

## Honoring God through Twenty Years of Serving ATA

By Dr. Joseph Shao, ATA General Secretary



**W**e thank God for guiding the ATA to another significant year of impact in theological education. With 300 members now in 34 nations, churches are stronger with healthy theological colleges and seminaries. Our horizons continue to expand with the additional enquiries and applications from Asian diaspora communities. We thank God for our participatory Board, with effective Associate Secretaries and efficient staff in carrying God's assigned task of theological education to us.

Since this is my final year in my third term as the General Secretary (2007-2016), allow me to thank all the former General Secretaries, Dr. Bong Rin Ro, Dr. Ken Gnanakan, who gave me

some advices as I started my journey with the ATA. I would also want to thank our Senior Advisers, Dr. Bruce Nicholls and Dr. Bong Ro, for their helpful suggestions for the on-going projects of ATA. I also like to thank Dr. Richard Hart, together with our previous ATA Chairmen, Dr. David Sang Bok Kim, Dr. Akio Hashimoto, and our current Chairman Dr. Takanori Kobayashi for their proactive leadership.

### Reflecting our Past and Present

I started my journey as a Board member in 1996 under the leadership of Dr. Ken Gnanakan, and served as the Board Secretary under Dr. Sang Bok Kim, and then was appointed to become the fourth General Secretary of ATA. It is all by God's grace that I can serve with the growing community of ATA for twenty years.

We have all witnessed what God has done through the ATA in theological education. The ATA is legally registered in the Philippines with an address that people can find. The ATA is now one of the key players in global theological education. In the most recent C-15 of ICETE in Turkey, we have the most representatives among the nine theological associations. With our expanding and meaningful ministries through accreditation, education, and publication, churches have benefited from our work. ATA as promoting evangelical theological

education is now to be reckoned with, as Serampore Senate and others are in communication with us. The ATA members eagerly participated in two Triennial General Assembly in Hong Kong (2010) and Jakarta (2013). We also witnessed the participation of international theological educators in our General Assembly. Our theological consultation for Asian scholars to present papers was also very successful. ATA was part of the convening member of Global Theological forum that gathered in Germany last May. God is good to ATA.

### Overcoming Obstacles and Challenges

Asia is geographical vast, and the work of the ATA is quite challenging. Our membership from different countries in Asia and outside of Asia speaks for the significant task that God has given us. Though English seems to be the common language that we are using at the ATA, language and cultural obstacle are challenges as we communicate within ourselves.

We are thankful that various international partners are linking with us. The ATA publication, in the ABC commentaries, will soon receive worldwide attention through our partnership with Langham Literature. We, in turn, have tapped into the resources of Langham scholars, in

*Continued on page 2*

from page 1



Some of the ATA Board members during the Triennial General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia



The General Secretary giving his report during the 2013 General Assembly



Board meeting with Dr. Shao



Dr. Joseph Shao and Dr. Rosa Shao with the staff

encouraging them to think and write relevant articles and books. Through our partnership, masteral theses and doctoral dissertations would be able to be published.

In India, ATA International has made it possible for the Serampore Senate to sit down and recognize our significant task of theological education. Our ATA India regional office, through Dr. Paul Cornelius, is continuing the discussion with Serampore leaders. Our regional office is also in negotiation with the Martin Luther University in Shillong India with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for additional quality affiliation.

### **Serving with Servant-Spirit with the Servers**

Theological colleges and seminaries in Asia are growing of age. Through the ATA, many institutions are becoming to be more mature and significantly players in the training ministry. In our early

history, we established the Asia Graduate School of Theology in Japan, Philippines, and Indonesia with our slogan of "training Asian in Asia." Now with the growing work of AGST schools such as AGST Japan, AGST Philippines, AGST Alliance, and AGST Pacific that are registered legally in their respective countries, we also have some schools that are helping the faculty development programs. ATA needs to have the servant spirit to work closely with the servers!

In the Western postmodernity era, the ATA can encourage schools to be partners of other established seminaries that need the Asian students. Even as we start distant learning, we may not need to reinvent the wheel. We can work closely as our global partners.

### **Encouraging Theological Leaders in Engaging the World**

As the ATA continues our work, let us focus on encouraging our theological

leaders to engage the world with the unchanging Word of our Lord. In many communities in Asia, people are still searching for the meaning of life that can only be found in the uniqueness of Christ. As we discuss and present contextualization and globalization message through our publications, let us engage the world and make significant contribution. Thank God that ATA is a global player!

