

WEA Theological News



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Future Plans for TC Announced

Dr Thomas Schirmacher, Chair of the Theological Commission, and Dr C Rosalee V Ewell, Executive Director recently reported on developments in the Commission and announced plans for future activities.

Included in the immediate plans are the commencement of a new website, World of Theology with a weekly commentary and a blog of news from the world of evangelical theology; a CD with good theological content for worldwide distribution; a “Global Issues” series of publications; extend the circulation of the TC’s journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology* into the electronic mode; enlist a number of theological consultants and to re-establish the Global Membership scheme.

Many of the earlier activities of the TC have been on hold or were scaled down in the last two years and these new initiatives are intended to compensate. Dr Ewell will be planning new consultations, exploring joint interests with other WEA commissions and seeking to map national and regional theological bodies and seminaries with the idea of building relations with the TC.

The structure of the TC which has been seriously affected

by events in the last two years will be re-organised in coming days. Those who were most recently involved in the organisational work of TC are being approached concerning their continuing participation.

These and many other aspects of TC work have been the topic of discussion over recent times, and the plans have been formulated as a result of feedback received. These plans were finalised and adopted at a recent meeting of the WEA leadership held at Manado, Indonesia.

Dr Schirmacher has reported that over the last two years the Commission has been involved in a wide range of activities including visits to conferences and consultation, members of delegations to church and civic leaders, preparing statements and providing advice on theological topics for the WEA, participation in the Lausanne Congress, and the TC’s publication activities which include this newsletter and *Evangelical Review of Theology*.

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World Evangelical Alliance International Leadership Meeting, Manado, Indonesia, 2011

Read and subscribe to our quarterly journal - *Evangelical Review of Theology*— turn to page 4 for more details

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

Common Charter for Quality Theological Education

Discussions in South Africa

A common charter reflecting the essential elements of quality in theological education for schools of all denominational backgrounds was proposed by representatives of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI) at a meeting held 4-8 July in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The participants emphasized the strategic importance of African associations of theological schools and the work of the All Africa Conference of Churches and other ecumenical bodies in enhancing theological education in Africa. Participants recognized the need to develop some common understanding between all Christian institutions of theological education on what constitutes quality assurance and enhancement in theological education.

The group said that a balanced concept of quality in theological education should include academic proficiency, spiritual formation and pastoral competencies. Academic presentations and lectures that were presented from the different regions and associations of theological schools and denominational networks will be made available on WOCATI's website. For more information visit the WOCATI 2011 Consultation Communiqué

Religious Freedom Advocate Honoured

The religious freedom specialist Dr Christof Sauer (Cape Town, South Africa), has been appointed Associate Professor Extraordinary by Stellenbosch University on the recommendation of the Theological Faculty's Discipline Group Practical Theology and Missiology. As Prof. Karel T August, the Chairperson of the Discipline Group announced, they are honouring Sauer's contributions to the research of Christian martyrdom theology and religious freedom as well as his expertise in missiology. Sauer was previously a Research Associate and a temporary lecturer in missiology and world religions at the faculty.

Dr Sauer is the Co-Director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom - IIRF (Bonn/Cape Town/Colombo) of the Worldwide Evangelical Alliance and has helped found the IIRF 2007. The 48-year old German also edits the scholarly *International Journal for Religious Freedom*. Dr Sauer is on leave of absence from the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Germany, of which he is an ordained minister.



Prof. Karel T August congratulates Prof. Christof Sauer

Christianity in Ancient Libya

Dr Thomas C Oden, who has close links with the WEA Theological Commission, has added a further volume to his ambitious project on Christianity in ancient North Africa by releasing a new work on Christianity in ancient Libya. A press release for the new book states, 'Buried for more than a millennium beneath sand and the erosions of time are the remnants of a vital, formative Christian presence in Libya. From about A.D. 68 till the Muslim conquest of A.D. 643, Libya housed a vibrant, creative Christian community that contributed to the shape of the faith even as we know it today. By the mid-190s A.D., Cyrenaica could claim favourite sons as the Roman pontiff, Victor the African, and as the Roman emperor, Septimius Severus.

A rich and energetic community produced a wide variety of key players from early martyrs to great thinkers to archheretics. Tertullian, the great theologian, and Sabellius, the heretic, are relatively well known. Less well known are the martyrs Wasilla and Theo-

dore and the great poet-philosopher-bishop Synesius of Cyrene.

