

## Towards an Evangelical Asian Christology: A Call for Research and Theological Engagement



By Dr. Bruce Nicholls,  
ATA Senior Advisor

One of our most urgent needs is for our evangelical scholars to undertake theological research and to contextualize our biblical theology in the plurality of our rapidly changing cultures. If you agree, then Asia Theological Association calls you to pray and to support our next theological consultation, "The Lordship of Jesus Christ in 21st Century Asia." This will be held on August 11-14, 2014 in Seoul, Korea. A strong Korean committee, led by Dr. Sang Hwa Han of Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission (ACTS), will host the event.

The consultation will seek to integrate the biblical and theological foundations of our Christology for Asia in the 21st century, all with coherent missiological goals. Eight plenary papers, and 24 interest group papers with brief responses, will be the focus of our discussion and debate. A total of 56 papers will be presented in this theological consultation. Paper topics for plenary sessions are foundational and theoretical issues of Christology in each sub-disciplines of theology, whereas those for interest groups are more practical and contextual issues. The committee to appoint and

monitor writers includes Dr. Sang Hwa Han (ACTS), Dr. Theresa Lua (ATA Accreditation Secretary), and Dr. Rico Villanueva (ATA Publications Secretary).

God is at work in Asia and the Middle East as never before. Churches are growing, especially in North India, Nepal, Egypt, and unseen in Iran and Iraq. More Bibles are being sold than ever before. Our ATA member institutions are full. In every country Christians are showing remarkable courage and faithfulness to

their Lord in the presence of increasing suffering and persecution from radical minorities and politicized forces.

Then too, secularism as an anti-Christian religious faith is an even greater challenge to all of us. It is reducing Christianity's influence in the public square to becoming a private

*Continued on page 2*



Asia Theological Association  
Theological Consultation on Christology

### The Lordship of Jesus Christ in 21st Century Asia

August 11-14, 2014 | ACTS Yang Pyung Campus, South Korea

#### TOPICS FOR THE PLENARY

- "Messianic Hope in the Old Testament"
- "Jesus and the Kingdom of God"
- "The Significance of the Chalcedon Creed and the Reformation Confessions for Life in the Asian Churches in the 21st Century"
- "Currents in Christological Debates"
- "Rethinking Missions for Today"
- "Jesus and the Leadership Paradigm"
- "Christ-centered Christian Education in Theological Institutions and Related Churches"
- "The Gospel and Christian Counseling"

#### REGISTRATION FEE:

(Including food and accommodation for 4 days and 3 nights)

US\$ 150 - Developing Countries (Bangladesh, Jordan, India, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam)  
US\$ 200 - Other Countries

#### TOPICS FOR INTEREST GROUPS

- Jesus Christ, creator, sustainer and redeemer of God's creation
- A Christological interpretation of Exodus 4:24-26
- The incarnation of Christ and the incarnational ministry of the church
- The historical Jesus and the resurrected Christ of faith
- Jesus the victor: his power encounter with sickness and demonic
- Christ's compassionate service to the poor, oppressed and disabled
- Christ, the liberator from injustice in society
- Jesus at prayer and as our heavenly intercessor
- The function of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the life and witness of the churches
- The contextualization of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ in the four gospels, and its significance in national cultures
- Christ-centered missional theology for a dysfunctional and suffering world
- Christ-centered personal and social ethics in the church and in society
- Jesus as a savior for others in the context of Buddhist culture
- Jesus as the reconciler and peacemaker between Jew and Arab
- Preaching Christ from the OT
- Christ-centered media and e-evangelism
- Christ-centered marriage and family life
- Jesus' ministry as a counselor and ours today
- Incarnation-Christological basis for child theology
- Both God and man: A Christological-historical reading of the OT
- The Lordship of Christ and the Problem of Nationalism:
  - A New Testament Perspective
  - Christology in the "Eating"
  - Jesus more than a Hindu avatar
  - Appraisal of missional church in Asian Context
  - More than a prophet: The return of Christ in Islamic Shia perspective
  - Incarnation and salvation
  - The role of Christian formation in the critical contextualization of Christology

For more info and registration, please email:  
ataasia@gmail.com / go to www.ataasia.com

faith. This has happened in Western countries and is now beginning to happen in the developed countries in Asia. Let us respond to both issues by proclaiming that Christ is Lord of all creation and society. Please pray for all involved in preparing this strategic consultation and for those contributing papers.

