



April-June 2019 Issue

# ATA news online

The Official Newsletter of Asia Theological Association

## ATA JOINS ICETE IN WELCOMING ITS NEW INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR



The Board of the International Council for Evangelical Theological education or ICETE has unanimously elected Dr. Michael A. Ortiz to serve as ICETE International Director, succeeding Dr. Riad Kassis, who resigned at the close of ICETE C-18 in Panama last November after six years of highly effective and transformational leadership. Dr. Ortiz will assume the immediate designation of Director Designate and will gradually transition toward full assumption of his office in Fall 2019.

The Board's election of Dr. Ortiz affirmed the recommendation of a special board-appointed Search/Transition Task Force (Drs. Ralph Enlow, Riad Kassis, Theresa Lua, Paul Sanders) that has been prayerfully engaged since last November in seeking ICETE's new leader. Specifically, the Task Force mandate was to identify, assess, inquire of, review, and interview

prospects and ultimately to recommend a candidate for Board ratification.

A lawyer by profession, Dr. Ortiz came to saving faith as a married adult and during the early years of his practice. His hunger for biblical and theological studies grew and that led him to pursue a ThM (New Testament) from Dallas Theological Seminary and further pursue a PhD (Theological Education) from Seminario Teologico Centroamericano (SETECA). Dr. Ortiz is of Cuban- American descent and has been married to Kathy for 33 years now. They have two adult children, Michael (29) and Alyssa (28) and serve actively at the Church of Incarnation in Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Ortiz will be giving a devotional in ATA's forthcoming General Assembly

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS / INTEREST GROUPS FOR THE ATA TRIENNIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In addition to the plenary sessions that address core issues in engaging the next generation, we have lined up several breakout sessions or Interest Groups focusing on different areas of needs and challenges in theological education. These breakout sessions along with their facilitators are as follows:

Facilitator/s	Title
Dr. Marvin Oxenham	Character Education
Dr. Davina Soh	Practicing Hospitality in Theological Classrooms
Dr. Andrew Spurgeon	Integration of Technology and Assignments
Dr. Rick Weymouth	The Future is Blended: How online theological education can partner with the local church in creating new transformative and holistic 21st century learning opportunities
Dr. Lisa Lamb	Can homiletics be taught online? Should it be? Biblical apprenticeship as a model for assessing the losses and the gains of online learning, with specific attention to preaching
Dr. Walker Tzeng	The Social Media Influencer Economy and Potential for Revenue, Recruitment, and Student Engagement in Theological Education
Mr. Ryan Mudge	The Accordance Bible Software
Ms. Isobel Stevenson	A Workshop on Writing for Asia
Dr. Billie Hanks	Multiplying Ministries of Disciple-making in Asia
Dr. Emmanuel Bellon	Mentoring the Next Generation for Theological Leadership
Dr. Ishak Wonohadidjojo	Innovating Seminary Programs, Empowering Churches, Preparing the Next Generation: Cry for Help of Christian Schools
Dr. Steve Chang Dr. Dick Eugenio Dr. Paul Cornelius	The Future of Doctoral Programs in Asia: Prospects and Challenges
Dr. Ralph Enlow	Essential Roles and Responsibilities of the Chief Academic Officer
Mr. Dan Kramer Dr. Romerlito Macalinao	Seminary Curriculum Options on Innovations on Great Commission Bible Translation
Tearfund Theological Network Engagement (Asia Team)	Integrating Integral Mission in the Seminary Curriculum
Dr. Jeannette Shubert	Me? A Mentor? Opportunities, Challenges, Competencies, and Roles of Faculty Mentors in Theological Education
Dr. Graham Aylett Dr. Tim Green Dr. Qaiser Julius Dr. Rick Weymouth	Learning Pathways Using Nested Programs to Serve the Churches of Asia
Mr. Timothy Liu	Ministry in the World of Work

Full description of these topics and the profiles of the facilitators will be sent to the registered participants in advance to serve as guide in choosing four breakout sessions scheduled on Tuesday (August 13th) and Wednesday (August 14th) afternoons.

