

Rev Dr Rolf Hille Honoured for Long Service



On March 4th, at the WEA's International Leadership Forum in Seoul, Korea, Bishop Efraim Tendo and Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell paid special honour to Rev Prof Dr Rolf Hille, former Executive Chair of the WEA's Theological Commission. Dr Hille's latest work for the WEA was the conclusion of a 6-year long formal dialogue process with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU). At the ILF, Dr Hille was interviewed by John Baxter-Brown (TC Senior Advisor on Evangelism) about this work with PCPCU.

Rev Hille has served the WEA for 30 years both in the Theological Commission and in ecumenical relations. During the closing ceremony of the ILF, he was honoured with prayers and presented with a special plaque for his faithful service to the WEA over such a long time. The text of the plaque read: 'Presented to Rev Prof Dr Rolf Hille - In grateful recognition of his thirty years of service at WEA's Theological Commission and in Ecumenical Relations. "For it

is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." *Philippians 2:13* Presented by Bp Efraim Tendo, Secretary General / CEO of the WEA, at the WEA International Leadership Forum, Seoul, South Korea, March 2016.'

Dr Hille holds a PhD in Theology from Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, and was a lecturer and student advisor of Albrecht-Bengel-Haus in Tübingen, 1989-1995. He became principal in 1995 just before being appointed to the Theological Commission, and served until 2009. He now directs its doctoral supervisory program. He was Chair of the WEA Theological Commission 1996-2008, and since 2009, Director for Ecumenical Affairs of WEA from 1993-2013. He was also chairman of the Fellowship of German Evangelical Theologians and has authored many theological publications.

TC Executive Director in Burkina Faso



Dr Velloso Ewell with some of the Tearfund staff and the organizer of the conference, Prof Mbairdbee Njegollmi

In February 2016, Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell (Executive Director of the TC) spent a week in Burkina Faso teaching and facilitating discussions on theological education and integral mission. In Ouagadougou she participated in 'Thinking Theologically,' a large gathering sponsored by Tearfund that brought together leaders and directors of Bible colleges from across West Africa.

The aim was to encourage these people to share best practices in holistic teaching and training, to learn and discuss with one another about the pressing challenges

of doing theology in their region, and to pray. While in Burkina Dr Velloso Ewell also spent some time at the Assemblies of God Bible College in Koubri where she spoke in chapel and in many of the classes.

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

Evangelical Theologians to meet at Lutherstadt Wittenberg



The biennial conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) will be held at Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany, August 26-30 this year. The theme of the conference is 'The Reformation - its theology and its legacy'. It will open with its first main paper and discussion on the evening of August 26, delivered by Professor Christoph Raedel (Freie Theologische Hochschule Giessen) on 'Guilt, Shame and Forgiveness'. This session will be preceded by an opening address by the FEET Chairman, Professor Pierre Berthoud. There will be five main papers discussing questions such as leadership, authority, and freedom of conscience.

Other papers will focus on church unity, education, worship, art, persecution and other religions, but the special feature will be a series of papers on the regional impact of the Reformation. Another feature will be a guided tour of various historical sites in the Wittenberg such as the Castle Church, Town Church, Luther's House and Melancthon house. A post-conference tour to other key Luther sites at Erfurt and Eisenach will also be available.

FEET is a network of theological scholars seeking to combine the highest academic standards with a commitment to the authority of Scripture and to orthodox biblical theology. Its main function is to organise its biennial international conference but it has also helped to establish national theological organisations in many countries and it is associated with the multi-lingual [European Journal of Theology](#). Conference registrations are required by 30 June. Further information may be obtained from Mr Gert Hain at kasse@afet.de or by [clicking here](#).

Appreciating Africa



Veteran missionary, Jim Harries, has published a new book, *New Foundations for Appreciating Africa: beyond religious and secular deceptions*, drawing upon his time in Zambia and East Africa which stretches over nearly 30 years. Harries, (PhD in theology, University of Birmingham, UK), is chairman of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission (AVM) and has had many articles and reviews published in our journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology*. His primary formal occupation is Bible teaching with indigenous churches in the Luo and Swahili languages. He says, 'The natural world alone provides an insufficient foundation for life. African people, as others, look elsewhere for guidance. The secularism implicitly taught in educational systems throughout the African continent frequently fails to engage with weaknesses in today's status quo. Here-uncovered Christian roots of secularism can provide a means to interact with African and majority world realities. It is time for dominant western scholars to stop ignoring activity in the divine realm.'

The European edition of this 106 page book has been published with VKLW publishers, the International/US edition will be published by Wipf&Stock and will be available at amazon.com. See also WEA Theological Commission World of Theology Series, (No 9) ISBN 9783862691159, <http://www.bucer.de/ressourcen/wea-cd.html> (last entry).

