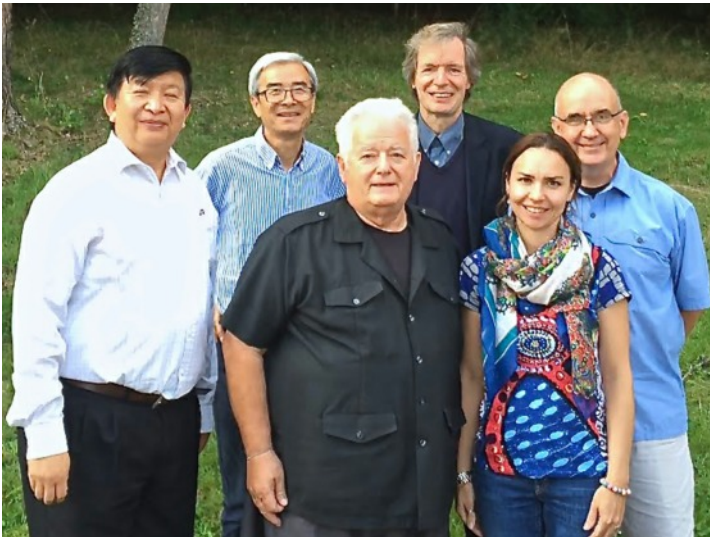


## Global Forum for Theological Educators



Through the work of its Executive Director, Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell, the TC has been involved in the creation and planning of a new network – the Global Forum for Theological Educators (GFTE). GFTE aims to bring together women and men involved in theological education from around the world and from all Christian traditions for a time of prayer, fellowship and mutual learning. The executive team has met 3 times and plans another meeting to prepare for the first GFTE gathering scheduled to take place in Dorfweil, Germany 16-20 May of 2016.

Please keep the committee and the work of GFTE in your prayers. This is a unique opportunity for educators to come together not just as representatives of institutions or organisations, but as Christians seeking to live out their discipleship in a multiplicity of teaching contexts.

Our hope is that as these leaders gather and meet one another, some of the barriers and distrust that separate us

will be challenged and that like the encounter of Peter and Cornelius, all will be transformed by the power of the Spirit. In such transformation we will see greater and better witness and service to God's kingdom.

## ACTEA Reports on Theological Institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone



ACTEA News, the official journal of the Association for Christian Theological Education in Africa, based in Nairobi Kenya has report on the situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone seriously affected by the devastating outbreak of Ebola. A lead article in its January 2015 edition said,

'We do appreciate your prayers for our institutions that are seriously affected by the outbreak of Ebola. The Evangelical College of Theology (Sierra Leone) and Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary have had numerous challenges since the outbreak of the virus over six months ago. Ebola is not totally gone, although there are fewer cases than before. Both institutions have remained closed

in compliance with their Government's pronouncement for all schools in the country to close. Liberia government thinks schools can reopen, something which has attracted many mixed reactions from the public. Some think it is timely; some think it is not. LBTS is about to reopen in compliance with Government's pronouncement for all schools to do so.'

The statement goes on to explain: 'The challenges are numerous. Some preventive protocols were released by Government to prevent new cases among students, but it seems the expenses will be too huge for many schools to incur without subsidy from Government or elsewhere.'

It is reported that 'The closure of schools and colleges has frustrated parents, students, teachers and education authorities/providers in these two countries. The fear that many students will not be able to return to school is becoming imminent due to some anti-education practices of some students, while for others it may result in the death of their education funders due to the Ebola virus. In fact, many families have been out of jobs since the outbreak — this includes both the staff of LBTS and TECT. How students will generate their tuition costs is plaguing many families.'

ACTEA has announced that assistance for the two schools is welcome and those who are interested should contact the institutions directly. For more information, visit <http://www.acteaweb.org/index.php/news-notice/2015-01-23-12-05-07>

**Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians**

## Africa Loses Leading Evangelical Theologian

### Dr Isaac Zokoué



**Dr Isaac Zokoué**  
(Picture: BWA Connect)

Isaac Zokoué, a former member of the WEA Theological Commission and leading evangelical theologian died on September 11, 2014 at the age of 70. He was president of the Fraternal Union of Baptist Churches in Central African Republic (CAR) and was pastor of the Baptist Church of Kina, a neighborhood of Bangui, the capital of CAR. Dr Zokoué was co-founder of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology (FATEB) of Bangui, which opened in 1977, and was its president for 14 years, from 1986 to 2000. FATEB was an initiative of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, training and equipping pastors and leaders for churches and Christian institutions from 21 African countries. At the time of his passing, he was professor of systematic theology and coordinator of the doctoral program at FATEB.

Dr Zokoué, who was originally from the Ivory Coast, was also a former chair of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches in CAR. He was a member of the International Advisory Board of the Center for Early African Christianity, which aims to educate African leadership in African intellectual literary achievements, especially those from the Christian tradition of the first millennium.

He played a key role in peace negotiations and reconciliation initiatives in CAR, heading one of three national conferences in 1998 that helped to put an end to the 1996-7 national unrests. From 2001-2002, he facilitated talks between the CAR government and labor unions over salary arrears.

