

New Editor for TC Publications - David Parker Concludes

The WEA Theological Commission has announced a new editor for TC publications to replace Rev Dr David Parker who is stepping down. The new editor is Dr Bruce Barron of Bethel Park, PA, USA. He holds a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh with a dissertation focusing on religion and politics in contemporary USA (published by Zondervan as *Heaven on Earth?*). He is the author of several other books, including *Politics for the People* and *The Health and Wealth Gospel* (both InterVarsity) and many articles. Dr Barron has wide experience in editorial and writing work and served for a time as a policy strategist for the University of Pittsburgh's Institute of Politics.

David Parker first joined the WEA Theological Commission in 1986 and served on some study groups before becoming involved in organising a major consultation in London in 1996. After that he served on the Executive Committee and became Administrator and finally Executive Director. He was first associated with the *Evangelical Review of Theology* as Book Review Editor in 1994 and took over as editor in 1998. He served in this position alongside his work as Executive Director and Editor of *Theological News* until 2009. However, he was re-called to take on the editorial duties again in 2010 and has continued in this role since. He will complete editorial work on the 2017 publications before stepping down. Dr Parker has also authored the history of the TC, *Discerning the Obedience of Faith*.

Executive Director Represents the TC at Key Conferences

KAICIID



For the second year, Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Executive Director of the TC, travelled to Vienna, Austria as part of the Advisory Forum for the KAICIID Dialogue Centre. The Forum is composed of religious leaders from around the globe and includes peacemakers such as Ella Ghandi and Bishop Matthew Kukah. The Forum discussed and debated initiatives in 4 areas: Interreligious Dialogue Training; Governance and Common Citizenship; Reconciliation; and Capacity Building (see photo left).

GFTE



Dr Velloso Ewell also represented the TC at the Global Forum of Theological Educators (GFTE) executive committee which met in Pittsburgh in February to begin planning its next global gathering. This event is scheduled for late 2018 or early 2019. GFTE had its first meeting in Germany in May 2016, where Christian scholars and educators from around the world met to discuss themes of best practices and teaching in the changing world of theological education. GFTE further serves to build relationships of trust and friendship between educators from all church traditions (see photo left).

Promoting Biblical Truth by Networking Theologians

European Theologians meet in ‘Lutherstadt’ Wittenberg

More than 80 evangelical theologians from all over Europe met in the ‘Lutherstadt’ of Wittenberg 26-30 August, 2016, to debate questions related to the Reformation under the heading ‘The Reformation – its Theology and its Legacy.’ The gathering which was a conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) was held in anticipation in 2017 of the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s nailing his theses to the Castle Church door, which is taken as the beginning of the Reformation.

FEET is a network of theological scholars that seeks to combine the highest academic standards with a commitment to the authority of Scripture and to orthodox, biblical theology. The organisation seeks to encourage individual scholars and institutions that see biblical and theological scholarship as their calling. Its primary activity is to organise a biennial international conference on a specific theological theme of contemporary significance. The General Secretary is the Baptist Pastor, Klaus Bensel (Siegen, Germany), and the chair, Prof. Pierre Berthoud (Aix-en-Provence, France). FEET is closely associated with the *European Journal of Theology*, a scholarly and professional journal carrying articles in English, French and German.

This conference was supported by the European Evangelical Alliance and its theological commission along with the European branch of the World Reformed Fellowship. The venue was the Leucorea of the University of Halle-Wittenberg, which is a research institute located in the original University of Halle-Wittenberg University building.

Dr Thomas Schirmacher, Chair of the WEA Theological Commission, who spoke at the event, said, ‘Many Biblical topics and questions have two sides which are equally important – at this point I like to use the term “complementarity.” Many historical or present day theological debates have arisen or arise solely because the parties to the debate emphasize one of the sides revealed in the Bible and neglect another, while the other party does the opposite.’



Sharing the Faith in a Multi-cultural and Multi-faith World

The World Council of Churches sponsored a conference on sharing faith in a multi-cultural and multi-faith world in mid-February 2017. An announcement for the conference said, ‘The multi-cultural and multi-faith realities Christians live in today confront them, in their witness and praxis, with common challenges along with on-going differences among various Christian confessions. In a world of post-modern values and concepts, the voice of the churches remains often unheard and is hardly understood. In these contexts, the faithful members of the congregations across all confessions are getting aged and their number decreases. Other faith communities living in such contexts go through a similar experience.’

It went on to explain the focus. ‘The main missionary and pastoral challenge is how to share the faith with younger generations so that they hear, understand and find in it meaning and fulfilment for their lives. This ECF Event is designed with young people to equip participants with a shared vision and new approaches to address this challenge.’

