

TC Welcomes New Leader of the World Evangelical Alliance



Thomas Schirmmacher, Executive Chair of the Theological Commission welcomes the new leader of the WEA with this message.

As the Theological Commission we welcome the incoming Secretary General of WEA, Bishop Efraim Tendero. We pray that God will give him all the necessary insight and wisdom, but also the courage to take clear decisions where needed.

For Evangelicals theology is not an extra for upper class, well educated Christians, it is not merely academic theology, but it is the formulation, evaluation, loving, propagation and defence of what we stand for in our relationship to our Creator and Saviour, to the whole body of Christ and to the societies and cultures around us. This becomes true each time we preach or discuss a Bible passage in a home Bible study. This does not

deny the right to study theology in depth, do research and use academic disciplines, but it grows out of it.

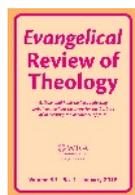
This is why we should and we cannot separate what WEA does in general, and what its theologians think and do. If our theology does not arise from and translate into action and reality, it is superfluous. It is without a theological motivation to honour God and do his will; all our actions remain as merely human actions. Only together can we work for the kingdom of God, the theologians learning from the wider church, but also counselling it at the same time.

Well trained and knowledgeable theologians and other experts can be of great help to the evangelical movement, but they should not think that their knowledge or their degrees automatically give them leadership roles. The New Testament tells us again and again that all Christians should serve the body of Christ with the gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit. This is what we want to offer, not more but also not less: Serving the body of Christ and serving WEA and its leadership with the gifts and expertise God has given us, knowing that these gifts are just one set of gifts needed to lead the body of Christ and reach the world with the gospel.

Bishop Ef has proved in his life and experience, that he knows how to integrate those things and we are glad to serve under him.

Bishop Efraim Tendero has served for more than 20 years as National Director of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), WEA's national Alliance member that represents some 30,000 evangelical churches in the Philippines. He is also President of the Philippine Relief and Development Services (PHILRADS), the relief and development arm of PCEC that works hand in hand with local churches in holistic ministries to serve the poor and needy. Bishop Tendero also serves as International Facilitator for South East Asia of the Asia Evangelical Alliance, was appointed Lausanne Senior Associate for Integrity and Anti-Corruption and is the chair of the board Back to the Bible Broadcast, Evangelism Explosion (EE) 3 Philippines, Global Filipino Movement, and the Philippine Missions Association. He is also the Executive Editor of *Evangelicals Today*, the longest running Christian magazine in the Philippines. Bishop Tendero has a BA in Theology from Febias College of Bible and a Master of Divinity with focus on pastoral counselling from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He received two honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees from Asian Theological Seminary and Febias College of Bible, and a Doctor of Leadership degree from International Graduate School of Leadership. Bishop Tendero and his wife Sierr have four children and two grandchildren.

Call for Papers and Reports



Contributions are invited for the Theological Commissions' two quarterly publications—*Evangelical Review of Theology* and this paper, *Theological News*. ERT uses academic articles in any area of theology of about 8000 words and book reviews of around 700 words. This newsletter uses current reports of developments in theology, seminaries, publications, conferences etc of up to 500 words with illustrations. A Style Guide is available for down-loading at <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/tc/publications/> Also contact the editors (see page 4).



Tribute to Former TC Executive Member

In Memoriam Dr. Emilio Núñez, 1923–2015

One of the principal Latin American evangelical theologians of the past half century, Dr. Emilio Núñez, passed away on 14 January 2015, at the age of 91. Originally from El Salvador in Central America, Núñez began theological studies in 1944 in Guatemala. He subsequently obtained academic degrees in the United States, including his Th.D. earned in 1969 at Dallas Theological Seminary. His dissertation was on the ecclesiology of Vatican II. He also did post-doctoral studies in 1973-74 in the Facultad de Filosofía y Teología in Barcelona, Spain.

In 1966 Núñez was founding Rector of the newly established Seminario Teológico Centroamericano (SETECA) in Guatemala, which became one of Latin America's leading evangelical seminaries. He served in this position until 1979, when he decided to devote full time to teaching and writing. Among the best known of his publications are *Liberation Theology* (1985), and *Crisis and Hope in Latin America: An Evangelical Perspective* (1996). He also authored more than a dozen titles in Spanish, including: *Hacia una misionología evangélica latinoamericana* (1997), and served on the translation committee of the NIV in Spanish. Among his articles published in the *Evangelical Review of Theology* was 'Towards an Evangelical Latin American Theology' (1983). In 2004 he was honoured by a scholarly Festschrift: *Teología Evangélica para el Contexto Latinoamericano: Ensayos En Honor Al Dr. Emilio A. Núñez*.

In Latin America Núñez played a formative role in several evangelical initiatives, beginning with CLADE I (Congreso Latinoamericano de Evangelización) held in Bogota in 1969, and CLADE II, held in Lima in 1972, where he gave the inaugural address. In 1970 he was among other key evangelical leaders, including René Padilla and Samuel Escobar, who founded the influential Latin American Theological Fraternity, and he played a supportive role in that forum for many years. He also participated in the founding events and early years of Latin America's continent-wide evangelical fellowship CONELA (begun in 1982), and its continent-wide evangelical missions congress COMIBAM (begun in 1984).