Dr Zokoué received his doctorate in theology from the Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Strasbourg, in France. He wrote several works, including *Jesus Christ the Savior: The Mystery of the Two Natures*.

As well as serving on the Theological Commission, he also contributed to one of the important TC theological consultations held in London in 1996. His paper was published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 20/4 October 1996, 354-364 as *Crisis of maturity in Africa*.

*Adapted from BWA Connect April 2015*



## Advances for Asia Theological Association

The Asia Theological Association met on January 20-23, 2015 for its annual meetings at the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines with General Secretary, Dr. Joseph Shao, reporting on a favourable year in relation the quality assurance affiliation, literature partnership, international dialogue, and infrastructure development. Regional Secretary of ATA India, Dr. Paul Cornelius, reported on accreditation visits, registration of students attending ATA accredited schools, database consolidation, discipleship seminars, and collaboration with Martin Luther Christian University. There were numerous developments also recorded in various policies for non-campus programs, and the new version of the Manual was approved. The ATA Publications Committee reports focused on the partnership agreement between ATA and Langham Literature, a grant for writers' scholarships from Asbury Seminary, and the Asia Bible Commentary series.

The four-day annual meeting was concluded with the announcement that Dr. Theresa Lua will be the new full-time General Secretary of the ATA International. Dr. Lua is presently the Secretary of Commission on Accreditation and Educational Development (CAED). The planning team for the next General Assembly will meet in August in Bangkok, Thailand. On February 28, 2015 the ATA-Korea had its General Assembly and renewed the offices for two years.

*Adapted from ATA News, Jan-Mar 2015 - <http://www.ataasia.com/ata-newsletters>*

## Marking 500 Years Since Luther's 'Social Media' Posting

2017 marks 500 years since Luther's postings on the social media site of his day – a church door. His 95 'posts' started a social and spiritual movement we know as The Reformation. There are a number of global events happening to mark the occasion, one of which the The Kirkentag in Berlin, Germany. Running alongside there are plans afoot for the second Global Ecumenical Theological Institute.

The first 'GETI' was held in Korea in parallel to the WCC Assembly. Rosalee Velloso Ewell, TC Executive Director, and John Baxter-Brown (JBB), TC Special Advisor on Evangelism, were guest lecturers there. JBB was invited to represent the WEA-TC at the second planning meeting for GETI. It aims to bring together 150 students to Berlin in 2017. They will be studying in Europe but from across the globe, of different denominations and traditions.

The aim is for these to be young theologians, people who may become thought leaders in their traditions, to encounter and learn from others, and to focus on the mission field that is modern Europe, reflecting on what the Reformation means for the 21st century. More information will be released about this stimulating and missiologically significant event in due course.

## Evangelicals Finalise Pontifical Council Dialogue



Dr Rolf Hille, who leads the WEA initiative conducting dialogues with other religious groups reports that the current series with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity is entering its final stages. Dr Hille said, 'We will have the final dialogue session between evangelical theologians and representatives of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The evangelical group includes Dr. James Nkansah and Dr. Claus Schwambach from the TC. We will meet from August 31 until September 4 2015 in Saskatoon, Canada.

'This meeting will summarize the result of our earlier discussions. We will focus on two issues mainly: first, scripture and tradition, because this is the key problem for hermeneutical and epistemological questions in regard to scripture and theology in general. The second focus is the role of the church in the process of salvation. There has been some progress in terms of the question of justification.

The dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has made clear that the open questions of the 16th century are almost answered.

There is now a good deal of mutual understanding between Protestants and Catholics as far as soteriology is involved. But still open is the question to what extent evangelical Christians who stem from the reformation churches have full access to salvation according the catholic view.

On the catholic side there is still a prominent understanding of the priesthood and its spiritual and theological authority, last not least, in regard to the sacraments. In addition to these topics, the current dialogue between Evangelicals and Catholics shall figure out how the relations at the grassroots level really are. Therefore we did a questionnaire and sent it to all national evangelical alliances as well as to the catholic bishop conferences around the world.

After the editorial work will be finished we plan to send the documents to the Vatican as well as to the International Council of WEA. These boards will give their approvals and after this evaluation the text is ready for publication and further theological discussion.'

## 'A.D.' - The Bible Continues

The executive producer of 'A.D.' a TV mini-series continuing on from 'The Bible', Mark Burnett invited a small group of Christian leaders to be the first outside of NBC to see the first episode. Producing 'The Bible' as a theologically sound film solely for secular TV, was a risk, but it was a success, breaking many records, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Thomas Schirrmacher, Chair of the WEA Theological Commission, made this comment after watching the pilot episode:

'In the 'A. D.' series, the best of our modern culture marries with the best of biblical scholarship and the 2000 year-old story of the gospel. As a scholar, I am not the type of person to exaggerate or to help advertise things to do people a favour. But when I congratulated Mark, saying that this is not only the best "block buster" on the Bible, but very true and close to the Biblical text, it was my professional opinion as one moderating evangelical theology globally. And I am pleased that former Secretary General of WEA, Geoff Tunnicliffe, played a major role in getting Christian churches of all confessions to back the program. By the way: The near to perfect music is from my favourite film composer, Hans Zimmer!'