### **Concluding Remarks**

I thank God for the opportunity to serve with you for nine years as the General Secretary. I pray that God will continue to use the ATA to be his channel of blessings to the theological colleges and seminaries in Asia and beyond. May the ATA continue on to achieve theological accomplishments, honoring our God and blessing his people all over the world as the Spirit of the Lord leads on. ■

# 2016 ATA Triennial General Assembly

Fixing our  
Eyes on Jesus:  
Asian Churches  
Pressing On  
(Heb 12:1-2)

Chongshin  
University  
& Theological  
Seminary

Republic of Korea  
July 25-29 2016

Time/Date	Monday 25 July	Tuesday 26 July	Wednesday 27 July	Thursday 28 July	Friday 29 July
7:30-8:30	CAED MEETING	BREAKFAST			
8:30-9:15		DEVOTIONS AND PRAYER TIME Dr. Sang-beop Shim      Dr. Andreas Himawan      Dr. Luke Cheung      Dr. Imad Shehadeh			
9:15-10:45		SESSION ONE: <i>God's Abundant Grace in Asia</i> Bishop Efraim Tendero  Responder: Dr. B.K. Sharma	BUSINESS MEETING	SESSION THREE: <i>Christianity in Asia: Missions Perspective</i> Dr. Paul Cornelius  Responder: Dr. In Sub-Ahn	SESSION FIVE: <i>TE: Responding to Global and Local Challenges</i> Dr. Dieumeme Noelliste  Responder: Dr. Lal Senanayake
10:45-11:15		TEA BREAK			
11:15-12:30		AGST COUNCIL MEETING	SESSION TWO: <i>Christianity in Asia: Historical Perspective</i> Dr. Makito Masaki  Responder: Dr. Jung-Sook Lee	BUSINESS MEETING  ACADEMIC SOCIETIES	SESSION FOUR: <i>Challenges in Asia</i> Dr. Clive Chin  Responder: Dr. Shekhar Singh
12:30-2:00	BOARD MEETING	LUNCH			
2:00-3:30	ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION	INTEREST GROUPS	TOUR (1:30 onwards)	INTEREST GROUPS	DEPARTURE
3:30-4:00		TEA BREAK		TEA BREAK	
4:00-5:30		INTEREST GROUPS		INTEREST GROUPS	
6:00-7:00	DINNER	DINNER		DINNER	
7:00-8:30	OPENING NIGHT Welcome Address Dr. Young-wood Kim Keynote Address Dr. Joseph Shao	REGIONAL UPDATES & PRAYER TIME  Book Launching		INSTALLATION SERVICE  ATA NIGHT (Cultural Presentations)	TOUR

## INTEREST GROUPS:

1. Education Technology: Get Started with Blended and Online Learning, Student Databases – Mr. Walker Tzeng
2. Case Studies from Impact Assessment:  
The What and How of Curriculum Impact Assessment: The ATS Experience – Dr. Joanna Soberano  
Voices of Alumni and Church Lay Leaders: The BSOP Experience – Dr. Chiu Eng Tan
3. Doing Stakeholder Studies that Promote Institutional Improvement – Dr. Richard Hart
4. Residential and Church-based Training in Partnership – Dr. Graham Aylett and Dr. Tim Green
5. Women and Justice in the Book of Judges – Dr. Athena Gorospe
6. Integrative Counseling as a Means of Spiritual Growth – Dr. Clark Campbell and Dr. Martha Chiu
7. How Asian Mission Agencies Can Avoid Repeating the Mistakes of the West in Relating to Theological Institutions – Dr. Stuart Brooking
8. Transformational Education for Missional Impact – Dr. Henry Tan and Dr. Ron Watters
9. Spiritual Multiplication through Relational Disciple-Making – Bishop Ef Tendero and Dr. Billie Hanks
10. Helping Faculty and Students Better Integrate Faith and Learning: Orientation and Best Practices – Dr. Kevin Lawson
11. Church as a Community of Faith and Communalism in Asia – Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau
12. Diaspora Missiology: A Non-option for 21st Century Theological Education.– Dr. Joy Tira

# Concluding Message of the Global Forum of Theological Educators (GFTE)



GFTE participants

*The following was taken from GFTE official press release on the forum.*

**W**e, 86 theological educators, give thanks to God for the first meeting of the Global Forum of Theological Educators (GFTE), which met on May 16-20, 2016 at the Ferienstätte Dorfweil, Schmitten (near Frankfurt). We are grateful to the organizers for their bold vision and careful planning for this exceptional new global forum.

The GFTE's composition is unique: for the first time, key theological educators from the six major church confessional families – Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Independent churches – came together in one united forum in order to learn from each other and to share about the current situation of theological education and ministerial formation on a global scale.

