

# WEA Theological News



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<http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/list/index.php?com=tc&id=5>

## ***TC Chair Delivers Bible Studies at FEET***



Dr Thomas Schirmmacher, Chair of the WEA Theological Commission, delivered the Bible studies at the 2012 biennial conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians held in Woltersdorf, near Berlin, 24-28 Aug 2012. The theme was 'Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology and Practice'. Basing his studies on Romans 12:1-2, he said that healthy theology as found in Romans 1-11 was the best basis for knowing God's will. 'All ethics necessarily begins with knowing God and His Word.'

Prof. Schirmmacher also declared that Bible believing Christianity puts more emphasis on individual liberty and national faith than any other religion. 'Paradoxically, Christians are also the most persecuted.' He went on to say also that "Another paradox is that the Christian church is the group that is most active in society.' He said that on the one hand 'believers are not of the world and should remain pure', but on the other, Christians were active in the welfare of others throughout the world. Dr Schirmmacher said 'Thirdly, Christianity is the religion with the greatest freedom for the individual.' Finally, he explained, a fourth unique feature of the Christian faith is the translatability of the Bible and the Christian message. "The message of Jesus can be transferred into every language and culture. This means that in theory there are no limits to the possibilities of evangelization and mission.'

Other speakers included Prof Patrick Nullens, Rector of the Evangelical Faculty in Leuven who said in outlining contemporary developments in biblical ethics that 'Love can be seen as the key to understanding the Bible' which echoed the statements of the Lausanne III 2010. There was intense discussion over the statements of another speaker, Dr Tchavdar Hadjiev, until recently working with IFES and lecturing in Bulgaria, about attitudes to towards the Old Testament as a 'Christian' book and the use of biblical criticism. Similarly, interest was aroused in the remarks of Dr. Roland Deines, professor of New Testament at the University of Nottingham, England regarding the status and authority of apocryphal books.

During the business meeting of FEET, Dr. Leonardo de Chirico from Padua, Vice-President of the Italian Evangelical Alliance, was added to the Executive Committee. It is the first time that the Committee has a representative from Southern Europe.

*(Based on reports by Dr. Pieter Lalleman, in Reformatorisch Dagblad <http://www.refdag.nl> 27 to 29 Aug 2012)*

## ***Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell Presents Code to World Baptists in Chile***

TC Executive Director made a presentation of the document, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* at the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering in Santiago Chile on 3 July 2012. Dr Velloso Ewell serves on the executive committee of the Baptist-Muslim relations task force. The document was officially launched in June 2011 and was developed by the World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches and representatives of the Vatican over a period of five years. The 5 page text reflects the classical foundations of Christian witness and the ethics of Christian mission. It is available on the WEA website (<http://www.worldevangelicals.org>).

The presentation to the BWA was chaired by Dr Nick Wood, Director of the Centre for Christianity and Culture at Regent's Park College, Oxford. There was considerable discussion about the document and also about the extreme difficulties being faced in Nigeria due to religious strife. The BWA later passed a [resolution](#) in response.



Dr Nick Wood and Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell at the BWA Annual Gathering, Chile July 2012

**Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians**



## **Student Centre at Bethlehem Bible College Honours President**

The Bethlehem Bible College newsletter reports that the official opening of the Bishara Awad Student Center named in honour of President Bishara Awad took place on 16 June 2012 at an outdoor ceremony.

It was a joyful occasion that was attended by dignitaries and friends of BBC. Beit Jala Mayor Raji Zedan joined with President Bishara and his wife, Salwa, to cut the ribbon prior to the welcoming of guests for an indoor tour and reception at which delectable pastries and sweets were served. The Bethlehem Bible College newsletter reports that the official opening of the Bishara Awad Student Center named in honour of President Bishara Awad took place on 16 June 2012 at an outdoor ceremony.

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The Center is now being used for many events, both college and community related. The beautiful building is outfitted with a cafeteria/dining hall, student canteen, gift shop, and many classrooms which will allow the College to continue to grow and expand.

### *African PhD (cont.)*

The applicant must hold a MA or MDiv degree from an academic institution recognized by the Commission for Higher Education of the government of Kenya, or by ACTEA or ICHE, in one of the following disciplines: Theology, Church History, Biblical Studies, or Missions. Full time professors for the program include Mark Shaw, James Nkansah-Obrempong and George Renner with Diane Stinton and William Dyrness as Adjunct Professors and Tite Tienou as Visiting Professors, along with many other quali-

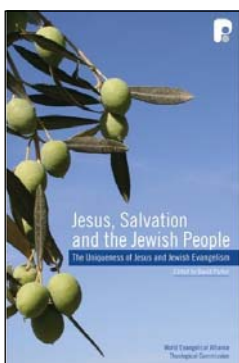
## **Africa International University offers PhD in Theology**

Africa International University (AIU) has announced the commencement of a PhD program in Theology as a new stage in its aim to educate "Christ-centred leaders for the transformation of God's people and the world." AIU is private Christian institution composed of several constituent schools, including Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), School of Professional Studies (SPS), and the Institute for Study of African Realities (ISAR).

