

TC Executive Director Leads GETI'17



Dr Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the TC, served as dean of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, which met in Berlin and Wittenberg, Germany from 18th May to 1st June.

The students of GETI'17 came from 58 different countries and represented all strands of Christian traditions and denominations. The faculty were also from all over the world and from different denominations. It was a time of learning, challenging and participating in various commemorations in Germany around the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation. In the spirit of Martin Luther, the key themes of GETI were 'Reforming Theology, Migrating Church, Transforming Society.'

In addition to her work at GETI'17, Dr Ewell also spoke at Kirchentag on the topic 'Independent and Dangerous Theologies.' Overall the weeks in Berlin and Wittenberg were very fruitful and good for both faculty and students. Learning to read the Scriptures with Christians of different churches and different places was both a joy and a challenge, but in the spirit of Pentecost, there was genuine God-given grace and wisdom in all the diversity and variety that was GETI'17.

TC Participates in Children-at-Risk Forum

In May this year John Baxter-Brown represented the WEA TC at the Lausanne Movement's Forum on Children-at-Risk. The purpose was to develop and implement action plans in response to the remaining mandates of the CTC regarding children. It involved 70 people from a wide range of organisations. The meeting took place in Lancaster, Pa, following earlier gatherings at Quito, Ecuador and at the Cape Town Congress.

The main focus was consideration of the theological and conceptual issues surrounding the issue. Documents from the Quito Consultation, a 'Call to Action,' and a Lausanne Occasional Paper, 'Mission With Children-at-Risk', were the source material for the Lancaster Forum.

Most participants prepared for the Forum by reading these papers and also by working with children, seeking their voices through some creative work, and bringing the art work to the meeting. Participants also heard stories about what is being done to help some of the most vulnerable people on the planet.

There were five *Action Groups*, Advocacy to the Church for Children in Refugee Communities (Children on the Move); Amplifying Children's Voices; Multiplication of Training Programs for Mission with CAR; Re-Imagining the CAR Paradigm; Lausanne CAR Regional Forums. Each group met several times to discern what action should be taken and to decide how to collaborate with other agencies and churches in the process.

John Baxter-Brown said, 'The Forum was both a privilege and fun: it is always good to meet up with old friends and to make new ones. We enjoyed an exposure trip to learn about the Amish community. And we encouraged each other to continue to work for to, with and for, Children-at-Risk.'

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

ATA Views its Large Task as it Approaches 50 Years

The Chairman of Asia Theological Association (ATA), Dr. Takanori Kobayashi opened this organisation's Executive Board Meeting on January 12 with an inspiring message: 'Our task as theological educators is to prepare and strengthen men and women in this faith, to lead the churches to serve in this world.' According to him, member bodies would experience many challenges and hindrances but they were not to grow weary in the great task that Christ has given to ATA.

On the following day, this message was strengthened with the General Secretary's reminder on Isaiah 40:28-31. Dr. Theresa Lua encouraged everyone saying, 'We need to be still, listen, and most of all, hope in the Lord. Let us not neglect spending quality time with God, enjoying him, and being renewed.' She continued on with this challenge: 'ATA is now nearing 50. As we face the next 10-20 years, let's continue to hope in the Lord. And may we indeed soar high for another 50 years for God's purposes in Asia!'

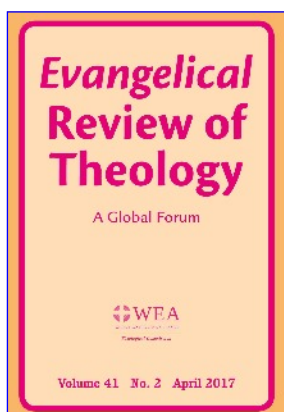
ATA is committed to serve the Church in equipping the people of God for the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ. Various faculty workshops in partnership with Global Associates for Transformational Education (GATE), an affiliate member of ICETE, to equip the equippers are set in 2017 and 2018. The workshops will be held in Indonesia, India, Nepal, and Myanmar. Part of the plan is to train more facilitators to extend the workshops to other countries. Another significant venture is on 'Telling the ATA Stories' which will feature testimonials of what the Lord is doing through the ministry of ATA. It will include collecting stories, creating tools for telling the stories, and communicating the stories. In addition, the various services of ATA like publication, accreditation, and consultancy are helping member institutions address the issues and challenges that face them for the advancement of God's kingdom in Asia and beyond.