Drawing on reflections from the book of Acts, participants gathered in the Spirit of Pentecost, aware that the core conviction of Christians – from whatever strand of Christian tradition they come – is to witness to the reality of God's transforming love while standing together, not allowing anyone to become isolated. There was a clear sense that each had something to contribute to the common table.

The GFTE meeting was a unique moment, as it is the only time in the

recent history of Christianity that such a diverse spectrum of leaders in theological education has joined together to underline the common tasks that face all Christian traditions. Some of these tasks include building up new leadership for the mission of the church, strengthening the sense of unity between Christians, giving witness to justice with peace in the world, and supporting all aspects of theological education. The meeting was characterized by a deep sense of humility and of mutual openness in prayer and dialogue.

## **Participants Realized with New Urgency**

We are living in a critical stage of World Christianity. The landscapes of Christian traditions are changing dramatically – in some countries the existence of Christianity is under threat and Christian minorities are challenged to remain steadfast in hostile environments; there are institutional frameworks of theological education that are crumbling; there is growing religious illiteracy and ignorance that help foster prejudice and extremism; theological institutions are often under pressure to conform to government or other external forms of accreditation requirements. In our many contexts we realize again that unity and cooperation in theological education beyond the traditional divides are not a luxury or mere specialized vocation for some, but are essential to the future of theological education. Cooperation and dialogue in theological formation are required for the

majority of settings in which the church finds itself in the 21st century.

We are glad therefore that the consultation in Dorfweil has provided an occasion to recognize each other as Orthodox, Evangelical, Mainline Protestant, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, or Independent theological educators contributing to a common task of theological education for the sake of God's reign in the world.

We are aware that we can complement each other and need each other with the different gifts we bring to the common table in the area of theological education. The need to overcome stereotypes and caricatures of each other is crucial not just for theological education but also for our witness in a world that is torn apart by wars, violence and so many types of injustice. We have been made aware of the need to continue conversations started in this first gathering, to foster friendships and collaboration birthed from our dialogue, and to seek together, as educators, to work toward transformative theological education that serves the churches and God's kingdom.

We recommend that the next gathering of the Global Forum of Theological Educators take place within the next two to three years – and that the Executive Committee undertake the necessary planning and develop increased communication among present and prospective participants. With thanks to God – Creator, Redeemer, and Giver of Life.

Invited participants from ATA schools were Dr. Takanori Kobayashi (Tokyo Christian University), Dr. Jung-Sook Lee (Torch Trinity Graduate University), Dr. Theresa Lua (ATA and AGST), Dr. Timoteo Gener (Asian Theological Seminary), Dr. Pravinkumar Israel (Center for Global Leadership Development), and Dr. Munther Isaac (Bethlehem Bible College). ■

## Visit to Bangkok Bible Seminary



On May 2-4, Bangkok Bible Seminary (BBS) was visited by Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) consisting of Dr. Ng Peh Cheng, Associate Secretary of Accreditation and Educational Development, ATA; Dr. Rahmiati Tanudjaja, Overseer of Missions Department, Southeast Asian Bible Seminary, Indonesia; and Mr. Gregg Nicholson, International Coordinator, The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand.

Bangkok Bible Seminary is an interdenominational institution and comes under the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand. It started as the Bangkok Bible College (BBC) in 1971 by the missionaries of Overseas Missionary Fellowship and Christian and

Missionary Alliance. In 2007, BBC was changed to Bangkok Bible Seminary. BBS exists to glorify God through building Christ-like leaders and Christian workers, equipping them with the Word of God for effective ministry in Thailand and beyond and to be a center for the development of theology in the region. Under the able leadership of Rev. Dr. Jangmook Manoch, BBS continues to expand in terms of facilities, programs, and student population.

The seminary offers Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Christian Studies, Master of Biblical Studies, Master of Divinity, Master of Ministry, Master of Christian Studies, and Master of Christian Administration. ■

## Visit to GLS College in East Asia

The GLS College in East Asia was visited by VET consisting of Dr. Ng Peh Cheng, Associate Secretary of Accreditation and Educational Development, ATA; Dr. Luke Cheung, Vice President, China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong; and Dr. Derek Li, President of Christian Ministry Institute, Hong Kong on May 16-22, 2016.

The GLS College is an interdenominational institution and it operates in two locations in East Asia. The Master of Theology and the Master of Arts programs in both extension sites were approved and accredited in 2008 and 2011 respectively by ATA through Crossway College in Brisbane. In 2014, Crossway College relinquished its role and GLS became a ministry of Eric Liddell Institute (ELI) based in Brisbane. ELI is a Christian NGO organization with a strong interest to support missions in East Asia.