**2019 ATA TRIENNIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**The Future Church: A Theological Response**

TCA COLLEGE, SINGAPORE  
AUGUST 12-16, 2019

**PLENARY SPEAKERS AND TOPICS**

- DR. VICTOR LEE** (Malaysia): THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND THE MILLENNIALS
- DR. DWI MARIA HANDAYANI** (Indonesia): BUILDING COMMUNITIES
- DR. MOTOAKI SHINOHARA** (Japan): EVANGELICAL DIVERSITY
- PTR. JOEY ASHER TAN** (Singapore): UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIALS AND POST MILLENNIALS
- REV. SAMUEL T. KOSHY** (India): AUTHENTICITY
- MS. SO-YOUNG KANG** (South Korea): DIGITAL CHRISTIANITY
- MR. REI LEMUEL CRIZALDO** (Philippines): ARTS AND SPIRITUALITY

**Plus 18 breakout sessions.**

## ATA PUBLICATIONS TO RELEASE NEW COMMENTARIES IN TIME FOR THE UPCOMING G.A.

The upcoming ATA General Assembly is definitely a very exciting one for it will be the launch of numerous things! Apart from launching the 50th anniversary celebration, among others, we will be launching six new additions to the Asia Bible Commentary Series and they are as follows:

### **1 SAMUEL by Koowon Kim**

1 Samuel is full of riveting narratives related to the beginning of dynastic monarchy in ancient Israel, from which we can gain not only the spiritual wisdom about our relationship with the Lord, but also copious insights into the outworking of political power. This theologically sensitive and historically informed commentary will help both pastors and laymen to navigate through what is rightfully considered the best book

ever written in the Hebrew language.

### **ESTHER by Peter Lau**

Esther is a peculiar book. Set in Persia, there seems little interest in the Temple, the Promised Land, and prayer and other signs of Israelite religion. Most peculiar of all for a book of the Bible, there is no explicit mention of God! Yet there are many similarities with the setting of Esther and our situations in Asia today, which open ways for God to speak to us. This commentary will examine the book of Esther in its original context, then consider how to interpret and apply it in light of the rest of Scripture – both the Old Testament and the New.

### **JAMES by Andrew B. Spurgeon and Luke Cheung**

In Hong Kong and China, criminals are often superstitiously religious. Ironically, both they and police officers worship the same folk god, Guan Gong, who represents righteousness! But their religiosity has no moral consequences – what both groups are seeking is protection from their opponents.

Unfortunately, some Asian Christians have a similar model of religiosity. They want God's blessings, but they do not want God to affect how they live. James will have none of this. He is convinced that our devotion to God must be reflected in the way we live, and so he writes a letter that is full of sound, practical advice. He speaks of how difficult it is to control our tongues, and how much we need to do so. He speaks against greed and envy, wrong desires, faith without



substance, complaining, gossiping, and unfair labor practices. He gives wise advice about enduring suffering, knowing the source of temptation, having an authentic faith, praying for ailing believers, and restoring believers who are tempted to depart from the truth.

### **PHILIPPIANS by Roji George**

Asian Christians will identify with the context of the epistle to the Philippians; a church hemmed in on every side. The internal struggles of the community, personality conflicts among leaders, division within the church, and challenges from the false teachers coupled with the violent threat from outside of the church parallels the situation in many parts of Asia today. Paul's ethical exhortations to the believers in Philippi enrich, guide, and correct so that a vibrant body of Christ can be established. Philippians teaches all Christians to make it their goal to know Christ more and more each day, imitate his example above all others, and bear bold witness to God's offer of salvation to all, beyond every divisive border. This commentary on Philippians studies the text exegetically in its original dynamic context while seeking to hear the rhetorical thrust of the apostle's words in the present Asian context.

### **COLOSSIANS AND PHILEMON by Brian Wintle and Bruce Nicholls**

Paul's epistle to the Colossians was written to a group of Christians who still held on to their past Jewish and pagan traditions alongside their faith in Christ. To help these believers, Paul provided

guidance on how to deal with their past, showing them how faith in Christ brings new meaning to their situation. Similarly, in his epistle to Philemon, Paul addresses a culture where slavery was a common practice. He demonstrates the potential when slaves responded to the gospel and turned to Christ. Both of these epistles are extremely relevant to the church in Asia today, especially as it is confronted with syncretism, false teachings, and the mistreatment of the less fortunate and marginalized in society.

