

# WEA Theological News



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<http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/tc/>

## *Hope II for Europe*

The WEA Theological Commission Chair, Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, opened the recent Hope II conference in Budapest, which was co-sponsored by the TC. He also moderated several of the events and gave three plenary addresses. Other speakers who addressed the 500 participants included Philip Jenkins, Os Guinness and Vishal Magalwadi. The TC also had a special track for evangelical theologians, which focused on how evangelical apologetics could be adapted to the very different cultural and historical situations of the countries of the former Communist world such as Latvia, Romania, Ukraine and Czech Republic.

The first Hope conference was held in 2002. This year's conference opened on May 9 marking the anniversary of the first moves toward the creation of what later became the European Union. The original vision for a united Europe was deeply rooted in Christian values. The aim of Hope II was to reinvigorate those values and the participants agreed to work towards greater cooperation to deal with the economic and moral decline in the continent.

Keynote speaker Philip Jenkins anchored the plenaries with talks on Europe yesterday, today and tomorrow. Originally from Wales, the Penn State University historian addressed several myths widely accepted in Europe. He argued that Europe was deeply rooted in the Christian faith, and scoffed at the vague phrase 'spiritual impulse' used in the proposed European constitution.

He also opposed the many 'myths' about Christianity being an 'aggressive and expansionist' religion, promoting tyranny and ignorance against 'enlightened' explorers and scientists. While Christians were often painted as ignorant obstructionists to progress, the rise of science, for example, had been a Christian project, asserted Jenkins. He also stated that Columbus did not expose the 'falseness' of church teaching about the earth—in fact he was wrong about its size as he found when he did not end up in India! The 'ignorant' monks were right.



## *Asia Theological Association publishes its story*

The Asia Theological Association which networks a more than two hundred evangelical seminaries to encourage quality theological education, has published its history. The book is titled, *New Era New Vision: Celebrating 40 Years of Asia Theological Association*, and is written by Bong Rin Ro, Ken Gnanakan, Bruce Nicholls and Joseph Shao, all of whom have been key figures in the life of the organisation. The editors were Bruce Nicholls, Theresa Roco Lua, and Julie Belding. ATA's member and associated institutions are located from the Middle East to the Pacific. Different sections of the book cover reflections by its presidents, the work of accreditation, publications and a challenging vision of the future potential of the organisation. A number of historic photographs also captures the story of this remarkable body which had a humble commencement when the vision of training Asians in Asia began to capture the imagination of people working in the area.

ATA is also working with Langham Partnership to present a writers' retreat July 11-15, 2011 to encourage and assist local writers to produce quality material. Named WordPower, the retreat is limited to sixteen writers who have work in progress and is being held in Malaysia. The sessions which will be led by gifted and experienced people will provide detailed assistance to guide writers as they prepare manuscripts for publication. Accomplished writer, Dr Bruce Nicholls speaking of the importance of the program, said, "Writing is hard work. It calls for self-discipline, patience to rewrite again and again, and courage to publish. ATA says to you who have a message burning in your heart, to write and rewrite in order to motivate to action your students, your graduates, and Christians in positions of public influence." For more information: [www.ataasia.com](http://www.ataasia.com) Contact Dr. Theresa R. Lua, [agstphil@gmail.com](mailto:agstphil@gmail.com)

**Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians**

## One Lord, One Voice, One Body

**Dr Thomas Schirrmacher, Chair, WEA Theological Commission**

*"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit -- just as you were called to one hope when you were called -- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:1-6)*

There are wrong ways to create unity among Christians. Finding the least common denominator is one of them. Here the gospel tends to become smaller and smaller with every new player involved. Selling the truth or handing over leadership to those who seem nicest are other wrong ways.

But no necessary warning of wrong ways to achieve Christian unity can nullify our task to strive for the unity of the body of Christ and to proclaim *One Lord, One Voice, One Body*. Living in unity means "to live a life worthy of our calling." Three times in these verses Paul mentions our "calling" as Christians as ground for the demand to unity. Being a Christian means to be humble, gentle, and patient to everyone, especially to other Christians. Thinking about wrong ways to unity may not keep us from finding right ways to seek unity; above all, we are to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace".