Uncovering this North African tradition and offering it to a wide reading audience is the task that Tom Oden sets for himself in this fascinating tour de force. The book, originating as lectures delivered at the Islamic Da'wa University in Tripoli in 2008 and later expanded as the W. H. Griffith Thomas Lectures in 2009 at Dallas Theological Seminary, has been expanded and refined to provide additional insights and references, surveying the texts, architecture and landmarks of this important period of Christian history. It also serves as a valuable companion to Oden's earlier offerings in *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind* and *The African Memory of Mark*.

The WEA TC welcomes this new volume and commends the work of his Center for Early African Christianity. For more information, <http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=3943> and info@earlyafricanchristianity.com



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



Theologians without Borders Joins Langham

The founder of Theologians without Borders (TWB), Dr Geoff Pound, has announced the organization is becoming one of the ministry initiatives of LeaDev-Langham, a group that supports Christian Leadership Development in the Majority World. The new name of will be "Teachers Without Borders" will signify this transformation and new ownership.

Dr Pound, a New Zealander who has served also in Australia, founded TWB in 2006 to provide short term volunteer theological teachers. It has grown quickly and is now too much for one person to manage. TWB has also received enquiries about positions for other fields such as IT, librarianship, counseling and teaching of English. Dr Pound also said, "In recent days I have become increasingly aware that many of the seminaries and colleges that have requested help through TWB have also put out requests to LeaDev-Langham."

As a result of discussions with Lea-Dev Langham about cooperation, it became apparent that the role of TWB could be enhanced greatly by becoming part of Lea-Dev Langham which is a larger organization with more resources.

Dr Pound said, "As I have become more acquainted with LeaDev-Langham I have been impressed with its strategic approach. It comes alongside at the invitation of a local seminary and it gets involved in a range of complementary ministries—faculty training, library and IT resources, campus development, preacher training, humanitarian aid and development, student scholarships and short term adventures."

Volunteers participate in a wide range of short term adventure projects as Academic Administrators and Advisers, Computer Trainers, Educators, ESOL Teachers, Finance and Administration Specialists, Mentoring and Pastoral Specialists, Health Practitioners, IT Specialists, Librarians, Property Development and Maintenance Workers, TESOL Trainers as well as Visiting Faculty.

While it is based in Auckland, New Zealand its vision and mission encompass the Majority World (MW). It has appointed people to help in the coordination of work in several global hubs. It is working on ways that people can donate - including in the USA where Americans can easily invest in its work.

After an initial period, Dr Pound will withdraw from the activities of TWB. He currently works as a writer, teacher and consultant based in the United Arab Emirates. For more information visit the LeaDev-Langham website (www.leadev-langham.org) or contact Tony Plews tony@ldl.org.nz.



Rosalee V. Ewell addressing WEA Mission Commission

Occupy's Imaginative Space

By Marijke Hoek, Coordinator Forum for Change

In a country where the pay gap is widening to Victorian levels, where the estimated corporate tax avoidance is £35 billion, where the executive pay rise is 49 per cent and child poverty levels are considerable, some live in the best of times while others live in the worst of times. In the midst of this 'tale of two cities' people concerned about the values and direction of our society have set up camp, awakening a dialogue about how we can live more justly. They don't have the answers but certainly have the questions. The protest is part of an international phenomenon that has come alive in more than 900 cities worldwide. Though vulnerable, in our time of economic shaking, these transformational moments have the potential to lead to radical, biblical propositions.

The case for a more just division of resources is argued at this week's G20 as well as on the streets. In the midst of the dominance of the City and in a culture of captured imaginations, people of all faiths and none do some imaginative work. The existential questions vocalised by the Occupy crowd resonate with many, and reflect a search for a more (economic) just and loving way of life. Sadly, the opportunity on St Paul's doorstep turned into a crisis. For as Luke Bretherton asks: "What is a Cathedral meant to be but a place where people can come and experience a different time and space, can live, if only for a moment, in a vision of a different future, and thereby have reality re-framed?"

Sitting on the steps of St Paul's, I think of Jesus' engagement with a question from the crowd: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Following a warning about greed, Jesus' parable about living selflessly or living richly towards God seeks to draw the hearers into the story to enable them to see life differently. Jesus' parables are designed to shake up and reconfigure how we intersect with the world. Having told the story, he draws out lessons for the disciples on life's worries, divine provision, generosity, and our responsibility to the poor, seeking first God's Kingdom and guarding our heart. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12).

