERT said, ‘These new arrangements should make our journal much more accessible to our worldwide readership. Once the system gets properly established, we are looking forward to an increased circulation. Our journal is aimed at providing well founded practical guidance for the life and mission of the church. We welcome interest in its circulation and also from potential contributors.’

The full run of ERT up to the end of 2005 is available on the TC’s Theological Resource Library CR-ROM. This CD also includes a large number of other TC and WEA publications. For more details, go to the web site above and <http://www.worldangelicals.org/commissions/list/index.php?com=tc&id=7>

Evangelical Theology of Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom.

A conference will be held in Bad Urach, Germany 16–18 September 2009 to develop an evangelical theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for the global church in mission. It is part of a study process being sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission and other interested parties, and is convened by Dr Christof Sauer (International Institute for Religious Freedom IIRF) and Dr Richard Howell (Asia Evangelical Alliance). The IIRF will organize the consultation with about 20 expert participants and some observers.

The convenors said, “The purpose of the project is to come to a common understanding among evangelical scholars who have written on the topic in various contexts.” They explained that a well-founded evangelical theology would have “the potential to counterbalance detrimental prosperity theologies and to complement the views of other theological traditions.” It is planned to issue a statement, journal articles and a compendium. The statement, to be known as “The Tübingen call on suffering, persecution and martyrdom for Christ”, will have the potential to raise the attention for the issue and could provide a theological benchmark for future dealing with the topic. Articles in various journals will provide contextualized examples of such theologies, and the consultation compendium will serve as a textbook for theological education on the topic. The focus of the project will be systematic theology and mission theology with a particular emphasis on a theology of the cross in mission.

The organisers request interested readers to pray that this study process and consultation may serve the global church in mission by laying solid foundations for a theology of suffering, persecution and martyrdom for Christ. The convenors also want to hear about experts who have written on a scholarly level on the issue. Help with sponsorship of the project is also invited.

For more information, contact Dr Christof Sauer, Convener International Institute for Religious Freedom
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Theological Education in Nepal

Dr Ramesh Khatri has recently been appointed Executive Director of the Association for Theological Education in Nepal (ATEN) for a further five year term. In operation since 1993, ATEN consists of 28 members (Bible schools, colleges and church groups) and aims to attract Christians who are either involved in the teaching/preaching ministry or are students attending various Bible colleges around Kathmandu. Using its library facilities in central Kathmandu, people are invited to live in the ATEN hostel for study and writing purposes.

A major project for ATEN is the attempt to establish the first university recognised Bachelor of Divinity program. After previous unsuccessful attempts, the new venture will be a five year integrated BD for students with high school and two years of college under Serampore University from June, 2012. Advanced training of staff is in process which will be helpful in this project. Although there are more than 58 Bible colleges or schools in the country, there is no recognized degree program available. A report from ATEN states, “ATEN will help a willing member Bible college/school to start the BD course. If a member Bible college for some reason cannot manage BD, ATEN will start the course in its own premises.

Dr Khatri also serves as national coordinator for Nepal Prayer Movement and a teacher for Forgiveness and Reconciliation Seminar in which ATEN partners with United Mission to Nepal (UMN). He is also contributing to the South Asia Bible Commentary series writing volumes on Romans and Revelation.

ATEN recently became a Global Member of the WEA Theological Commission. For more information about ATEN, contact info@aten.org.np or write ATEN, G.P.O. Box 4368, Kathmandu, Nepal

Review—Bible Software: BibleWorks v 8.00

BibleWorks V 8 has been released, representing a significant advance on previous versions (see *Evangelical Review of Theology* April 2004 (28:2), 178–181 for a review of v 6.00), increasing its already strong claim to being the best such package. However, at US \$350 it is priced well beyond the reach of many, making a “Lite” version (providing basic Bible searching and translations in the major biblical and other languages for students and others on a budget) a good idea for the producers to consider. It installs easily from DVD or multiple CDs, the user interface is simple and more intuitive, there are extensive help modules, and the program is highly configurable. It features almost 200 Bible translations (including many which are obscure) in nearly 40 languages and numerous original Biblical language texts and reference works. However, it is still weak on other reference works with long out-of-date dictionaries (which are actually likely to be misleading) and only Tischendorf’s NT critical apparatus.