### **EZRA-NEHEMIAH by Joseph Too Shao and Rosa Ching Shao**

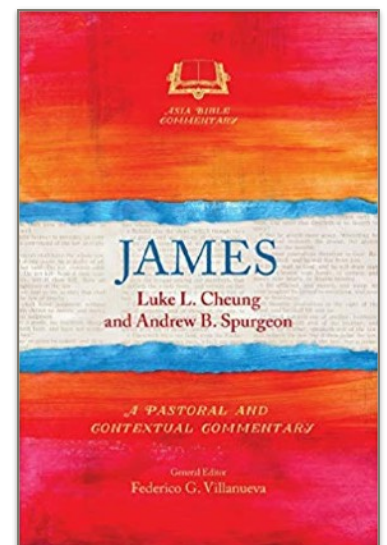
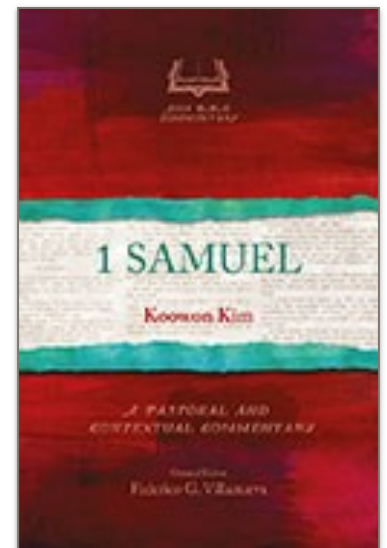
The books of Ezra and Nehemiah illustrate how leaders confronted the challenges confronting the people of God during the post-exilic period. Zerubbabel inspires the people of God to rebuild the temple. Ezra helps in renewing their faith in God, and Nehemiah rebuilds the wall. These books testify to how God's gracious hands guide and bless his people at each juncture. The careful exposition of these two books provides a model for how readers balance prayer and action with contextual application.

### **JONAH by Rosa Ching Shao**

In this commentary, Dr. Rosa Shao beautifully weaves together the story of the biblical text, the relevant narratives of the Chinese, Filipino and Asian contexts, and psychological insights. Testifying to how she was drawn to the book of Jonah very early on, she shares how this book has spoken to her and demonstrates how others can

hear the message of the book in their own context.

We are most definitely excited to launch these books in the upcoming General Assembly.. . but we are even more so excited to see our member institutions – and the church at large- benefitting from them.



## EXCITING EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE BIBLICAL SEMINARY OF THE PHILIPPINES

May 26, 2019 was eventful for the Biblical Seminary of the Philippines or BSOP.

For one, it held its 60<sup>th</sup> Commencement Exercises with 27 graduates plus 12 graduates from the AGST/BSOP programs (ThM and PhD in Biblical Studies, EdD in Christian Counseling). The guest speaker for this event was Rev. Dr. Caleb Tong.

But apart from holding its Commencement Exercises, BSOP installed its new president, Rev. Anthony Hao, who has been serving in BSOP for ten years as faculty and Vice President. Dr. Theresa Lua, on behalf of ATA, gave the congratulatory remarks to the new president. It was also the conferment of Dr. Joseph

Shao as President Emeritus. This was in recognition of his 30 years of faithful service as BSOP President. Dr. Shao was likewise ATA General Secretary from 2007-2016.

All these events took place at the United Evangelical Church of the Philippines after which a special banquet was held in honor of Dr. Shao at the New World Hotel. Several people were asked to give their greetings to Dr. Shao during the said event, one of which was Dr. Theresa Lua.

We indeed praise God for Dr. Shao and all his years of excellent service and faithfulness!





## THE EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS: A VISIT TO THE ZION CHURCH, BATTICALOA AND THE STUDENTS OF COLOMBO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By Dr. Ivor Poobalan, President, Colombo Theological Seminary



### Background

Last April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, a series of coordinated suicide bombings befell Sri Lanka. Known as the Easter Sunday Attacks, the incident left 257 dead, one of which a graduate of Colombo Theological Seminary (CTS) and assistant pastor of Zion Church, to which CTS is closely connected, and 500 injured. The bombings were done by nine suicide bombers (including one female), between the ages of twenty and thirty-six, from an organization called the National Tawhid Jamaat (NTJ). The NTJ is a small network of extremists committed to violence and terror based on certain interpretations of Islamic ideology

### Encounters with Students and Families

Our first conversation was with Pastor Roshan Mahesan, the senior pastor of Zion. Pastor Mahesan has led Zion for the past 38 years. He had been on a ministry visit to Norway when the attacks took place. The challenges that he now faces are immense; with so many bereaved and injured church members, and massive loss to property. He is

operating out of a rented property opposite Zion. By the time of our visit, the church property had not as yet been handed back to Zion by the government authorities. It was clear that Pastor Roshan is under severe pressure, but is full of faith and confidence that God will enable them to pull through so they could serve Him even more effectively. His wife and children are a great comfort and strength to him. He spoke several times about “Ramesh, my right hand man”, and indicated how closely and loyally Ramesh had served the Lord.