The Theology Department will start a PhD in theology with concentrations in three areas, Systematic Theology, Theology and Culture and Theology and Development. All students in the program will take the core Theology courses, and then at least three courses in their concentration with two other courses from other concentrations. This will prepare them for effective ministry and give them a broader and integrative advantage to be effective and productive in their professional task as teachers.

In explaining the reason for the new program, a spokesperson for AIU said, 'There are very few evangelical theologians in Africa today who have PhD degrees in Theology on the continent of Africa to teach in our graduate theological institutions. Most African scholars in our graduate institutions have PhD either in Biblical studies or Missions. While biblical studies and missions are critical for the Church's life and mission, theology I think is the most critical in the African context. Most of the questions society is facing are theological questions. The challenges facing the church in Africa today are theological in nature and therefore, theological reflection cannot be ignored and it must be given special and critical attention. African Theological Institutions lack strong theological faculty at the graduate level where much of these issues are to be reflected upon and students equipped for the work of the ministry within the Church and society. This lack of theological teachers for our theological institutions at the graduate level is not good for the Church in Africa. Currently, people teaching theology classes in our theological institutions were not trained as theologians at the PhD level.'

The Theology PhD Programme consists of two phases: a seminar cycle lasting two academic years, and a dissertation research and writing cycle normally lasting two years, and no more than five years.



### **Jesus, Salvation and the Jewish People**

*Statement and Papers from Consultation on Jewish Evangelism*

ISBN 978-1-84227-669-3

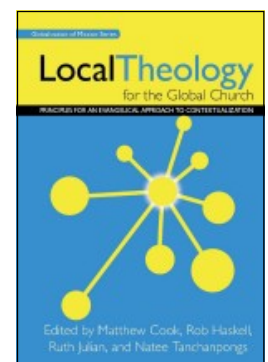
Editor: David Parker

### **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





## ICETE Appoints New International Director

The WEA's Theological Commission (TC) welcomes the appointment of Dr Riad Kassis as the new International Director for ICETE, a WEA Global Partner. Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the TC, says: 'It has been our privilege to work closely with Dr Paul Sanders - we are so grateful for his years of service. We now look forward to building even further on our existing strong ties with ICETE through the work of Dr Kassis and his team'. Dr Velloso Ewell, the WEA Theological Commission and the whole WEA are especially pleased about Dr Kassis joint position as International Director of the Langham Scholars Programme - because this will enable closer, and more effective and purposeful cooperation for biblical theological education around the world.

Dr Kassis will serve as International Program Director for Langham Scholars under appointment by the Langham Partnership. In this role he will direct the operation and strategic development of the program, which now encompasses more than 300 scholars around the world.

Dr. Kassis lives in Lebanon and currently serves as the Regional Director for the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe for Overseas Council (OC). In this position he has wide involvement with theological education in these regions and globally. Riad, himself a Langham Scholar, serves as visiting professor of Old Testament at The Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon. Dr. Kassis is a respected lecturer and author in Arabic and English.

ICETE's triennial Consultation will take place 15-19 Oct 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya with the theme, 'Rooted in the Word—Engaged in the World' and will focus on the impact of the Lausanne Cape Town document on theological education. Key speakers at this the 15th consultation, will include Chris Wright of Langham Partnership, Doug Birdsall of the Lausanne Movement, David Baer of Overseas Council, and Geoff Tunnicliffe of the World Evangelical Alliance. Participation is open to delegates from theological schools linked with the ICETE 8 member bodies around the world.

## Asian Theological Educators meet for Consultation on Scripture



*In our faith and love for the Word of God and in service to the Body of Christ to which we all belong, we hereby solemnly commit that we shall read, study and meditate upon the Word of God with delight and present it to others in understandable language.*

*We affirm our confidence in the primacy and sufficiency of the transforming Word of God in every context in Asia. In the midst of suffering, the Word of God heals and unites the social diversity, religious plurality and political realities of Asia, restoring dignity to women and men created in the image of God.*

The Asia Theological Association broke new ground with a major contribution to the understanding of and use of the Bible from an Asian and Middle East perspective in a consultation on June 18-22, 2012 held at the Malaysia Bible Seminary Recreation and Training Centre, near Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. About 106 delegates came from 20 countries representing 50 theological institutions from the Middle East, across Asia and from the South Pacific, with guests from USA, England, and South Africa. The paper presentations (around 20 of them) were followed by stimulating small group discussions. From the daily comments and reflections submitted by the participants, the integration committee drafted the following Consultation Letter to the Churches:

*We, the participants of Asia Theological Association (ATA) Consultation held at Malaysia Bible Seminary, Kuang, from 18-22 June, 2012 hereby together acknowledge our gratitude to God and our appreciation to ATA for providing us an enriching time of reflection on the theme 'Scripture: Its Authority, Meaning and Mission.'*