## Theological Educators to meet in Turkey

Theologians and educators from around the world will gather 6-11 November 2015 in Antalya, Turkey to discuss how theological education impacts the Church and the world under the theme, Engaged and Effective. The consultation is sponsored by ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education). Some of the topics to be covered include impact-based assessment, measuring the outcome of spiritual formation, new trends and innovative models in global theological education and sustainability and impact assessment.

The consultation will have plenary sessions as well as workshops, breakout groups, and electives. Speakers include Dr. Chris Wright of Langham Partnership, Dr. David Baer of Overseas Council International, Dr. Dan Aleshire of ATS, and Dr. Elizabeth Sendek of Biblical Seminary of Colombia.

Registration is online, at <http://www.icete-edu.org/antalya/> and the site includes seminar topics and information about optional tours taking place during the consultation. The consultation was to have been held in Ukraine and on another date but it was relocated to Turkey due to the international situation.

ICETE is a global community, sponsored by nine regional associations of theological schools, to enable international interaction and collaboration among all those concerned for the enhancement of evangelical theological education worldwide.

*Adapted from ICETE news release <http://www.icete-edu.org/>*

# Evangelicals and Ecumenicals

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

Neither the World Council of Church (WCC) nor the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) has an even, linear history, but both their stories have ups and downs; both are also the beneficiaries of several very different streams from history coming together. They both grew gradually by including older ecumenical initiatives and global organizations, which again have their own history. They both mirror the world around them in the last six decades since World War II.

However, in the development of both bodies I find four common central topics going back into the early history:

1. *The unity of Christians*, as there is only one Jesus Christ and thus only one body of Christ,
2. *World mission*, that is the task to jointly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole world,
3. *Religious freedom for all religions and beliefs*, which is the other side of the coin of peaceful mission without any coercion,
4. *Human rights*, e.g. fighting slavery and racism.

I am convinced that both the WCC and the WEA are returning to their core history more than ever and thus find more in common than they had 30 years ago. Gerhard Lindemann, who wrote a new, well researched study on the early decades of the Evangelical Alliance (EA), sheds much new light on the core topics of the WEA and shows that the WEA is much closer to its early history today than some evangelical critics, to the right of WEA, suppose when they criticize the present course of WEA as being too 'worldly' and too open to others. Lindemann sees the Alliance as being, from the outset, the first organized form of ecumenism, as the sole true ecumenical organization which emerged from revivals in the 19th century. He shows that the Alliance itself frequently used the word 'ecumenical' in its early documents. Lindemann also sees the Alliance as a part of the transnational pietist movement of revival after Pietism, which should not be judged sweepingly as 'anti-Enlightenment' or 'anti-modern'. Rather, with respect to questions of religious freedom or the fight against slavery, it was also ahead of its time.

After the initial success of the Ecumenical Movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, church leaders agreed in 1937 to establish a World Council of Churches, based on a merger of the Faith and Order Movement and Life and Work Movement organizations. The merger took place 1938, but due to the war, the WCC was founded ten years later in 1948; there were further additions later, including the International Missionary Council.

The WCC itself was thus founded in the beginning stage of the Cold War in 1948, as was the present legal form of WEA in 1951. I think that both were influenced by postwar developments for the better and for worse, much more than has usually been seen by the actors, especially as theological topics seemed to be at the top of the agendas, while often it was actually politics and social changes that made the difference.

The development of the first statement of faith of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846 is stirring, as the first two sentences have produced a dynamic tension of complementary principles which we must embrace and employ: first, the divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, and second, the right and duty of private judgment in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. On the one hand, you find here an unalterable and unifying provision in the sufficiency of Scripture. On the other hand, it reflects an extreme pluralism, obligating each believer to interpret the foundation for himself.

Evangelicals are marked by two opposite poles, and one does not do them justice if one only observes or stresses one pole of those positions. On the one hand, there is the *centrality of the Holy Scriptures* inherited from the Protestant Reformation. On the other hand, there is *individual salvation* that arises from Luther's question: 'How do I find a gracious God?' It is a matter of each person having a personal relationship with God and there arising as a corrective to the centrality of the Scriptures the entitlement, even the obligation, of every Christian to study the Scriptures himself and to interpret them. The result is that such an individual stands on a level with every evangelical theologian, no matter how learned, even if it is his pastor. Thus the evangelical world unites dogmatic constriction, thanks to the position of the Bible, with an enormous democratic breadth, because every Christian is allowed to have a say.

The second two poles are missions and religious freedom. From the enormous emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus, what arose was a strong stress on the 'duty to witness' as well as a strong emphasis on religious freedom. The concept of voluntarism marks not only free churches - it also marks intra-church pietism, for which faith should not be something that is only external, or inherited, but rather something which is personally experienced. But for all that, no one can be forced into it. Indeed, coercion destroys the possibility of accomplishing a truly independent, personal repentance before God. Thus we prefer a smaller church with convinced members over a large church with many members who belong only due to societal, family, or other pressures.

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