We next visited with Krishanthi, the widow of Ramesh. They have two children, a daughter of about 13 and a son about 11. They were very close, and Ramesh supported the family by doing a business as a small-time contractor. Krishanthi had been with Ramesh when he had escorted the

bomber out; she had then gone into the sanctuary. Her grief and trauma is greatly compounded by the fact that she has been victimized multiple times by experiences of terror and tragedy. When she was a child her father had been murdered by the LTTE, and later in life her mother had been killed by the army. She had also lost immediate family members when the 2004 tsunami hit. Ramesh’s sister, husband and one-year infant also died on Easter Sunday. She is not employed, having taken early retirement from the health sector some years ago to volunteer at the church.

Kumaran is a member of the CTS prayer team and committee. He and his wife lost their middle child, Malchijah, who was thirteen. They

*Continued on page 8*



*photos from Daniel Pakkiam's facebook post*

## A Visiting Evaluation Team sent to St. Paul's Theological Seminary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Last April 11-14, a Visiting Evaluation Team composed of Drs. Teresa Chai, Academic Dean of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS), Philippines; Samuel Sidjabat, President of Tyrannus Bible Seminary, Indonesia; and Rev. Khee Vun Lin, Principal of Anglican Training Institute (Sabah) went to St. Paul's Theological Seminary, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This visit was conducted as a response to the request of the institution to evaluate and accredit three programs, namely their 1- year Certificate in Theology, Mission, and Ministry (C.Th), their 2- year Diploma



in Theology, Mission, and Ministry (Dip. Th), and lastly, their 3- year Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Mission, and Ministry (B.A Th).

St. Paul's Theological Seminary aims at preparing its students for church leadership- be it lay or ordained leadership, full time or bi-vocational. It is the Seminary's hope that its students plant new churches not just in Malaysia, but also beyond and in the wider South East Asian Region. Additionally, it aims at equipping students for life long effective ministry. Their vision is "to

play our part in the evangelization of the nations, the revitalization of the church, and the transformation of society." St. Peter's Theological Seminary is registered under the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of West Malaysia and yet also remains Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Charismatic and is open to churches and other denominations, which is attested by their diverse student body.

Let's continue to pray for St. Paul's Theological Seminary as it seeks to equip more leaders for the church and its mission.

## A Visiting Evaluation Team Sent out to CYCU

A Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) was sent out to the Chung Yuan Christian University (CYCU) in Taiwan last June 17-19. The team, composed of Drs. Ng Peh Cheng, Associate Secretary of Accreditation and Educational development, ATA, Dr. Luke Cheung, Vice President, China Graduate School of Theology, and Erwir Chen, Academic Dean, China Lutheran Seminary, Taiwan, more specifically visited its Graduate School of Religion in the College of Humanities and Education in order to accredit the University's Master of Arts in Religious Studies.



Founded in 1955 by a missionary, CYCU grew in tremendous ways through the years and in fact became a full-scale university in 1980. It has 6 colleges and a law school and is recognized by the government and also accredited by the "Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan." The Graduate School of Religion was set up under the College

of Humanities and Education in 1999 and recognized as one of its departments.

With an enrolment of about 16,000, only 4% of the student population are Christians while the faculty and staff are at 20%. Let's keep CYCU, along with their faculty, staff, and students, that they would shine Christ's light in Taiwan.



## A Joint Visiting Evaluation Team Graces Israel College of the Bible

Last May 28-30 2019, Israel College of the Bible was visited by a joint team from ATA and the the European Council for Theological Education or ECTE (formerly the European Evangelical Accrediting Association or EEAA). The members of the team are as follows: Dr. Rick Weymouth (ATA Convenor), Dr. Chiu Eng Tan (ATA Member), Dr. Parush Parushev (ECTE Team Leader), and Dr. Hubert Jurgensen (ECTE member).

Formerly known as The King of Kings College, ICB began in 1990 with the purpose to serve Israel's growing Messianic Jewish Community. Its mission is "reaching and training a generation of Israeli disciples living in the last days who are equipped, mobilized, and energized with a first-century commitment to believe in God's promises and participate in His purposes for Israel and the Nations."