Núñez also took an active part in various global evangelical events. In 1966 he was a delegate at the World Congress on Evangelism held in Berlin. He was to address the Lausanne Congress in 1974, but owing to his absence his paper was read on his behalf. Later he was a speaker at Lausanne's consultation on world evangelization in Pattaya in 1980, and at its consultation on Evangelism and Social Responsibility in Grand Rapids in 1982. Among other positions, Núñez was at various times a member of the Executive Committee of the World Evangelical Alliance, and of the governing body of the Lausanne Movement.

Núñez played a crucial role in the founding of Latin America's association for evangelical theological education AETAL in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1992, and subsequently served on its Board of Reference. After AETAL was admitted to membership in the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), he was appointed to the ICETE Council of Reference. And at ICETE's 2009 International Consultation for Theological Educators held in Sopron, Hungary, he was honoured with a congratulatory plaque in recognition of his faithful service to international evangelical theological education.

Dr. Núñez was preceded in death by his first wife, Sara, in 2000, and by his second wife, Esther, in 2011. He is survived by his four children.

[Report provided by Paul Bowers; for additional information, contact Dr Pablo Sywulka: psywulka@seteca.edu]

New Think Tank on Moral Issues for Southern Baptists

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) introduced a newly configured think tank to equip Christians and churches to address moral and cultural issues in August 2014. The new Research Institute is made up of Southern Baptist scholars and leaders and its purpose is to help the SBC by generating materials to help churches engage ethical and religious freedom issues. The institute's collection of 70 fellows in four categories includes representatives of all six SBC seminaries; various Southern Baptist colleges, state conventions and churches; public and Christian universities; and organizations such as the American Center for Law and Justice and the Heritage Foundation.

The SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) director said that the think tank 'is to be a catalyst to connect the agenda of the Gospel to the complex questions of the day -- and to do so at the highest levels of academic scholarship for the good of local congregations. I am thrilled to get to work together with an exceptionally gifted band of scholars and leaders as we seek to be a persuasive, prophetic witness engaging the academy and equipping the church.'

Director of the Institute, Barrett Duke, said that the new institute 'comes along at a crucial time for our churches. With our culture nearing crisis mode on many moral fronts, church leaders and laymen alike will be confronted with some challenges the church has not had to address since before the founding of this country. Other challenges are ones the church has never had to address before.'

Adapted from Baptist Press report Aug 13 2014

WEA and WCC Explore Possible Cooperation



In the light of current global realities, representatives of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) met from 20 to 21 January 2015 at the Chateau of Bossey, Switzerland to explore and discuss possible areas of future cooperation.

The meeting featured introductions to the work of the WEA and the WCC, and participants reflected together on current developments in society and churches, and in evangelical and ecumenical movements. They shared current plans and discussed possibilities for closer collaboration.

Stressing the significance of being Christian witnesses, the meeting participants also identified various ways of responding together to the needs of communities around the world. Together the participants read the Scriptures and reflected on similar and different understandings of mission and evangelism. They prayed together and shared stories of faith. Recognizing the importance of a joint response to a suffering world, the participants agreed to continue to meet in order to identify further areas of possible cooperation.

The WEA representatives at the meeting were Dr Wilf Gasser, associate secretary general, Gordon Showell-Rogers, associate general secretary, Thomas Schirrmacher, executive chair of the Theological Commission and ambassador for human rights, Rosalee Velloso Ewell, executive director of the Theological Commission, Bertil Ekström, executive director of the Mission Commission; and John Baxter-Brown, senior advisor on Evangelism and Ecumenical Affairs.

The WCC representatives at the meeting were Georges Lemopoulos, WCC acting general secretary, Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri, WCC associate general secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia, Rev. Dr Ioan Sauca, WCC associate general secretary and director of the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters, WCC associate general secretary for Mission and Unity, Canon John Gibaut, director of the Commission on Faith and Order, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, secretary for the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and Peter Prove, director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

Joint news release of WEA and WCC.

A Small Miracle Opens Way to Successful Evangelical Advocacy

In 2000 a small miracle occurred - some 189 nations agreed to halve extreme poverty by the year 2015. The UN formulated eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve this audacious plan, each one with measurable targets. Recognizing that this was a moment in history of unique potential, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Micah Network initiated a new movement called 'the Micah Challenge'. According to the former head of WEA, Geoff Tunnicliffe and the International Director of Micah Challenge, Joel Edwards, 'This was a time when the stated intentions of world leaders echoed something of the mind of the biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor.'

Writing for the *Lausanne Global Analysis* in March 2015, they said, 'We also recognised that we had the means and capacity to reduce poverty dramatically. In the words of the Micah Call, we committed ourselves, 'as followers of Jesus, to work together for the holistic transformation of our communities.' They added, 'What was really new about the Micah experiment was the emphasis on advocacy. We called international and national decision-makers to account, to fulfil their promise to achieve the MDGs. We wanted to be agents of God's hope and to put justice at the heart of the church.'