It includes a number of standard lexicons and grammars but BDAG and Blass-DeBrunner (and a number of others) must be purchased, either as extras to be unlocked by payment of a fee or as optional modules, at prices ranging up to \$200. Some of the useful new features include improved analysis tools and text export, additional Bibles, reference works and text diagramming, a facility to manage external resources, and text-to-speech.

There are several features to make the Bible easily accessible at the popular level, such as readings from Daily Light, and other non-academic resources of only limited importance in a package of this kind, but its speed and flexibility of searching in the Biblical languages, with ease of access to lexical information and ability to compare and contrast other sections of the Bible and many other translations makes BibleWorks ideal for the student, professor and preacher. For more information, <http://www.bibleworks.com>

Verbum

Our Target: God's Glory

By Bob Moffitt, PhD

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Countless Christians around the world come to faith with the expectation that the gospel should result in transformation of individuals and communities. Most, though, do not see the transformation they expect. Recently, while speaking with indigenous Indian church leaders in south-eastern Brazil, I attempted to illustrate why this is. I blindfolded a marksman from the audience and armed him with a bow and arrow, then asked him to aim at and hit a target on the wall. After some wide-eyed gasping when their compatriot mistakenly aimed at them, those in the audience pointed out the obvious: if he couldn't see the target, it was unlikely he could hit it.

Sadly, the Christian church often acts as a blindfolded marksman. When we mistake the target to be the salvation of individuals, we fall short of our expectations and God's desires. Instead, when we understand God's ultimate purpose to be revealing his glory, we are empowered to 'hit' his purpose.

Setting our sights on God's glory rather than on individual salvation is the metaphorical equivalent of removing our blindfold: we turn our aim from the audience to the target on the wall. With God's glory in mind, we will, in an attempt to reflect that glory, obey his teaching and do his will. And once individuals and communities start doing that, God will bring about a transformation that exceeds their wildest expectations. Let me explain.

The Target—God's Glory: Scripture as a whole reveals that God's ultimate purpose is to make known his glory (Dt. 4:5–8; 1 Pet 2:9–12). God's concern for his glory is driven by the very self-giving, circular nature of that glory. By living in a way that manifests his glory, we *become* God's glory (2 Cor 3:18), and in that glory we fulfil God's purpose.

In his salvation and transformation of his creation, God intends to restore the reflection of his glory. God desires that his people live in a way that other nations would see his glory and be drawn to him (Dt. 4:5–8), and we are chosen and redeemed 'for the praise of his glory' (Ephesians 1:13–14). In other words, when we live the way God asks, we glorify God, reflecting his glory and fulfilling his ultimate purpose.

Right Target, Right Methods—Obedience: Once we understand God's glory to be our goal, the necessity of obedience becomes clear: we can only reflect his glory by living, by his power, how he asks. This mandate for obedience is reflected quite clearly in the Great Commission. We evangelicals have typically focused on going, making disciples, baptizing, and teaching, but our teaching has all too often centred on teaching *what* Jesus taught. The Great Commission, though, commands us to teach obedience as well as knowledge. Teaching followers to obey is the final but essential step of Jesus' command to us. It is the means to reaching the true target of God's glory. Unless we teach the means to reaching the target, the glory that God created us to reflect will be greatly diminished.

Transformation—God's Response to Obedience: How does all this relate to transformation? Quite simply, God's promise to bring transformation is conditional. 'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land' (2 Chron 7:14). God conditions his supernatural healing/transformation on repentance of disobedience followed by obedience. When God's people obey, he supernaturally intervenes in their realities, often using their intelligence, money, manpower, and other resources to bring his healing.

Conclusion: God's people have repented and are thus forgiven. If we would also do his will—a lifestyle of loving our neighbours by demonstrating that love through sacrificial service—he can transform our lives and communities beyond anything we could ask or imagine. Surely this calls for an outpouring of passion to heal brokenness, of suffering for others, and of generosity toward those we don't know—all borne of having our sights set on God's glory and our strength drawn from it.

For more information: www.disciplenations.org and www.harvestfoundation.org

Verbum: Welcome to Verbum—a page of thoughtful comment and insight giving perspectives and overviews of topical issues. It appears in both our print and electronic versions. Reproduction and wider circulation is encouraged. Please acknowledge as "Verbum: WEA Theological News April 2009"

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

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