## ATA Leaders Discuss Significant Ministry Development in its Annual Meeting



**O**n January 21-24, 2014, the ATA Annual Meeting was held at the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines (BSOP). Dr. Joseph Shao, ATA General Secretary, reported on current ATA membership statistics. With the growth that has occurred gradually over the years, the ATA is the largest of the ICETE member agencies with 282 member institutions and 185 of which have been accredited by the ATA International. He also presented an overview of the recent ATA Triennial General Assembly held in Jakarta, Indonesia last August 2013. He thanked all who participated in making it a success.

One of the regional partnerships in which the ATA has had a role is in the formation of the Asia Forum for Theological Education. A meeting of A Foundation for the Theological Education (AFTE) was held at BSOP last January 9-11, 2014 and the group produced a document called "Common Commitment." One of the goals is to

discuss how degrees and accreditation procedures might be mutually recognized between the associations across Asia. Dr. Joseph Shao and Dr. Takanori Kobayashi are representing the ATA in the ongoing discussions. Other participants represented were the Asia Pacific Theological Association (APTA), the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), Senate of Serampore College, and Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia, and Asian Forum for Theological Education. The Lausanne Movement's Global Consultation on Theological Education will be held in San Paulo, Brazil on June 2-6, 2014. ATA Secretary of Accreditation and Educational Development, Dr. Theresa Lua, will be co-presenter of a paper at the consultation. The ATA General Secretary will also be a participant.

Dr. Shekhar Singh, the newly appointed ATA India Chairperson, presented the report on ATA India. The report gave an overview of visits to institutions, value added services, publications, membership statistics, change of address of the society's office, future review of society rules and regulations, progress in establishing an Evangelical Society of India, various staff matters, finances and the building project.

Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA Accreditation Secretary reported that over 30 institutions were visited during 2013 either for new accreditation or renewal of accreditation. She also reported on the new associate members and provided a list of schools to be visited in 2014. The ongoing revision of Accreditation Manual, aimed to provide guidelines on Distance and On-line Programs, was also reported. The revised manual is expected to be completed this year.

Dr. Federico Villanueva thanked the Publications Committee and Dr. Shao

for the ways they are helping him do his job as the Publications Secretary. The Asia Bible Commentary series has been his main concern, but he also has focused on plans for developing monographs and textbooks for ATA member institutions. Dr. Steve Pardue is managing the monograph and textbook areas with an emphasis on producing resources that will help churches. One of the projects being considered is an Asian Dictionary of Theology. Authors of books and monographs will be asked to sign memorandum that will authorize the ATA to produce e-books at some time in the future from the books the authors have written for the ATA. The Publications Committee is working on a clear statement of the mission and purpose of ATA publications.

Progress in developing AGST institutions were also shared in the meeting. AGST Philippines, Japan, Alliance, and International (Korea) reports were received, discussed and approved. The appointment of Dr. Makito Masaki as Chairman/Presiding Dean for a three-year term was mentioned. Structural changes in the AGST Council and various projects were discussed including an AGST South Asia. An AGST Handbook and Policies will be presented at the 2016 ATA General Assembly.

Dr. Takanori, ATA International Board Chair, urged the Board members to now work towards finding a successor for the current ATA International General Secretary, Dr. Joseph Shao, who wishes to be replaced at the 2016 ATA Triennial General Assembly. The nomination Committee is also assigned the task of looking into the financial issues and the administrative structure related to the next General Secretary, the Secretaries of the CAED and the other staff members. Prof. Ronnie Poon is the Chair of the Nominating Committee.

## Operation Multiplication in Action



Dr. Billie Hanks with his wife, Carol, with Dr. Joseph Shao and Dr. Jim Wilson and Gigi Graham Wilson (daughter of Billy Graham)

**D**r. Joseph Shao, ATA General Secretary, visited the headquarters of International Evangelism Association (IEA) in Salado, Texas, USA on March 6-8, 2014 to attend a special meeting of the *Operation Multiplication* of Dr. Billie Hanks. Dr. Hanks actively ministers widely throughout the world and at West Texas Ranch for Christ.