Does this mean that we should forget about truth? No! If there is only "one God" ('theos'), then in the end there can only be one truth about God ('theology'). If there is only "one Spirit" and if it is the task of the Spirit to lead us into all truth, the Spirit and his truth will not divide but unite us. And if there is only "one faith," we never have to choose between unity and faith, but deeper and clearer faith will always lead to unity, and greater real unity will lead to a deeper and common faith.

In Ephesians 1-3 Paul reveals to us who God is and who Jesus is; he explains forgiveness, resurrection, ascension, and other central topics of Christian teaching. Paul paints a magnificent picture of God's universal purpose with the church of Jesus Christ. It is so magnificent that it seems far away from the reality of our often ugly local churches in.

So what practical outcome does the teaching in Ephesians 1-3 have? Very easy: "Thus I admonish you. . . (Eph 4:1) to live and work for unity! Paul's admonitions in Ephesians 4 are not the end of biblical revelation and teaching but the practical result of it! "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (Eph 4:15).

Let us pray that the Spirit of God keep us from wrong ways to Christian unity, but even more so, to make truly biblical and spiritual ways to Christian unity the centre of our thinking about the one church, the one body of Jesus Christ.

For the *One Body* of the *One Lord* should speak with *One Voice*.

## New Studies on Wesley

A new annual publication focusing on John and Charles Wesley has been announced. *Wesley and Methodist Studies* (WMS) will present scholarly essays examining the life and work of John and Charles Wesley and their contemporaries (proponents and opponents) in the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival. Other aspects including the historical and theological antecedents of the Wesleys as well as their successors in the Wesleyan tradition will also be covered. Studies of the Wesleyan and Evangelical traditions today will be welcome. The primary historical scope of the new publication is the eighteenth century to the present but other relevant periods will be included.

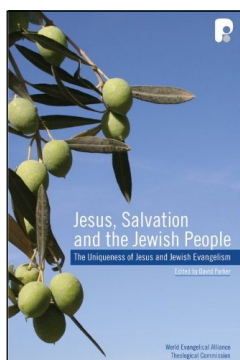
An official statement said that WMS will have a dual and broad focus on both history and theology. Its aim is to present significant scholarly contributions that shed light on historical and theological understandings of Methodism broadly conceived. Essays within the thematic scope of WMS from the disciplinary perspectives of literature, philosophy, education and cognate disciplines are welcome.

WMS is a collaborative project of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre, UK, and The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University, UK, and is published annually by Didsbury Press. Further details about WMS can be found at: <http://www.mwrc.ac.uk/wesley-and-methodist-studies/>

## Redcliffe Lecture On-line

Redcliffe College, a training college in Gloucester, UK, dating from 1892, has streamed on-line a lecture in the Bible and Mission series by Eddie Arthur, Executive Director of Wycliffe Bible Translators. The subject is "Reading the Bible with the Global Church" and it was originally delivered as the college Annual Lecture. It is available on the Redcliffe website at [www.redcliffe.org/bible-and-mission-lecture-audio-2011](http://www.redcliffe.org/bible-and-mission-lecture-audio-2011).

The annual lecture was organised in partnership with Bible Society, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Keswick Ministries and Biblefresh. The evening, hosted by Tim Davy, Lecturer in Biblical Studies, was enjoyed by a variety of local Christians, mission agency members and Redcliffe staff and students. It was also streamed live over the internet which enabled people around the globe to watch, and contribute using Twitter. In addition to Eddie's lecture, the audience discussed some of the issues raised in small groups, and there was a time of question and answers with Eddie Arthur.



### Jesus, Salvation and the Jewish People

*Statement and Papers from Consultation on Jewish Evangelism*

ISBN 978-1-84227-669-3

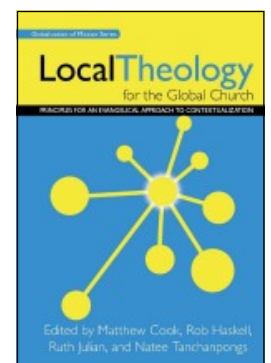
Editor: David Parker

### Local Theology for the Global Church

*Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization*

Editors: Matthew Cook, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian, and Natee Tanchanpongs

ISBN 9780878081110





## Now and Next Kenya March 2011



In March 2011 over 100 Christian leaders from all around the globe gathered in Nairobi, Kenya for the *Now & Next Theological Conference*. The event brought together theologians, seminary professors and principals, NGO workers and missionaries to discuss one common theme: children. The purpose of the meetings was to reflect theologically about the place and significance of children in the life of the church and the kingdom of God. *Now & Next* was co-sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance, Compassion International, Global Alliance for Holistic Child Development, Child Theology Movement, Daystar Christian University, the 4/14 Global Initiative, International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFEMIT), Overseas Council International (OCI), and the Lausanne Movement.