ATA will hold a theological consultation 18-20 July at Malang Indonesia. In describing the purpose of the gathering, ATA said, 'Our goal during this consultation is to listen to each other. Our desired outcome is clarity on what we are being asked to do as scholars and what the church needs us to be. We hope this conversation will encourage integration across disciplines, building on evangelical convictions to address the pressing questions raised by various contexts in Asia.' For more information, visit www.ataasia.com

Adapted from *ATA News* Jan-Mar 2017



Evangelical Review of Theology on 'The dynamic of theology'



The July 2017 issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology* presents articles which follow the 'dynamic of theology' from basic principles into a variety of areas of application. Former TC Executive Chair, Dr Rolf Hille (Germany), leads with his study of the nature of the gospel and its relationships with its context, using developments in European theology and philosophy as his guide. Then Myles MacBean (UK/Malawi) gives the results of his innovative study of preaching. In a first for the TC's theological journal, another article by Col. Craig Bickell (Australia) discusses military chaplaincy and how the Christian faith has enduring value for the profession of arms.

David Moe (USA/Myanmar) writes about an evangelical trinitarian theology from a missiological context, while Ebenezer Yaw Blasu (Ghana) looks at the dynamic of theology in ecological matters. Then finally, a legacy article by Iain Provan (Canada/Scotland) shows how all creation and redemption are bound together to 'act out the kingdom of God.' He says, 'Holistic ministry is simply bound up with what being a Christian is all about—being true to the nature of things.'

Asian Theological Educators Discuss Some New Trends in Contextual Theologies

Eighteen representatives from theological institutions in Asia met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 17-20 April at a consultation on 'Ecumenical Theological Education and Contextual Theologies in Asia' convened by the Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) department of the World Council of Churches (WCC) with the support of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia (FTESEA), and in collaboration with theological associations and institutions in Asia.

The theological educators shared perspectives on new societal developments in Asia over the past few years which have increased the urgency to revisit the understanding of contextual theologies and the way they are taught at seminaries and universities.

Participants observed that the realities and historical locations from which contextual theologies are elaborated in the different countries in Asia are multi-faceted and complex. A uniformed definition of contextual theologies is therefore not possible, observed Prof. Amélé Ekué, ETE programme executive, and described a similar context of debate in other regions. She proposed to consider describing contextual theology rather as a 'travelling notion, which takes its specific contours according to different historical and societal situations.' Rev. Dr Henry S. Wilson, executive director of FTESEA noted that consultations like these are at the heart of the foundation's commitment to promote theological education liberated from Western models.

The consultation also had an inter-regional engagement with the presentation of Prof. Esther Mombo, who spoke about her experiences in guiding students to take their cultural, societal and economic environment seriously for their research work at St Paul's University in Limuru, Kenya. The possibility of reflecting a theological education theme both from within a specific regional perspective and at the same time to confront these reflections with processes in another region stimulated the debate.

Dr Kanan Kitani, a young associate professor from Kyoto, mentioned how important such ecumenical fora of discussion are especially for theological institutions in Christian minority situations, as in Japan. In her presentation she shared about the recent impact of migration on Japanese Christianity and articulation of contextual theology.

Adapted from a report by Amélé Ekué/WCC© published by World Council of Churches Press. For the full report , [click here](#)

'Lost Sermons' of Spurgeon

US Baptist publisher, B&H Academic has launched the first of a 12-volume series of previously unpublished sermons by the famed British preacher Charles H. Spurgeon. 'The Lost Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon' series is being researched and edited by Christian T. George, assistant professor of historical theology and curator of the Spurgeon Library at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The first volume includes a series introduction, an overview of Spurgeon's life and times, 78 sermons he preached itinerantly and in his first pastorate at Waterbeach Chapel, and George's analysis of the sermons. Each volume within the compilation will include full-colour facsimiles, transcriptions, contextual and biographical introductions, and editorial annotations of sermons from Spurgeon's earliest years in the pulpit. Volumes 2 and 3 are in various stages of the editing process and, according to B&H, the full 12-volume set will be completed by 2023. 'The Lost Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon' adds approximately 10 percent more material to Spurgeon's complete body of literature, with the volumes being developed for scholars, pastors and students alike, according to B&H Academic, a publishing division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Dr George stated noted how in 2011, while researching for his doctor of philosophy degree at Spurgeon's College in London, he came across the original journals containing the sermons. He soon realized they were messages that Spurgeon had previously promised to have published for his readers. Unfortunately, the demands of ministry prevented him from fulfilling his promise. Thus, the sermons had been lost to history for some 160 years. Upon realizing the value and scope of the documents, George came to an agreement with the college's principal and began to search for a publishing company. In due course, he said, that led him to B&H Academic, with the volumes being published 'for such a time as this.'