The organization of IEA has started a national strategy of one-one-discipleship movement in Thailand, Philippines, and India. Dr. Hanks gave workshop at the ATA Triennial General Assembly held in Jakarta in 2013, and since then continue to work through our ATA system, along with churches. In February 2014, Dr. Hanks and his team visited numerous cities in India and Philippines to train key pastors and leaders of Lead churches. In the Philippines, 370 attended his one-day training. In July and September 2014, he will return again with his team to train the equippers in the Philippines and India. For Dr. Hanks, discipleship should be part of the training ministry of seminaries. Numerous schools are using the Operation Multiplication materials. The materials are available in English, Spanish, German, and will be translated into Chinese, Tagalog, and other languages for the use of churches. ATA is happy to be part of the movement.

## ATA Seeks APQN Membership



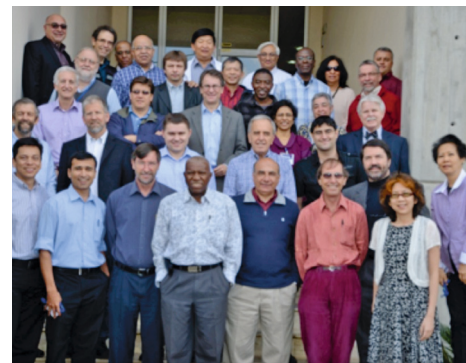
**D**r. Theresa Lua represented ATA in the Asia Pacific Quality Network Conference (APQN) held at the Crown Plaza in Hanoi, Vietnam on March 7-8, 2014. Around 200 participants from 40 countries, representing various national and professional accrediting associations attended the event. The conference

focused on the theme, *Higher Education Quality Assurance in a Changing World: Envisioning the Future of Asia Pacific*.

APQN is a "network which serves the needs of Quality Assurance Agencies in higher education and higher education institutions in the Asia-Pacific region." ATA is seeking to be part of this network in order to be better known in the world

of accreditation evaluation and be of further service to its member schools.

## Overseas Council Sponsors a Curriculum Consultation in Beirut, Lebanon



Leaders of the 2014 Curriculum Consultation

**T**he Overseas Council Australia along with Overseas Council USA sponsored a Curriculum Consultation at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Beirut, Lebanon on February 24-28, 2014. Ten schools were selected from the ICETE family (ATA is one of the founding members). South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS) of Bangalore, India (headed by Dr. Ian Payne), Biblical Seminary of the Philippines (headed by Dr. Joseph Shao), and Asian Theological Seminary (headed by Dr. Tim Gener) were selected to assess their curriculum through research-based questionnaires. Schools from Africa, Latin America, and Eurasia were also represented. For accountability and fruitful implementation of effective curriculum, Regional leaders, along with few key educational experts were assigned to assist different schools. We praise the Lord for such partnership of Overseas Council with ATA member schools.

## ATA VET and EAAA Visit Israel College of the Bible



Israel College of the Bible (ICB) is accredited both by ATA and EAAA (European Evangelical Accrediting Association). A joint accreditation visit was held last January 8-10, 2014. The ATA VET was composed of Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA Secretary of Accreditation and Educational Development; Dr. Richard Hart, Accreditation Director of Middle East Association for Theological Education (MEATE) and Coordinator of ATA West Asia; Dr. Robert Miner, Program for Theological Education by Extension (PTEE) Director for Graduate Studies. The EAAA team was composed of Dr. Horst Born and Dr. Graham Cheesman.

remarkable and inspiring function in bringing together Jewish and Arab Christians within Israel. ICB introduces students from outside Israel to the real situation in the country and helps them to relate to it biblically. The VET team encountered not just ICB programmes, but also many stories of how this works in practice. They were impressed by what was being done particularly by the high value students and alumni put on the way the teaching helps them to sort out issues of personal identity, of what it means to be a follower of Jesus in an Israeli context.

Dr. Erez Soref became president in 2006 and the college has become a stable and growing organization under his leadership today. It is a college with a wide range of ministry, including the accredited courses, an active media department, a well-staffed counselling department, a Russian section of ministry and it is also involved in a number of initiatives in bringing Arab, Jewish and international followers of Messiah together. ICB has recently moved from its original Jerusalem site to a well-equipped new campus in Netanya. ICB offers programmes in Year in Israel, *Bikurim* (First Fruits, which acts as the first year of the B.A.), B.A., M.A. in Counselling and M.A. in Biblical Studies.

Israel College of the Bible performs a

ICB was founded in 1990 and went through some years of change and struggle.