ICETE Consultation Materials On-line

Materials from the 2015 consultation of ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education) have been posted on-line at the TheologicalEducation.net site. Click [here](#) for the URL. The gathering was held at Antalya, Turkey in November 2015, with the theme, 'Engaged and effective: The impact of theological education.'

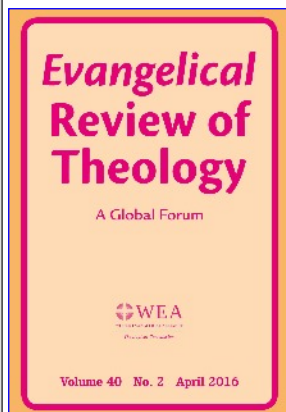
One of the presenters was Dr C Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the TC, who discussed the ways in which churches view theological education and how the connections between church and seminary can be strengthened. A number of leading speakers were featured at the plenary sessions, while workshop sessions covered topics assessing church-based theological education, on-line learning, oral learning and the use of technology. For more information about ICETE, visit <http://www.icete-edu.org/>

Reformation Commemoration

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Roman Catholic Church will hold a joint ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation on 31 October, 2016, in Lund, Sweden. The event is taking place in anticipation of the 500th Reformation anniversary in 2017. It will include worship based on the recently published Catholic-Lutheran 'Common Prayer' liturgical guide. 'The LWF is approaching the Reformation anniversary in a spirit of ecumenical accountability,' said Junge. Cardinal Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity explained: 'By concentrating together on the centrality of the question of God and on a Christocentric approach, Lutherans and Catholics will have the possibility of an ecumenical commemoration of the Reformation, not simply in a pragmatic way, but in the deep sense of faith in the crucified and resurrected Christ.'

(Adapted from WCC press release 10 February 2016)

TC Journal Features new Theology Book by Prolific Author



A new introduction to theology is a special feature of the April 2016 issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology*, published by the WEA Theological Commission ([click here for details](#)). The journal presents a panel discussion of the book, by Amos Yong (Fuller Theological Seminary), whose work has appeared in the TC's publication before, both in the form of articles by him and reviews of his books. This new volume is titled, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity*, a paperback (477 pages) published by Baylor University Press in 2014. Unusually for a book of this type, it includes 56 colour images which form an essential part of the presentation; there are other interesting features of the book brought out by the panel, not least of which is the way it starts its theological vision with eschatology!

The presentation consists of a group of papers which arose from a symposium held at Lee University in Cleveland TN in November 2015. They are introduced by Christopher A. Stephenson who sets the scene for the book. Then follow four reviews - by Lisa P. Stephenson, Chris Green, Mark H. Mann, and Thomas Jay Oord. They are rounded off by a response from

Yong himself who reflects on some of the points raised by the articles, helping to explain his vision of a renewalist theology.

For more details, contact Alphagraphics at periodicals@alphagraphics.co.uk

Schirmmacher: Human Rights prior to all Religions and World Views



TC Executive Chair, Dr Thomas Schirmmacher, recently spoke at a Georgian-German Symposium entitled 'Christianity and European Civilization' conducted by the Professorenforum and the International Center for Christian Studies at the Orthodox Church of Georgia (ICCS) at Scheuern near Pfaffenhofen in Bavaria.

In his opening lecture, 'Christianity and Human Rights,' he declared that the modern idea of human rights cannot to be adequately legitimated without seeing their origin in Christianity: 'Human rights are predicated upon the essence of human beings as creatures of God, not in their adherence to a religion or a world view', he said.

Human rights and their claim to universal validity were codified in the form of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued by the United Nations in 1948, admittedly without having a generally accepted derivation and justification provided with them. However, Schirmmacher expressed the fear that if there is no higher authority upon which retrospective dependence can be placed with respect to the human rights catalogue, then human rights can only be seen as the result of a vote and would only be valid as long as they were agreed to. Their position as prior to the state can only be justified in a manner relating to world view.

Schirmmacher analyzed the theological foundations of the human rights discussion, saying, 'People, and indeed this means all people and not only Christians, are creatures of God and images of God and therefore have a sublime dignity which precedes everything else. This dignity is independent of how the individual stands in relation to God. Also, then, it is independent of whether that person is a Christian or not. Accordingly, human dignity and human rights are grounded in the essence of what it means to be a human made in the image of God. Consequently, it is not the state which produces human rights. Rather, the state only formulates and protects them.'

He concluded by arguing that Christian churches cannot claim human rights as their own. 'We Christians know that the fact that we believe in God does not protect us from bad decisions and actions, as numerous examples from history demonstrate.' However, he added, 'it would help many religious people around the world if they would look less at the secular and thus, for them, more threatening character of human rights. Rather, they should stand up with Judaism and Christianity for the authorization of human rights by the Creator and for anchoring human rights in the individual's created nature.'