Spurgeon, born in 1834, served as pastor of Metropolitan Tabernacle, a London megachurch, from 1854 until his death in 1892. The Spurgeon Library at Midwestern, dedicated in October 2015, includes Spurgeon's personal collection of more than 6,000 books and hundreds of artefacts, letters and assorted materials. The seminary acquired the collection in 2006 from William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo. Midwestern also is home to the Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching, which offers a limited number of scholarships to full-time residential students called to pastoral ministry and sponsors the Charles Spurgeon Lectures on Biblical Preaching each fall. The Spurgeon Center is online at center.spurgeon.org.

Adapted from a report published by Baptist Press (www.baptistpress.com), news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, 28 Feb 2017. For more details visit <http://www.baptistpress.com/48413/bh-academic-launches-lost-sermons-of-spurgeon>

TC Discusses Issues of Proselytism

The TC is involved in the Global Christian Forum's working group on 'Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism.' A Reader for the group has been compiled by the TC's John Baxter-Brown. Here is an excerpt from the Introduction to that Reader.

Evangelism is the queen of all Christian ministries, dedicated to making the gospel known to the whole world through words, deeds and character. It is an outward-looking ministry, facing into the world that is loved by God and yet wounded and broken. Whilst Christian leaders around the globe agree that 'the church is called to mission and evangelism, powerful emotions and deep wounds, rooted in experiences, perceptions, or accusations of proselytism' (cited from *Call to Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism: A Global Conversation*) — understood popularly as the 'stealing of sheep' from one Church by another Church — are widely manifest. The Global Christian Forum has developed an initiative to explore the issue of proselytism.

Some key themes are:

Language and definitions

Proselytism is an emotionally laden term. This was not always the case, but in modern usage the term has come to carry a pejorative meaning. There remains a lack of clarity about the precise meaning of the term such that 'one person's evangelization is another person's proselytism.' Which language is best: Do we draw upon legal concepts, including the narratives of human rights and religious liberty? Or would sociology or social anthropology provide better tools? Or moral philosophy? Or theology? Who decides the language we use? These questions point to a second issue: *authority*.

Authority and Power

Though there are authoritative statements produced by Churches arising from structured processes and carrying the weight of the Church or organisation, a question remains: *By whose authority does a missionary or evangeliser act?* Many missionaries believe their work is in direct response to God's call or in obedience to Matthew 28:19. Whether the text refers to the practice of individuals or to a group (Church), the varying issues of power and authority creep in at all levels and in all contexts.

Ecclesiology

Understandings of ecclesiology have substantial implications for the issues of proselytism. What counts as salvation, who is *included* and *excluded* from the Church weigh heavily. For more sacramental traditions, baptism is paramount. However, younger traditions often assert that inclusion is associated with personal commitment to Jesus.

Likewise, the levels of expected behaviour of members varies. Some traditions emphasise personal piety and individual witness whilst others on public worship and the sacraments. This is not an either/or polarity: it is a question of emphasis. However, the strength of emphasis is at times significant, and has led to border conflicts about who is *in* and *out* of the church. In contexts of "nominal Christianity" is evangelism a legitimate activity, or is it proselytism?

Religious Liberty

The theme of religious freedom is central to the entire controversy. Such freedom cannot exist where force, coercion, inducements, *etc.* undermine its very basis. This can be particularly acute in contexts where political power hinders religious liberty. This theme also appears in contexts where a person decides to 'change' their allegiance from one Christian tradition to another.

Proselytism is an abuse of power, whereas evangelism is testifying of God's power into individual and social contexts and the building up of God's church. However, discerning the difference between the varying types of power, its ethical use and its abuse may require a complex judgement. Depending upon one's perception, one group may believe that they are practicing ethical evangelism, whereas another group perceives the same activity as proselytism.

In a world with fast-growing migrations from one continent to another, with rapid changes in societies and the escalation of wars, it is paramount that there be serious considerations about the character of the Church's witness. This initiative of the Global Christian Forum provides a much-needed space for such conversations and for Christians from different traditions to learn from one another, to listen and to find together the best practices of Christian witness for the 21st century.

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