

WEA Theological News



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From the Chairman



This week, the 2009 annual meeting of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission will be taking place in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There are two equally important parts to this meeting. The first is a meeting of the commission itself which will take the opportunity of the recent leadership transition within the theological commission to

reassess our vision and purpose and to plan for the future. Our desire is to continue to ensure that what we are doing is truly serving the global evangelical community in the most appropriate way possible. We will also be addressing the representative nature of the theological commission to ensure that the commission continues to draw together the full array of global voices that are necessary if it is to do its work effectively.

The second part of the meeting will be a mini-consultation of Latin American theologians which will discuss the state and nature of evangelical theology in Latin America today. A very impressive line up of contributors has been arranged with many leading Latin American theologians joining us for the consultation. We trust that over the two days relationships will be strengthened and a renewed vitality brought to those who are present. - *Justin Thacker*

he edited our theological journals, the Evangelical Review of Theology and the Theological News. Through his work, we gained a lot of publicity and were recognized as a public voice of the WEA Theological Commission. I deeply appreciate his fine Christian attitude. David is a dear brother and friend."

Thank You, David Parker!



A warm "thank you" goes out to David Parker for all his hard work. Through the years David has been involved in just about every aspect of the Theological Commission. He stepped down from his responsibilities this May 2010.

David's participation in the TC has spanned

23 years. After working with the Evangelical Alliance and its theological work in Australia, he was appointed as a TC member in 1986. During the period since he has served as an executive committee member and staff member, worked on study units, been editor of the Evangelical Review of Theology and Theological News, served as webmaster, organized conferences (including the TC's last major consultation in London 1996), been administrator and Executive Director. David has also written a book on the history of the WEA TC called *The Obedience of Faith*.

Rolf Hille, former TC chairman, had these kind words to say about David, "For many decades, David Parker was a very competent and helpful co-worker in the international work of the accreditation association as well as in the work of the Theological Commission of the WEA. He participated in nearly all our conferences throughout these years and contributed with his wisdom and insight and personal experience as a theological teacher and professor. I admire him because he is a very friendly and humble man who was always cooperative and helpful. As director of administration and publication, I experienced his precision and reliability in all questions of organization. With a broad overview and perspective with regard to theological topics and issues,

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

ICETE - Triennial Consultation for Theologians in Hungary

The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE) will hold its triennial international consultation this October 5-9 in Sopron, Hungary. The theme will be Energizing Community: Theological Education's Relational Mandate. Plenary presentations, interactions, seminars and workshops will probe such questions as: In what sense might community be considered a mandated priority for theological schools? What are the warrants, and the limitations? How might a theological college best embody biblical community in its institutional culture? How might students be better equipped in relational skills for ministry? How might theological schools best promote community within their own social context?

Principal speakers include Bishop Hwa Yung of Malaysia, who will give the keynote address, and Professor Henri Blocher of France, who will address the question of the warrants, risks and limitations. ICETE's international consultations are widely popular for offering evangelical theological educators an opportunity for peer professional interaction at a global level. See: www.icete-edu.org/hungary.

WorldVenture's MEGA II '09

This April, thirty nine educators from WorldVenture and other missions agencies gathered at a resort in Southwest Asia to participate in MEGA, the Missional Educators in a Global Age conference. The attendees represented eighteen countries on five continents.

An important emphasis of the gathering was that theological education without a view to the lost is deficient. This point was developed by Dr. Mark Young, incoming President of Denver Seminary, who helped the group think through the implications of a missional orientation in all aspects of the Christian life, not just in their formal and non-formal theological education. Young posed an absolutely critical question to teachers: Do we say, "We are teaching New Testament (or some other course) for knowledge?" Or do we say: "We are teaching students for transformation so that they can live out the gospel before believers and non-believers?" Young also connected the task of theological leadership with the *missio dei* by pointing out that leadership and theological education has to begin with what God is doing in the real world. He encouraged educators to see that God is about the task of establishing a missional people.

MEGA conferences are designed to support missional educators in their calling. The first MEGA was held in Amman, Jordan in April 2007. Future gatherings are now in the planning stages for Francophone Africa in 2011 and a worldwide event in 2012.

For more information contact: Joe Wright joewright@WorldVenture.net.

Report on Bangui - The Future of Theology in Francophone Africa

A conference on the future of Evangelical theology in Francophone Africa was held in Bangui, Central African Republic, on the campus of FATEB (Faculté de Théologie Evangélique de Bangui) May 17-21, 2009. The conference was funded by the Overseas Council and others. Matthew Cook was the WEA-TC representative to the conference and gives us the following report.