In the 'Executive Summary' of their 1700 word full length article, they go on to explain more about the new movement for evangelical advocacy. 'From the very outset, Micah Challenge built its identity on Micah 6:8 with its emphasis on justice, mercy, and humility. Its mission was to prompt evangelical communities around the world to respond to the challenges set by the goals, in order to reduce extreme poverty. As a global evangelical movement we were clear from the outset that, while the focus of our work was political advocacy, our mandate was entirely biblical.

Now Micah Challenge has announced a new approach. 'After 10 years of helping Christians campaign towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to halve poverty by 2015, the first phase of the Micah Challenge campaign concluded in December 2014. The same partners who were the driving force behind the Micah Challenge campaign will be working on launching a new campaigning coalition in 2015, which will be dedicated to the same central commitment of ensuring Christians are advocating for and with the global poor.'

The authors of the review note that there have been a lot of successes, especially, 'extreme poverty has been halved in the last 25 years, millions have been lifted from poverty, and child mortality and primary education have improved considerably.' However, they warn that while 'Micah Challenge exists to challenge governments to deliver our promises to the poor ... we also lament, recognizing that the church—with all its amazing work—still has a long way to go to shape the world God wants. It is a world in which Jesus Christ is lifted to full view and where justice is at home with politics and our economic systems. Such a world sounds utopian, but is possible. Christians who live in that reality between the now and the not-yet are called to yearn for a world which brings future shalom into the present.'

For more about Micah Challenge: <http://www.micahchallenge.org.au/> Adapted from <http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2015-03/micah-challenge-international>

Thomas Oden: A Change of Heart

A review of Thomas C Oden, *A Change of Heart: A Personal and Theological Memoir*

(Downers Grove, IL, IVP Academic, 2014 Hb, pp 384, bibliog, endnotes, index)

by **Raymond James Laird, PhD, Honorary Fellow,**

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Dr Thomas C Oden
Former TC Executive
member

Some books entertain, some educate, some inspire, some excite, and some even amaze. One can only say, after reading this autobiographical memoir of this well-known North American Methodist theologian (and former member of the WEA Theological Commission), that it does all of these – and does so in the superlative. This is the story of an academic, a ‘soft Marxist’, and his journey away from the philosophical-psychological-social trends of modernity that swept into the mainline churches via their seminaries and universities in the 1950s and 60s. The resultant liberal theology denuded the Scriptures of their truth and authority, confused worshippers, and emptied churches.

In essence, this represented the abandonment of the apostolic kerugma in the accord of the Early Church Fathers, whose consensual voice was expressed first in the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. It was only as Oden began to see in practice the poverty of the fruit of the gods of modernity, such as Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx, and their devotees in the seminaries and councils of the churches, that he turned to embrace the collective agreement of the Fathers, and set about to restore it to the centre of theological training so that its fruit would permeate the churches, renew their life, and inspire their vigour.

God does not waste anything. Those early years for Oden were times of learning and perfecting skills that would be critical in promoting the great issues and projects of the Christian faith in later years. He was learning the arts of persuasion, of engaging with people, and organizing followers, skills of which he became master. These are seen in what he has accomplished in bringing together leaders of the diverse expressions of the faith into a working unity towards re-establishing the ancient consensus back to primacy in the thought and life of the church. In this he is the epitome of patience, empathy, and in focusing on the nuclear core and avoiding satellite issues.

A vital part in Oden’s transformation is the people with whom he conversed along the way. The book is like a *Who’s Who* of theologians and church leaders in America and beyond. It is incredible to read of the people at the turning points of Oden’s transformation. This is not the place to elaborate, but in short, Karl Barth told Oden he must get back to the Biblical text; Joseph Ratzinger, before and after becoming Pope, was instrumental in teaching Oden to read the scriptures in the light of Patristic exegesis, and showed Oden how to link systematic theology to the history of exegesis.

The most interesting figure in Oden’s turn around towards classical Christianity was a Jew. When Oden came onto the faculty at Drew University, he encountered Will Herberg, the premier teacher in the Drew Graduate School. Herberg had a similar history to Oden. A longstanding member of the Communist Party, he became disenchanted, and after years of drifting, was persuaded by Reinhold Niebuhr to go back to his Jewish heritage, and to study Judaica at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York where he recovered his Jewish roots. Not long after arriving at Drew, Oden gave a recently published book of his to Herbert to read. A couple of weeks later, after some debate, Herberg told Oden that he was ignorant of Christianity and that he would remain theologically uneducated until he read Athanasius, Augustine and Aquinas. God is full of surprises in those He chooses to get something across. Oden took his advice.

The end result of Oden’s turn-around has been the publication of the massive series *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, followed by four other multi-volume series of related studies. Oden and his colleagues have brought together experts in the respective fields from around the world. This alone is a task well done, apart from his own copious publications and many other projects he has fathered or brothered in the enlightened phase of his life.

This book is more than the story of one person; it is the story of a movement of kindred hearts who have wept over the divisions that have marked the Christian Church and the ideas that have enfeebled it. Oden has documented in outline a revival that has brought fresh hope to many in America and beyond.

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