## VET Team Visits Zarephath Bible Seminary



The Visiting Evaluation Team consisting of Dr. Richard Hart, ATA Coordinator for West Asia; Dr. Graham Aylett, ATA Coordinator for Central Asia; and Dr. Robert Miner, Director for Graduate Studies, PTEE, visited Zarephath Bible Seminary (ZBS) in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on February 22-26, 2014.

The mission of Zarephath Bible Seminary is to train students to become Christ-like servant leaders through coming to know the indwelling, risen Lord Jesus Christ more deeply and personally. The initiatives that led to the founding of Zarephath Bible Institute began in 1976, when a number of leaders saw the need for a new training institute.

Seven agencies joined hands to set up an evangelical, interdenominational Bible school in Attock City, distant from major centers of population in the north-west Punjab. Classes leading to a Diploma of Theology began in 1982. A three-year diploma program began in 1996. In the following year, a major setback occurred when the school had to be closed due to student unrest. However, God used the experience for good, as it led to a thorough re-evaluation and changes in admissions policy and curriculum when the Institute re-opened. In 1998 the ZBI moved to a much smaller site in Rawalpindi. With a view of future expansion, a 7.5-acre land was purchased outside the center of Rawalpindi

and development has begun. Evening classes began straight away, a one-year Certificate program started in 2000, and an English-medium M.Div. program began in 2010. In 2013 the name of the Institution was changed to Zarephath Bible Seminary. Further progress depends on building good relationships with the surrounding community.

ZBS places special emphasis on field work. Students have opportunities for weekly fieldwork in local churches and summer fieldwork of two and a half months in different areas. Currently, ZBS offers Certificate of Theology, Diploma of Theology, Bachelor of Theology, and Master of Divinity.

## VET Team Visits Bethlehem Bible College



The ATA VET consisting of Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA Secretary of Accreditation and Educational Development; Dr. Richard Hart, Accreditation Director of MEATE and Coordinator of ATA West Asia; and Dr. Robert Miner, PTEE Director for Graduate Studies visited Bethlehem Bible College (BBC) in Palestine on January 10-14, 2014. Bethlehem Bible College grew out of the need for transformative leadership education that emerged after the hope shattering consequences of the Six Day War in 1967.

After 12 years of military occupation, the population of Christians in the area declined rapidly. Many leaders left. New leaders were needed for churches in occupied Palestine. Dr. Bishara Awad, along with other church leaders began Bethlehem Bible College in 1979 to help educate new leaders. BBC charted a path of hope building for churches and families whereby their young people could gain a

Bible-based college education that would prepare them for the future, whether or not the occupation continued.

In the late 1990s it earned academic recognition of its Associate of Arts Degree in Bible from the Palestine National Authority's (PNA) Ministry of Higher Education. In the early 2000s the PNA recognized the BBC Bachelor's degree. During this process of academic and physical growth, BBC was also accredited by MEATE in 2000.

The new president, Rev. Dr. Jack Sara, has been appointed in September 2012. The previous president and founder, Dr. Bishara Awad, who served as president for 33 years, has been appointed as president emeritus and serves as BBC ambassador.

The various ministries of BBC are impacting the Holy Land and beyond. One

important ministry is the publication of local resources. Several faculty members have written books and articles that are relevant to contextual issues and realities. The humanitarian arm of BBC called "Musalaha" or the Shepherd's Society extends help to the needy. The Guesthouse provides lodging for pilgrims, visiting scholars and students. BBC hosts the only public library in Bethlehem which caters to both children and adults. The "Christ at the Checkpoint" conferences draw attention to the wall around Bethlehem. In various means speakers of these conferences steer the participants into further thinking about how to live with the occupation in ways that are pleasing to Christ and may contribute to wholesome change.

BBC offers Diploma in Media and Tour Guiding, B.A. in Biblical Studies and and M.A. in Christian Ministry and Leadership.

## ATA VET Visits Open Theological Seminary



The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has been much in the news in the past few months, as the Taliban brings pressure to bear for a stricter application of Sharia law. In this context the Open Theological Seminary (OTS) has over 4000 students studying in more than

200 centers around the whole country. The mission of the OTS is "to equip God's people for work in His service through contextually relevant Biblical study materials and tutor-led local classes throughout Pakistan." The OTS has been serving the churches of Pakistan

since 1971, offering accredited programs since 1996. The OTS now offers a Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor of Theology.