African theological education is necessary because Africa needs more leaders. But it is also necessary because the region needs more theological answers and more theological thinking. The African theologians at Bangui are moving toward constructing contextual theology along the same lines as the WEA-TC Contextual Evangelical theology working group has suggested. It was heartening to see the correspondence. [The TC's new book *Local Theology for the Global Church*, edited by Matt Cook and others will be published soon – Ed.]

I was struck by the quality of the participants the organizers were able to gather. The interaction with Ka Mana, a well known non-evangelical African theologian, was cordial, sometimes strained, but delightfully useful.

The conference tended toward agreement that further contextualization of theology in the African context is needed. The main presentations affirmed that idea in the following areas:

- Hermeneutics: making greater connections between biblical and current situations to flesh out the meaning of a text,
- Development of theology in mother tongues, not just in the lingua franca,
- The most exciting contribution was an evangelical approach to using ancestral African images for Christ that would maintain biblical controls, and

The call for ethics that understands and faces the social and worldview realities.

This conference touched a clearly felt need for continual theological reflection. I heard the following informal discussions, which help to illustrate the concerns of the attendees: The proliferation of cell phones is making face to face visiting unnecessary and, when it does happen, socially awkward (as one person interrupts a face to face visit to talk to another person on the phone – cultural faux pas). There is a need to rethink the creeds from the African context so that they reflect African realities and speak to African realities (this is not an interest to change the substance of the creeds, merely the form). What is an orphan in the African context? What does integral mission look like for Darfur refugees in Cameroon?

I took extensive notes on most of the sessions if anyone would like further information. The proceedings will be published early next year. An official statement from the conference is expected soon, but not available at this time. It is hoped that the resolutions proposed will be incorporated into the functioning of the theological system in Africa, both individually and institutionally. – *Matt Cook*

The Impact of the Lausanne Theology Working Group on Lausanne 2010

Theological directions for Lausanne

As our readers know by now, the TC is partnering with the Lausanne Theology Working Group (LTWG) to help form the agenda for Lausanne 2010 in Cape Town. The LTWG has met for two years (in Chiang Mai and Panama) and plans a third meeting in Beirut at the beginning of 2010. In these meetings theologians from all around the world have gathered to discuss three key phrases of the Lausanne covenant: the whole gospel, the whole church, and the whole world.

The material and topics of these consultations will impact the Lausanne gathering in three ways: First, LTWG will produce three briefing papers of around 3,000 words on each of the main themes of the Cape Town conference: Truth, Reconciliation, World Faith, Prosperity, Integrity and Partnership. These papers will give informed perspectives on the topics and also offer resources for further study.

Second, the statements of the three consultations will be combined in booklet form and distributed beforehand. Christopher Wright, head of LTWG, hopes to have them distributed to all the participants, not just the leadership of the conference.

Finally, the Evangelical Review of Theology (the Theological Commission's journal) is dedicating an edition to the papers of each LTWG gathering. If there are enough funds, these will all be published later in a single volume.

In Dr. Wright's words, "It is fair to say, I think, that the Lausanne Theology Working Group has already had substantive influence on the thinking and planning for the Cape Town 2010 program. First, through what we've submitted in writing to the program team, chaired by Ramez Atallah. At each of our LTWG meetings over the past two years, we have studied the developing plans that were shared with us, and made detailed theological and practical comment. Second, through my invited participation in some of the planning meetings where I was able to give input, suggest names and articulate phrases for session titles and content. So although our TWG input is not very formalized, I do think we are helping the process to have theological depth, and I am constantly assured by Doug Birdsall and others in the senior leadership of Lausanne that this is welcomed as fully in line with what they want to be the case."

As Daniel Salinas pointed out in a recent edition of ERT, the first two Lausanne meetings did not always chart a clear theological path on issues like the extent and depth of the missionary enterprise (Daniel J. Salinas, "Will Lausanne III Listen? A Latin American Inquiry," ERT (2009) 33:2, 158-166). The Theology Working Group is providing a solid foundation through input from the global theological community, which will help orient this extremely important event in the life of the global church.

Beirut - The whole world

The third and final LTWG meeting in Beirut will look at

the phrase "the whole world." The concern here is to ask what this means in relation to the mission of God which we are called to participate in. As the preliminary documentation explains, "It would be tempting to take the phrase in a purely geographical sense – meaning every corner of the planet – and that is certainly an important dimension of its meaning. Nowhere is not the mission field. But we need to go deeper and ask about dimensions of our world that biblical mission must address: ecological, politico-economic, religious, philosophical, technological, humanitarian, etc. In what ways is the whole gospel good news for the whole world in all its dimensions?"