*We clearly understand that we need to review substantially and innovate the curricula of our theological institutions in order to embody the Word in our ever-changing Asian contexts. Our curricula must help our students understand and serve their contexts biblically and theologically through the teaching and preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*We strongly feel that every faculty in our theological institutions needs to mentor their students in Christ-likeness so as to form them for practical ministries of the church such as ministries among children, youth, women and men. We need to train them to engage wisely in the socio-political and environmental issues that the world is facing today.*

*Therefore, trusting in the enabling power of the Holy Spirit we commit our hearts and minds to the above affirmation. In our prayerful commitment, we joyfully share the mission of the Body of Christ for the glory of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*

*(Asia Theological Association - <http://www.ataasia.com/>)*

## What Kind of Church?

By Molly T. Marshall

President and Professor of Theology and Spiritual Formation at Central Baptist Theological Seminary

Making my way up I-35 from Fort Worth to Kansas City after the CBF gathering, I saw the following sign: 'Going to hell? Ask Jesus into your heart. Be Saved. Contact a Christian-based church.' Any of these phrases could invite extended theological reflection, at least during a long drive, but it was the 'Christian-based church' line that arrested my attention. What other kind is there?

Defining what constitutes church has been a challenge since early Christianity burst onto the scene during the Roman Empire. One cynic wrote: 'Jesus came preaching the kingdom, and what arrived was the church.' Much has been made of the relationship of the kingdom or reign of God to the church. Augustine went so far as to identify the two. A more tempered perspective is that the church points beyond itself, bearing witness to the kingdom.

The church now can only be understood as it was understood originally – as Hans Kung put it, in light of the gospel. The etymology of the word 'church' derives from the Greek word for Lord. Hence church technically means 'related to the Lord.' Matthew's Gospel renders a vision of Jesus as the architect and builder of the church: 'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church' (16:18). Only one other passage in the Gospels even mentions the word *ekklesia*, Matthew 18:17.

The scarcity of Gospel references to the church does not gainsay its importance, however. Jesus' preaching and teaching laid the foundation for a post-resurrection church. The rest of the New Testament assumes that he authorized its emergence. Apostolic images for the church are multiple. Prominent among them are People of God, Body of Christ, Communion of Saints and Work of the Spirit. Early Baptists loved the term 'the gathered community,' a reference to the importance of worship and service together.

The Nicene Creed offered the first doctrinal framework for the church. The four classic marks were 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic.' To this list, feminist theologian Letty Russell has added 'justice.' Although implied by the earlier terms, she wanted to emphasize that the church cannot be faithful without doing justice. This is a time of precipitous challenge for the church. The predictions are dire. Church attendance is in decline. The number of students enrolling in the master-of-divinity degree, the usual pathway to the pastorate, is waning. Most congregations have an aging demographic. The only increase is in the percentage of unaffiliated persons, the so-called 'nones.'

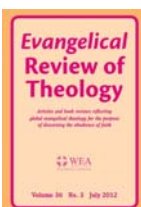
The other part of the sign that troubled me is the idea that the individual can discern whether he or she is going to hell in isolation; one can find Jesus and be saved without the midwifery of the people of God. It suggests that a person needs the church only after all those other things have already occurred. At the risk of being too linear in my reading of a billboard message, the point, as John Wesley observed, is 'no one can be a Christian alone.'

There is good news, however. The cultural disestablishment of the church could actually bode well for authentic ecclesial identity. In a day when dislocated people are longing for community, the church can offer a home where they can be one with the Body of Christ.

For those who feel they can never measure up to a tyranny of exaggerated expectations, the church mediates grace and thereby makes sinful people holy. For persons longing for expressions of faith that move beyond narrow confines of judgment, a church can be catholic in generous orthodoxy. And for those who know they need the deep waters of the long stream of Christian teaching, the church can be faithfully apostolic proclaiming and living the gospel.

In these practices, a church can rightly claim to be 'related to the Lord,' and therefore the right kind of church.

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### Evangelical Review of Theology

Oct 2012 Spirit and Truth

The importance of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the cross opens this issue. We next present an evaluation of Process Theology followed by an innovative reflection on creation care and the Sabbath! Another practical topic is leadership so we turn to a challenging discussion on gender diversity in the leadership of mission organisations. Another important missions topic is the impact of monetary support. Finally, we have an extremely topical discussion on how one university is teaching patristic studies to both Christian and Muslim students with positive results. All of these articles are well worth reading. For more information—contact [chair\\_tc@worldidea.org](mailto:chair_tc@worldidea.org)

### WEA Theological News

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Executive Director: Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell

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Address for News and Subscriptions: WEA Theological News, Friedrichstr. 38, 53111 Bonn, Germany  
Email: [chair\\_tc@worldidea.org](mailto:chair_tc@worldidea.org)