An ATA team consisting of Dr. Richard Hart, CAED Coordinator for West Asia; Dr.

## ATA Publications In Progress

The Publications Committee in its effort to make the Bible relevant to Asia has recently proposed a new format for its Asia Bible Commentary series. The format consists of an

- 1) **INTRODUCTION**, where we summarize the main point/message of the chapter, presented in a way that connects with the context of the reader (e.g. Chinese, Japanese);
- 2) **EXPOSITION**, which tries to explain the text using our own Asian cultural resources; and
- 3) **CONTEXTUAL APPLICATION**, where we attempt to allow the text to address our context while at the same time acknowledging that there will be issues arising from our context which affect our reading of the text.

For a long time, we have been listening only to voices from our Western brothers and sisters. And while we continue to value their input, we also need to establish our own voices so that all of us become conversation partners towards the goal of a global interpretation of the Bible which empowers Asian Christians to fulfill their God-given calling.

ATA Publications is now in the process of working out a partnership with both international and local publishers so that our books will soon be available in all formats, including e-books. To date, we have published 18 volumes of the commentary, with 37 more to go. Presently, we are actively working on six of these volumes. We are grateful to the Lord for the way he has prepared writers for our commentaries. With our two journals – Journal of Asian Mission (JAM) and Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology (JAET), we hope to publish more monographs that address Asian issues. We are now thinking of an Asian Dictionary of Theology within our ATA constituents. Challenging but exciting developments!

## ATA VET VISITS OPEN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY from page 5

Graham Aylett, CAED Coordinator for Central Asia; and Dr. Robert Miner, Director for Graduate Studies, with the PTEE visited the OTS offices in Lahore from February 17-21, 2014. We found many things to celebrate, and also heard something of the cost of this ministry. In the Course Development department, five new courses were produced over the past five years, as well as much revision work. A *Reader in Contextualization* was produced.


In the Field Department, capacity has been greatly increased through the appointment of Area Coordinators. Field Department staff traveled extensively and conducted an amazing number of group visits last year—more than 750! Sometimes Field staff minister is in dangerous situations, and in September last year, an Area Coordinator lost his life in the bombing of All Saints' Church, Peshawar.

We saw the commitment of the volunteer tutors who facilitate local learning groups, and heard many testimonies of the ways that OTS courses were making a difference. In one location that we visited, as the Call to Prayer sounded loudly in our ears, a young woman said, "In our context, people ask us many questions about our faith and belief. These courses help me to respond, and express my faith to them." May the Lord continue to use the OTS for His glory.

spoke on the topics: *Teaching the Unchanging Word of God in Changing Pakistan; Educating the Whole Church for Holy Living; Defending the Message with Grace and Truth in the Midst of Other Ideologies*. He also gave update on the current projects and ministries of ATA.

The three-day forum included discussion in small groups of Dr. Larry Caldwell's paper on *How Asian is Asian Theological Education?* Dr. Caldwell was former academic dean of the Asian Theological Seminary, Manila. His paper was published in 2010 by Asia Theological Association in the book entitled, "Tending the Seedbeds," edited by Dr. Allan Harkness. Interspersed with the major portions of the conference the participants had sharing from and prayer for each of the institutions. Everyone is looking forward to next year's forum when Dr. Ajith Fernando will be the guest speaker in Lahore on February 18-21, 2015.

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## ZBS Hosts 2014 Theological Educators' Forum



Dr. Bruce Nicholls with Dr. Ashkenaz Asif, Principal of Zarephath Bible Seminary

The 2014 Pakistan Theological Educators' Forum was held at Zarephath Bible Seminary (ZBS), Rawalpindi, Pakistan on March 13-15 with special guest, Dr. Bruce Nicholls, Senior Advisor of the Asia Theological Association. The theme of this year's forum was *Relevancy in Theological Education*. Dr. Nicholls

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Address all correspondence to the editor:

Bubbles P. Lactaoen  
[pe.atapublications@gmail.com](mailto:pe.atapublications@gmail.com)

54 Scout Madriñan St., Quezon City 1103, Philippines

QCC P.O. Box 1454-1154

Telefax: (02) 410-0312

Email: [ataasia@gmail.com](mailto:ataasia@gmail.com)