The topics to be covered in Beirut will be,

- The world in Bible and history,
- The world of creation,
- The world of religion,
- The globalized world of the public square,
- The world of violence,

The world of human poverty and injustice.

Presenters and case study authors are still being assembled. Look for the papers in a future edition of ERT!

On the web

You can see a video on the Internet of Chris Wright explaining the Lausanne Covenant ([go](#)).

First Volume in the Africa Bible Commentaries

The first volume in the Africa Bible Commentaries series is scheduled for release this August. This new series, published by HippoBooks, is written by African scholars for the Global church in the same tradition as the Africa Bible Commentary. The first volume is on 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, written by Samuel Ngewa.

HippoBooks is an imprint shared among several publishers and partners. Their vision is to stimulate spiritual and intellectual growth in the African church by developing books by African Christian authors who address African realities from an evangelical perspective. The partners include Langham Partnership International, The Piquant Agency, Word Alive, Acts, and Zondervan. Most of the sales of Hippo Books will take place in Africa and the hope is that African scholars and ministers will put money back into their own economies by purchasing great resources in Africa, by Africans, from African publishers.

Other new books by HippoBooks include *The War Within*, by A.C. Chukwuocha (July), which deals with spiritual conflict and personal growth, and *Galatians* also by Samuel Ngewa (December). See www.hippobooks.net for more information.

Verbum

Peace in a World Filled with Conflict

By Ruth Julian, Missions professor at the Alliance Bible Institute of Congo

I have started wearing a bracelet with “peace” inscribed on it as a symbol of a much deeper heart cry for true peace.

And is it not just my heart’s cry. In the Republic of Congo, where I live, people are hoping and praying that the presidential elections this year will take place without violence. Those living in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo are crying out for peace as they experience the atrocities of looting, rape, and killing of civilians. In the more ordinary circumstances of everyday life in both Congos, conflict and division are not absent. Families members are pitted against each other as accusations of sorcery abound. Along with all this is the ever present temptation of divorce in marriages where conflict reigns.

This is a superficial description of just one region of the world.

The angels gloriously proclaimed peace on earth at Christ’s birth...but 2000 years later, we humans are still embroiled in these types of wars and conflicts. Where is the peace that was promised so long ago?

It is present and available to those willing to do the hard work required to live in that peace. Jesus, who knew the conflict, persecution, and suffering that lay ahead of his followers told them, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (Jn. 14:27 TNIV). This peace is not simply happiness or an ability to get along with others. It is a “combination of hope, trust, and quiet in the mind and soul, brought about by a reconciliation with God” (“Peace,” in Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary) and is linked closely with humility and service of others, with valuing others above ourselves and looking out for their interests instead of our own (Phil. 2:3-8). Jesus talked about this peace as he was preparing himself to face a violent death on a cross, an act of tremendous love for the world.

Christ modelled for us the way to both inner peace and peace with others. He had an inner peace that was based on his relationship with his heavenly Father. He sought peace with others as he loved and served them, and desired their good above his own, even to the point of death. Not only did Jesus model this peace, but, through his death and resurrection, he made living in that peace a possible reality for us. This does not mean that harmony will be always present in our relationships. Wars and conflict will take place until Christ returns. But our actions in this reality will be an overflowing of the peace of God that rules our lives.

As followers of Christ we have the opportunity to be peacemakers because of this peace that he gives and the work of the Holy Spirit who develops this peace in our lives; an inner reality that influences the world around us. Without this inner reality of peace, our external calls for peace ring false. Christ’s peace must first permeate our own person and our personal relationships. It will then be able to spill out from this to our broader spheres of influence. Our decisions of how we live our lives will be affected, decisions which range from small everyday choices such as not responding in anger and retaliation when our rights are violated and doing the hard work of personal reconciliation, to becoming involved peacemaking processes at the community, regional, and even world levels.

We are ambassadors of reconciliation, people who work at bringing peace into situations of conflict and making peace a reality. This cannot be done when pride, self-centeredness, or self-protection are dictating our actions, but only through humility, love, and self-sacrifice. This does not mean that we do not take stands against injustices or wrongs; we must do this. Instead of taking the easy recourse of violence or retaliation, however, let us look for the creative response that brings about peace in our relationships and the world around us.

For further reading:

Henri Nouwen, *Peacework: Prayer, Resistance, Community*, (Orbis Books 2005)

Christian Peacemaker Teams, www.cpt.org
Peacemaker Ministries, www.peacemaker.net

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