The aim of the College is to “provide quality and contextualized theological education for the local church.” In particular, its focus is to train biblical, Christ-centered, and mission oriented workers for the Chinese church and society for the glory of God and the benefits of its people.

GLS offers Master of Theology in Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology. The school also offers Master of Arts in Theology and Biblical Studies. ■

## Visit to Faith Bible Seminary



The Visiting Evaluation Team consisting of Dr. Joseph Shao, ATA General Secretary (Philippines); Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA Accreditation Secretary (Philippines); Dr. Pieter Theron, Missions Professor, Simpson University (California) visited Faith Bible Seminary, USA on May 2-4, 2016. Dr. Rosa Shao also joined the team as observer and interpreter.

After 20 years of serving as pastor and teaching theology, Rev. John Hao felt the urgent need to train effective leaders and workers for Chinese churches. God used him to establish Christian Witness Theological Seminary of New York in 1989. A burden to start a faith mission with emphasis on church revival led to the establishment of Faith Bible Incorporation in 1995. It has been approved by the New York State and Federal Government as a non-profit organization. Its various ministries include missions, establishing local churches, and seminary training for pastors, teachers, missionaries, evangelists, Christian educators, and lay leaders. Christian Witness Theological Seminary became known as Faith Bible Seminary in 1995.

The seminary has a clear focus on meeting the needs of Chinese churches for pastors and Christian workers who not only serve with passion but with balanced training in Bible and practical application. Faith Bible Seminary has filled a gap in the training of Chinese pastors and Christian workers for New York and the eastern part of the United States of America. The school offers Certificate, Bachelor, M.A., and M.Div. programs. FBS also has a training center in Taiwan. ■

# Reflections on Commentary Writing

This coming July we will be launching the first set of commentaries to be published in partnership with Langham International. By the time of this writing three of these are already being typeset. The final manuscripts of the following books are finished: Judges, Psalms 1-72, and 1, 2, 3 John. We are hoping to add one more volume – the one on the book of Lamentations.

We are grateful to the Lord for His sustaining grace. The journey has not been easy. There have been struggles along the way as we have had to experiment on the best format which would reflect a more Asian way of interpreting the text. We decided to weave together exegesis and application to bring out a more holistic reading of the text. But this meant rewriting, re-arrangement,

and redoing. We are grateful to the writers for their patience and perseverance. They are a gift from the Lord for His church. Our prayer is that the Lord will use these commentaries to strengthen His Church in Asia.

What does it look like to write an Asian Bible commentary? In what follows, Gilbert Soo Hoo shares his own experience writing the commentary on the 1, 2, 3 John.



## My Experience Writing the Commentary on 1, 2, 3 John

By Gilbert Soo Hoo

My journey of writing this commentary began in December 2013 when I first proposed the idea to the ABC General

Editor, Dr. Rico Villanueva, and he accepted conditionally. By “conditionally” I mean that he asked whether I would be willing to work with a contextualization consultant when I was thinking of doing both the exposition and contextualization myself. On other writing projects before I always worked alone. To work with another person required quite a bit of adjustment for me. It meant greater complexity of coordination.

But as the project progressed, sometimes very slowly, I understood the wisdom of collaborating with a native Asian who brought in his cultural and religious experience particularly within a predominantly Muslim context. This was something I could not experience living in Singapore, an oasis of economic and political stability, and religious harmony.

Until I worked on this commentary, I had researched and wrote on the Fourth Gospel nearly exclusively and hence I did not study in any depth other Johannine literature. The opportunity to do so served as the primary motive for me to write. I believed that studying and writing on the letters of John would enrich my study and understanding of the Gospel of John and vice versa as both writings emerged from a common tradition.

As I review this writing journey, I must admit that I did not always appreciate the editors of ATA and later from Langham Partnership. Months would pass before I received their input by which time I had to

refresh myself on what I had written earlier. The format specifications changed a number of times forcing me to redo what I thought was complete. Sometimes I was urged to submit something quickly prompting me to frantically find ways of complying without causing my other responsibilities to lag.

But through it all I sensed that the editors

and I were pursuing the same goals and they really wanted to see this work published as much as I did. Further, I realized that they reviewed the material from the perspective of the readers and offered careful scrutiny in order to enhance the final product. As a result, I am now confident this commentary will serve its intended purpose in large measure due to the editors’ high standards and dedication. ■

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