Since its founding at the end of the 1990s, the 'Professorenforum' has brought together scholars from various subject areas, countries, and denominations for discourse on Christian and Occidental values and world view and their significance for academia and society. The Professorenforum also organizes discussion events at German universities and in some non-German-speaking foreign countries. This has also occurred since 2013 in the form of a Georgian-German dialog. This year's Symposium was opened by the Georgian Metropolitan Daniel (Datuashvili), who said, 'The main goal of our conference is to put the role Christianity has played in the development of intellectual culture before the eyes of European society and the entire world. Faith and scholarship do not stand counter to each other. Rather, they complement each other.'

Adapted from Bonner Querschnitte 390 – No. 54/2015

Theology in the Service of the Church

By Rev Dr Neville Callum, General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance



When his book, *Salt, Light and A City: Introducing Missional Ecclesiology* was released in 2012, Graham Hill promised his readers a companion volume that would draw from theological works in the 'Majority World' as a contribution to a better understanding of the missional nature and practice of the church. The promised book, *Global Church: Reshaping our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalizing our Churches* (Downer's Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016) is now available. In deciding to write this book, Hill set himself an ambitious project and many readers will agree that he has lived up to the expectation formed in the minds of those who read his earlier work.

Hill names the book's audience: The work is written primarily for the people in the 'Global North.' Hill wants them to 'abandon their flawed Eurocentric and Americentric worldviews' and adopt a 'new global and missional narrative' influenced by what they can learn from 'the Majority World and indigenous cultures...about the church's mission, worship, theology and community.'

Hill's plan is impressive: He peruses theological writings emerging in the Majority World in order to discern what may be gleaned for the benefit of the church in the Global North and beyond. Of course, it is difficult for any one person to secure sufficient access to the vast body of literature produced in the Global South. We can have nothing but admiration for those who are bold enough to try to develop an adequate understanding of ideas that emerge from contexts vastly different from their own.

Of course, where theological reflection is understood as primarily a constructive task undertaken more through the spoken rather than written medium, printed essays reflect only part of the story of a people's reflections on God's mission among them. However, printed works are often more accessible to those who are not hearers of the sermons and presentations given in Bible study sessions and elsewhere.

Like those who participated in the 2004 Pattaya Forum, Hill opts for the term 'Majority World Church' over the church in the Global South. One reason why some people from the part of the world that this term references prefer to describe themselves as coming from the Global South is that they have seen how a quantitative calculus has tyrannized some Christians in other parts of the world. Quantitative measurement, whether of money or people, tells a story, but not the whole story, and often the story it tells tends to prioritize quantity over quality – a habit that puts at risk those who are focused on Christian discipleship.

Hill's goal is clear: He wants the church in the Global North to listen to, and learn from, the insights emerging in the 'Majority World Church.' He calls on Christians in the North, whom he accuses of having ignored the voices from the South, to participate in fresh conversations that will evince a new global missional narrative. These conversations, he says, 'must be multivocal, multicultural, multipeopled, missional and glocal (global and local).'

Hill has produced a book that will be appreciated by anyone who cares about our interdependent churches, their vocational self-understanding and the manner in which they participate in the mission of God in the world today. Hill makes it clear that his book does not address the perspectives of those in communities in diaspora. It will be interesting to see whether such communities will claim that what Hill passionately calls for corresponds in what they seek to do every day.

Meanwhile, people from the Global South will want to continue to interrogate how far their understanding of God's ways of working in their cultures is influenced by insights from metropolitan centres. They will want to continue to develop their own contextual theologies – a task those in the North have been doing for centuries. Then, because of the catholicity of the church, they will want to dialogue with their fellow Christians from the Global North, but without ever wanting to impose their own views on others. Then, a way will need to be found to determine how the partners will proceed in crafting new narratives in response to Hill's invitation.

Those who, like me, are from the Caribbean will want the contributions that several of their theologians have made to the quest for an understanding of the church's mission in their region to be treated with appropriate respect. What a debt of gratitude we owe to people like Idris Hamid, Adolfo Ham, Ashley Smith, Hyacinth Boothe, Lewin Williams, Theresa Lowe-Ching, Burchell Taylor and Horace Russell – to name a few. We will be also be appreciative of the effort Hill has made to highlight the need for the sharing of the riches that are unearthed in all parts of the world as people seek to plumb the depths of God's workings among them and discern how faithfully to respond.

Hill continues to display how theological scholarship can serve the church that is mission-centered. We look forward to the dynamic conversions that his accessible text, *Global Church*, will inspire. We encourage you to read and study this book.

WEA Theological News

ISSN 0260-3705

Published quarterly by WEA Theological Commission

Chairman: Dr Thomas Schirmacher
Executive Director: Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell
Vice-Chair: Dr James Nkansah-Obrempong
Editor: Dr David Parker

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Address for News and Subscriptions: WEA Theological News, Friedrichstr. 38,
53111 Bonn, Germany
Email: chair_tc@worlddea.org