ICB aims at enabling students to develop not just their knowledge of Scripture but also their ability to communicate the message behind it. The institution aims not just at giving the students the skills they need for ongoing study of Scripture, but they likewise point them to resources that are made available to them for their personal spiritual growth and development and equip their students for leadership in ministry. Furthermore, woven into the identity of ICB are its efforts in bringing

reconciliation and unity among Israeli and Arab believers.

ICB offers the following programs: Year in Israel Certificate, Bikkurim or "first fruits" Certificate, BA in Biblical Studies, MA in Biblical Studies, MA in Biblical Counselling, and Master of Ministry (Pastoral Ministry).

Let us keep Israel College of the Bible in our prayers as they go about their mission and as they work towards unity and reconciliation.

*from page 6*

have an older son and a younger daughter. Malchijah was great at Bible Quiz and a talented trumpet player. He was identified by the wristwatch he was wearing.

Vathani is a CTS student. The catalogue of events that have unfolded for her was difficult to imagine. She has suffered severe injuries to her hearing. Her sister, Verlini died along with Verlini's husband. Another sister,

Rebecca, has been hospitalised in Colombo with head injuries, severe burns, and multiple limb fractures. Vathani's nephew, a 13 year old basketball player, died. The boy's father met with a motor cycle accident while making the funeral arrangements and has sustained neck injuries. Verlini's daughter Debbie (about 6) has been injured but most tragically has lost her sight. One eye has been removed, and doctors at the children's

hospital are desperately trying to help restore the other. Debbie and her older brother are orphans.

Kasilda is a CTS graduate. She lost her youngest son, thirteen year old John Jeshurun. John and Malchijah were friends and they had gone arm in arm outside to have a drink of water when the explosion had occurred. John had many abilities, especially in web-design. He used to do a lot of work for



his older brother who works as a freelance software developer. I shared with Kasilda how the Lord spoke to me through Isaiah 57:1-2 when my brother died, a young Christian worker. We prayed together and wept.

The family we were unable to visit was that of our alumnus Thamendra. His sister has suffered severe head injuries and was in the ICU.

A significant part of our emotionally exhausting day was the session we had with the CTS students from Zion, who had not been personally injured or bereaved. They are suffering a trauma of a different kind because everyone and everything is an intimate part of their lives, and yet there is less 'permission' for them to grieve. I asked them to share individually what questions troubled them and whatever they would feel like sharing to help us share the load with them. Each one spoke in turn. On everyone's mind was the question why, but also that sure confidence that God was in control. Some were unable to eat, sleep, and even pray for days. Others suffered with post-traumatic stress symptoms such as being startled by small sounds or loud voices. One of the students was among the Sunday School teachers who had led the children in making their personal commitments to Jesus as their Savior. He and another woman Sunday School teacher are at a loss as to how to face their kids, and what they are to say.



Another student Dinesh shared an amazing testimony. He was leading a branch church 30 kilometers away. But he couldn't continue with the service for more than 10 minutes because he felt a great heaviness. So he stopped the service and switched on his phone and was inundated with texts and calls. He got on his bike with his wife to rush to the main Zion church. His wife was repeatedly asking him why God would allow this to happen. But he found that the Holy Spirit just kept bringing three CTS teachers to mind and the lessons they had taught on Church History and Christology. The former about how the Church over the centuries has experienced martyrdom and revival at the same time. The latter was about

the incarnation of Christ, and Jesus's participation in a suffering world. He felt that God was marvelously preparing him to face the days ahead, and feels truly confident that God is sovereign in this very situation. I silently praised God for the encouragement of the power of the taught-Word that becomes the resource that the Holy Spirit can use in a critical moment.

The visit enabled us to express our solidarity and concern for the suffering Christians in Batticaloa. It also gave us great insight into the nature of the needs and possible ways that we will be able to support those who are in need of material, emotional, psychological, and spiritual care. A program to provide meaningful support and encouragement has now been started and will continue in the weeks and months ahead. In addition to providing financial help for affected families, we are looking into the possibility of organizing a counselling and teaching retreat for all the students in the CTS Batticaloa Extension in June.

Thank you for your prayerful support and commitment to stand with the believers at this crucial moment. We thank God that he walks with us and that his people all over the world are the agents of His comfort and love.

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