During the 3-day conference, participants engaged in in-depth study about what the Bible and Christian theology have to say about children, about the challenge that churches worldwide face in training leaders to work with children and young

people, about issues surrounding the exclusion of children in regular worship services, and the ways in which God speaks to us through children. Participants were challenged anew to take heed of Jesus' words concerning children, and to see their presence in the church as a sign of God's kingdom. They also shared about their work and ministries and there were very important moments in the programme dedicated to praying for one another.

The conference was structured around 4 key themes:

- Children as signs of the kingdom
- Child in the midst: a challenge to the churches
- Child theology: a challenge to the seminaries
- Children in mission: a challenge to Christian movements and organizations

These themes were addressed in plenary lectures and formal papers, followed by small-group discussions, called the 'global tables'. Dr. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the WEA Theological Commission, offered a paper on the theme of children as a challenge to the churches and also served as a global discussion table leader.

At the end of the gathering the Findings Team drafted a text that summarized not only the key themes of the conference, but called all participants to commit to praying and working on behalf of children and young people in a spirit of humility and cooperation. It is the hope of the conference organizers and the Child Theology Movement that a fresh perspective on the importance of children will gain momentum in Christian circles and that the church worldwide will begin to see children with new eyes – with the eyes of Jesus.

## World Christian Forum 2011

The Second Global Christian Forum will take place from the 4 – 7 of October, at Sulawesi Indonesia, with the theme, 'Life Together in Jesus Christ, Empowered by the Holy Spirit.' Some 300 church leaders and representatives of both evangelical and traditional churches have been invited. The makeup of the conference follows a set of principles used to ensure balance in representing the variety of world Christianity. As well as discussing changing trends, participants will listen to the experiences of the churches from across the world.

These plans were finalised at a recent session of the GCF Committee in Istanbul which also involved discussion on the current profile of world Christianity and the many changes that are in process, the most obvious being the rising surge of new Christians in the southern hemisphere. Statistics from the *Atlas of Global Christianity* told the story: While 66 per-cent of all Christians lived in Europe in 1910, by 2010 only 25.6 per-cent lived there. Less than 2 per cent of all Christians lived in Africa in 1910 skyrocketing to almost 22 per cent by 2010. Professor, Lamin Sanneh of Yale Divinity School said, "The crush of new converts is exposing painful shortcomings and inadequacies in the organizational strength of the Churches". In spite of this stunning change "surviving mental habits still locate Christianity's intellectual and political gravity in Europe and North America". He called for a new 'mental map' that recognised where the strength of the church now resides.

General Secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance Richard Howell and Dr Rolf Hille, representing the World Evangelical Alliance were in attendance.

## Early Christian Sites Neglected

Dr Thomas Oden, Director of the Center for Early African Christianity (CEAC) says, "Many of the early African Christian sites are in shambles, hard to find and have no logistical support for convenience or even accessibility...[These sites] have been buried in the sands of the desert and the fires of the Arab conquest. They need to be recovered not just by Africans of the north but also by young Christians of the south."

The goals of CEAC are to encourage efforts to study, reassess, preserve, and protect these neglected sites, and to support and encourage travel to the ancient pilgrimage sites of North African Christianity. CEAC believes that both research and tourism will contribute to the rediscovery of a shared past buried in the sites of Early African Christianity and rebuilding common interests between Muslims and Christians in North Africa.

Executive Director of CEAC, Michael Glerup, has drawn attention to various informative resources including the Global Heritage Network Site: Cyrene which focuses on endangered archaeological and cultural heritage sites in developing countries, with a current interest in Cyrene.