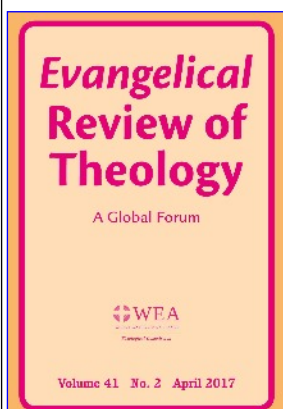
The event included visits to Taizé, France, the Ecumenical Centre and meetings with representatives of migrant churches and different faith communities in Geneva.

For more information, visit <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/>

Evangelical Review of Theology on ‘Theology in Church and World’

The current issue of the TC’s journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT), follows the theme, ‘Theology in Church and World’, commencing with an article by well known American theologian, Timothy George, outlining the basis for developing an evangelical ecclesiology. Then Book Review Editor, Michael Borowski, examines the important question of moving from scripture to theology by reviewing some recent expositions of this process.

Branching out further, there is an interesting creative example of ‘moving beyond’ as Andrea Robinson (USA) shows the connectedness of all elements within God’s created order as presented in biblical wisdom literature under the concept, ‘ecosapiential theology’. Other articles continue the theme. Naomi Reese (USA) examines the work of Colin Gunton in the field of ‘public theology’ while the final articles provide an outside and inside view of the church as it seeks to witness in a world of people, politics and nature. The first by Thomas K. Johnson (Czech Republic) laments that historic ‘scars’ on the church have limited its ability to impact the world in a positive way, and the second, a Bible study article by Rob Fringer (Australia), points to the kind of dynamic needed to achieve renewal in the church.



ATA Considers the Calling of the Biblical Scholar

The Asia Theological Association (ATA) will hold its next Theological Consultation on 18-20 July, 2017 in Malang, Malaysia with the theme, 'The Calling of an Asian Biblical Scholar/Theologian: Challenges Facing Asian Evangelicals Today.' Writing in the Oct-Dec 2016 ATA Newsletter, Dr Rico Villanueva, ABC General Editor, said that he had recently begun thinking seriously about this topic when he heard of biblical scholars who saw 'their task as descriptive, not prescriptive. In other words, the biblical scholar is only to interpret what the text meant in ancient times.' But he noted that this was not always the case for noted scholars like Augustine, Luther and Calvin. This forced him to ask the questions, 'What happened? How did we come to this point where doing biblical studies and theology has become two separate tasks? Why was application to the church marginalized among biblical scholars?'

Dr Villanueva stated, 'These are some of the questions we hope to address in the Consultation. The consultation is open not only to biblical scholars and theologians but also to historians, social scientists, and educators, who have an interest in understanding the role of Bible and theology in their respective contexts in Asia. Part of the goal of this Theological Consultation is to listen to each other. Our desired outcome is clarity on what we are being asked to do as biblical scholars/theologians in relation to the Church and wider Asian realities. We hope this conversation will encourage integration across disciplines building on Evangelical convictions to address the pressing questions raised by our various contexts in Asia.'

He added, 'The consultation is also a continuation of the conversation started during the 2016 ATA Triennial General Assembly in Korea where different groups met to discuss their disciplines. Some expressed the idea of forming a society of biblical scholars/theologians among ATA member institutions. We'll see if this will be a reality, especially now that we are nearing our ATA 50th anniversary.'

For more information, contact, ataasia@gmail.com

ICETE Announces Global Consultation

ICETE (International Council for Evangelical Theological Education) has announced preliminary details of its 2018 triennial consultation. It will be held 29 October-2 November 2018 at Westin Playa Bonita in Panama City, Panama. The theme will be, 'The sacred/secular divide and theological education'. Registrations will open soon. 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. It is a Global Partner within the World Evangelical Alliance. The International Director is Rev Dr Riad Kassis (Lebanon) and the website is <http://www.icete-edu.org/>

The last consultation was held in 2015 at Antalya, Turkey. Some of the papers and presentations from the event can be accessed on-line at TheologicalEducation.net

Conference on The Reformation, Church and Society

A international conference will be held at the St Petersburg Christian University, St Petersburg, 20-21 April 2017 on the theme, 'The Reformation: Humanity, Church, Society'. This conference will be part of the 'Reformation 500' series. An announcement of the conference explains that 'The Reformation and the Protestantism to which it gave birth have had a profound influence on all aspects of civilization in both private and social life, socio-economic structures, political institutions, cultural models, educational paradigms, scientific ideas, and artistic forms of expression.' Yet, it continues, 'As an all-encompassing event of historical significance, the Reformation nevertheless was basically of a religious character, at the centre of which was the relationship of human beings with God, oneself, other human beings, and the world. Thus, the celebration of the anniversary of the Reformation offers the opportunity once again to analyse the historical path of Protestantism, consider its influence on the development of the self-understanding of contemporary man and women, and the dialectic of the human being's relationship with society and the world.'