Listening to the debate on the streets, I see charity workers, pensioners, students, lecturers, political groups and families with children mix and mingle in the debate. The 'What would Jesus do?' banner is an open door to weave in the testimony of Christ. The Sermon on the Steps brings the pulpit to the pavement. It's the stuff some dream of. The Archbishop's timely advocacy for the Robin Hood Tax coheres with the Church of England's longstanding commitment to justice. St Paul's and its Institute will continue to foster an informed Christian response to ethical and spiritual issues of our times: among which financial integrity and the meaning of the common good. The way is open for a meaningful engagement with its neighbours. A crisis turned into an opportunity.

Here and imaginably on every doorstep, the life of Christ awakens a consciousness, disrupts routine and deepens insights. It inspires a commitment to live justly and gives hope for the renewal of all things. May we all live richly towards God.

This article appeared on the Evangelical Alliance of UK Friday Night Theology series 4 Nov 2011

What is 'Islamic Fundamentalism'?

Christine Schirmacher

The author is Director of (forthcoming) International Institute for Islamic Studies of the World Evangelical Alliance and also teaches at Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium, and the State University in Bonn, Germany.

'Islamic fundamentalism' is politics in the name of Islam, with the goal of the creation of a state under the rule of a caliph. After allowing for a certain period of transition, Islamic fundamentalists call for all areas of society, such as marriage law or criminal law, to be aligned with Islam's religious law – the Sharia. Also, the way of life to be imitated as precisely as possible is Mohammed's lifestyle in the 7th century. Needless to say, in such a state there is no place for democratic freedoms, equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, or between men and women.

Islamic fundamentalists do not necessarily use force but employ strategy, exercise influence, use the elective process, financial resources, educational institutions, and assistance for the needy in order to advertise their views and to implement their basic approach. The border to violent Jihadism is a fluid one, above all due to the fact that the early Islamic fundamentalist architects and leaders in the first half of the 20th century did not exclude the use of violence in certain cases.

It is very important to know the history behind this because representatives and movements of Islamic fundamentalism have already been home-grown in Europe for a long time. The most important works of the religio-political leaders have been translated into European languages and exercise influence on the Muslim community present among us. Islamic fundamentalism is by no means a topic restricted to the Middle East. This is because the conflict of worldviews has long since been taking place in the middle of Europe. Whoever wants to defend the freedoms and achievements of our democracy, such as religious freedom, cannot get around the need to be informed and to occupy himself or herself with the architects of Islamic fundamentalism.

A large portion of the public really only became aware of Islam after September 11, 2001. Unfortunately, when it comes to dealing with Islam, the picture is still frequently defined either by panic or by downplaying the situation. A matter-of-fact, informed, and sophisticated debate is, however, also urgently needed with the intellectual construct of Islamic fundamentalism. This is needed in order to understand which goals several Islamic organizations are pursuing in Europe. The integration debate also urgently has to acknowledge what fatal role is being played by local Islamist groups that set boundaries and refuse to integrate. This is the only way that Muslims can be distinguished from Islamic fundamentalists.

Islamic fundamentalism has grown enormously in strength over the last 25 years, in Europe as well as in the Islamic home countries, and developments in the European Muslim community cannot be unhitched from them. One reason for this is deep disappointment. When it comes to prosperity, progress, civil rights and liberties, and political clout, countries marked by Islam have been experiencing an increasingly strong fall in comparison to the western world. Since Islam is simultaneously preached as the religion and societal order that is superior to all others – after misguided experiments with socialism, nationalism or Pan-Arabism – from a Muslim point of view the solution can only lie in Islam itself and in a return to its comprehensive practice.

The question of whether this or that Muslim group, or individual Muslims, want to integrate in Germany (or other western countries) should not hinge on the question of whether they are very religious or not, and it should not be required of Muslims that they give up their religiosity. Religious Muslims are not per se holdouts against integration and promoters of violence. It is also important for politics to not suppress the question of the validity of the Sharia in political and societal spheres but to bring it to light and to confront it. Generally, Islamic fundamentalists will only be able to temporarily accept the German Constitution, since their point of reference remains the Sharia. There really is no place in Germany for political Sharia law.



Evangelical Review of Theology

January 2012

Commending the Truth

January 2012's journal features articles by Nelly Garcia Murillo and Joel A Carpenter on Christian Higher Education in a global perspective with biblically focused contributions by Derek Tidball on Leadership and by Michael Parsons on Calvin's understanding of prayer. A highly important feature is Anthony McRoy's instructive insights into how to deal with Western Islamic polemics. An Indian writer concludes with a commendation of Scripture as God's Word.

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