There are also conferences such as the Seminar on Early African Christianity which was hosted by Bishop Antonius Markos, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Johannesburg in early June 2011. Another one on the 'the faith, courage, tenacity and remarkable intellectual strength' of early African Christianity was held in TCCA, Ndola, Zambia on June 8-10.

CEAC may be contacted at 1300 Eagle Road | St. Davids, PA 19087 USA or [eastern@earlyafricanchristianity.com](mailto:eastern@earlyafricanchristianity.com)

## **A Call to Mourn from the Brazilian Evangelical Alliance**

**C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, TC Executive Director**

*On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, a young man named Wellington entered a school in Realengo, a poor suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and opened fire on students, teachers, and staff. Within a very short period of time, twelve students were dead and dozens wounded. Wellington himself was also shot dead.*

*Churches from the area and around the country gathered in solidarity and with many tears mourned with the families and friends of those teenagers. Over the past weeks financial and other aid has been sent to the victims of the Realengo massacre and at least one Christian publishing house has offered packages of free books to the school and families.*

*On the Sunday after the shootings, the Brazilian Evangelical Alliance sent a letter to all its associates and member churches calling for prayer, silence and mourning. This is the letter, written by Valdir Steuernagel, on behalf of the BEA.*

**I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry (Psalm 40:1).**

**Larissa dos Santos Atanásio, 13 years old**  
**Samira Pires Ribeiro, 13 years old**  
**Laryssa Silva Martins, 13 years old**  
**Bianca Rocha Tavares, 13 years old**  
**Luiza Paula da Silveira, 14 years old**  
**Mariana Rocha de Souza, 13 years old**  
**Karine Lorraine Chagas de Oliveira, 14 years old**  
**Milene dos Santos Nascimento, 14 years old**  
**Géssica Guedes Pereira, 15 years old**  
**Rafael Pereira da Silva, 14 years old**  
**Ana Carolina Pacheco da Silva, 13 years old**  
**Igor Moraes da Silva, 13 years old**

Silence! Tears! Pain! Perplexity! As we remember on this the Lord's Day, the names of the sons and daughters killed last week at Tasso da Silveira Municipal School (Rio de Janeiro), we want to cry with the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, teachers and friends over each one of these children who lost their lives at the very dawn of life.

One of the marks of Christian faith is a God of compassion. A God that knows how to receive and embrace each one who on this day feels the emptiness and pain of the absence of a loved one. Our prayer is that God may manifest himself as the God of comfort to each of those who mourn. May God's tears be joined with the tears that stream down so many faces today.

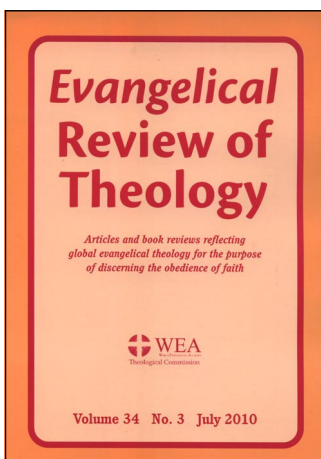
Another mark of our faith is that children should feel themselves attracted and absolutely welcomed by Jesus. In one child's encounter with our Lord, he places her on his knee and blesses her. Our prayer in these days of so much lament, is that parents and relatives of those who cry over the brutal death of their loved ones might be embraced by Jesus' blessing, who shares in their pain.

And last, but surely not least, our prayer is for all the "Wellingtons" of this world who, alone and without purpose in life, end up on the road to destruction that leaves around them not only pools of blood, but also so much desperation.

There are no words of explanation in moments such as these. As an expression of the Brazilian evangelical church, we must share in our perplexity before such brutal violence and pain. Our choice is to place our lives, as a people and as a nation, into the hands of a God upon whom we call for presence and mercy.

**Lord, have mercy!**

**Lord, teach us to build a society in which children do not die this way!**



### **Contribute to TC Journal**

We invite articles, reviews and books for review for our quarterly TC journal.

Initial contact with ideas and proposals to

[tc@worldangelicals.org](mailto:tc@worldangelicals.org)

This journal reflects global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith.

Detailed style guide available.

### **WEA Theological News**

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