The conference will examine such topics as intellectual sources for the Reformation, secular aspects of the Reformation and its consequences for the development of Western civilization and the anthropological change in the European awareness of a new era. Other matters to be surveyed include religious pluralism of the Reformation, theological assumptions of the Reformation's ecclesiological paradigms and the Reformation's influence on socio-political and economic processes.

Selected papers will be published in *Theological Reflections*, the Euro-Asian theological journal. The conference will be conducted in Russian and English. The head of the organising committee is Dr V. Sannikov, President of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association.

For more information, email srrc@e-aaa.info

Crossing Cultures in Scripture

Biblical Principles for Mission Practice

Marvin J. Newell

Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2016

ISBN 978-0-8308-4473-9 Pb., pp 298, appendices, bibliog., Index

Reviewed by David Turnbull, Senior Lecturer in Intercultural Studies, Tabor College of Higher Education, South Australia.

Living in a globalized world means seeing the rise of polycentric mission, from everywhere to everywhere. As God's community moves to and from places, cultural chasms need to be crossed. The mechanics of bridge building to facilitate movement inevitably draws on principles and practices primarily from secular and social sciences perspectives. Marvin Newell, in his book *Crossing Cultures in Scripture: Biblical Principles for Mission Practice*, adds to this bank of literature by addressing significant principles and practices for bridge building that arise from Scripture. Such a book on intercultural effectiveness drawing on Scripture is long overdue.

Newell comes with a background of two decades of missional engagement in East and Southeast Asia and more years in Intercultural Studies education. This background aids his credibility to share on the subject and leads to a conversational and personable style of presentation.

Newell takes on a unique approach to explore the principles and practices of cross-cultural engagement from Scripture. He remains loyal to the journey of Scripture through retelling and evaluating, from a cross-cultural perspective, 35 significant biblical characters, events and texts from Genesis to Revelation. For each account, there is a personal narrative, a core text, core insights and a relevant summary of the implications for crossing cultural chasms to take away. These encounters are applied to the diversity of contexts where crossing the cultural chasm can occur today such as cross-cultural workers heading into a different geographical context, being an international student, welcoming international students, and engaging the diaspora on our doorstep. The principles and practices arising from the selected Scriptures cover a range of subjects impacting on cross-cultural engagement such as addressing common cultural differences like shame and honour, cross cultural truth seekers (such as the Queen of Sheba), and possible approaches to common scenarios that arise in relational cross-cultural encounters.

Numerous conceptual strengths are evident from Newell's Scriptural storytelling approach to developing cultural intelligence. The deliberate focus on Scripture recognizes its authority and value in educating God's people and the selection of encounters brings a sense of comprehensiveness and breadth for what is sought in crossing cultures, even though several key encounters are missing such as with Melchizedek. I was particularly struck by the way he has appropriately engaged cross-cultural encounters, not just from the 'perceived' cross-cultural worker's perspective but also from the perspectives of those people and communities from the different cultures encountering God's messengers (such as Ruth, Rahab, and the Queen of Sheba). In developing knowledge of how the 'other' perceives what is occurring will aid strategy, planning and delivery within cross-cultural encounters. Five useful takeaways are the balanced dissection of Jonah's ethnocentrism (egocentrism and punicentrism) (p 130), the cross-cultural seeker cycle (p 114), Nehemiah's response to the seven forms of hostility by dominant majority culture communities (p 160ff), Jesus' seven marks of cross-cultural success (p 186ff) and the cultural interpretation of Paul's treatise on love from 1 Corinthians 13 (pp 252-3).

When using the book the reader needs to recognize that the flow of ideas regarding the cross-cultural encounter is not sequential or logical, and that the aim and purpose is to focus on Scripture not the principles and practices. Each passage needs to be treated individually. In using the book some common missiological language in intercultural studies is missing such as incarnational living and identification. Possessing an overarching secular framework like cultural competence or cultural intelligence will be helpful to guide people through the experiences and help organize the dynamics in a more systematic manner. The topical guide on page 8 helps address this concern.

Having said this, the result is still an admirable resource to encourage those who seek to develop cultural intelligence in bridge building. From reading the book you realize the extent of the cross-cultural engagement God's people participated in in the Biblical period, which shows the significance for our contemporary multi-cultural world. The book has potential to be used as a textbook globally and for all cultural settings but certainly as a strategic reference book to aid the missional and cultural dimensions to be incorporated in the preaching and teaching of Scripture.

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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US\$15 per annum

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