



TOWARDS THE FLOURISHING OF OUR MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Testimonials on the VSI process

One of the ways in which ATA serves its member institutions is by providing a consulting service done in partnership with ScholarLeaders International (SLI). This is known as the Vital Sustainability Initiative (VSI) project. SLI describes the purpose of the VSI as follows:

We intend to: strengthen the Church in the Majority World, by enabling schools of theology to clearly define their unique missions related to formation of leaders and to their prophetic role in the Church and society, then to help them define the strategy that will enable them to pursue their mission with vitality and sustainability, to coach leaders as they confront difficulties and implement plans, and to share what is learned.

The VSI engagements were largely disrupted by the pandemic but praise God that four institutions in Malaysia and Indonesia have taken on the process. Here are the testimonies of these institutions:

On behalf of our college (Bible College of Malaysia), we would like to thank Scholar Leaders International and Asia Theological Association for providing us with this timely strategic planning exercise with the VSI (Vital Sustainable Initiative) team.

The method was comprehensive and well-planned. Dr Emmanuel, who led the team, provided clear instructions and guidance throughout the entire process. The team visited our campus from the 22nd to the 24th of September 2022 to gather data. The team analyzed our current position from that visit and

translated the data into a strategic plan. The team visited the campus again from the 8th to the 10th of March 2023 to work through the strategic plan in detail. By the end of the process, we have crafted a strategic plan for the next five years with clear, actionable, and measurable goals.

The VSI has tremendously impacted our college at different levels. It has helped our management team to reflect on and reprioritize our effort and resources. Our

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SLI team with the leaders of the Bible College of Malaysia

discussions with the consultants were stimulating and opened our eyes to new ideas and opportunities. The team was very experienced with global insights into issues affecting theological institutions. The team also provided care and support to me as the executive leader.

I personally recommend that every theological institution consider working through its strategy using the method developed by VSI- particularly when you need to reposition your institution with a strategic edge.

Rev Dr Victor Lee
President, Bible College of Malaysia

Greetings from Alpha Omega International College in Malaysia! Our institution was a recipient of the VSI consultancy project that started around 2020-21. We are in the final stages of completing this process.

The timing of the VSI consultancy was divine orchestration! Our institution went through a very challenging period and the process had helped us to think deeply about the need for change in the post pandemic era- planned strategies and actions that will engender hope of a compelling future for our stakeholders and constituents. Moving forward, we



SLI team with the leaders of the Alpha Omega International College

have much more work to do but it will be purposeful, and faith driven work.

For any institution that is keen to move forward, have an independent group to come alongside to help you think through what you do. While you will certainly be stretched through the process of change- it will be one of the best decisions for the health and growth of your seminary.

Dr Lim Siew Pik
President, Alpha Omega College, Malaysia

As President of Amanat Agung Theological Seminary (STTAA) in Jakarta, Indonesia, I am grateful for the opportunity to be guided by the VSI team from Scholar Leaders International (SLI). Since I signed the Partnership Agreement with SLI on February 20, 2020, we've been in constant communication to figure out how this process will work. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the VSI team's first visit to our seminary was only able to take place on July 4-6, 2022, and we received a second visit on February 27-March 1, 2023. Besides physical visits, there were a lot of online discussions. I can say that we were very well coached on how to create strategic initiatives, objectives, and action plans. We were extremely impressed by the outcomes of our team's work in collaboration with the VSI team led by Dr. Emmanuel Bellon and Dr. Linzay Rinquest. In the end, we were ultimately able to

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SLI team with the leaders of Amanat Agung Theological Seminary



SLI team with the leaders of Bandung Theological Seminary

generate the STTAA strategic plan document for five years (2023–2027), which makes the management of this seminary more focused and direct. I am very appreciative of ATA for recommending our institution for that reason in this regard. Also, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the VSI team at SLI for all of the dedicated work they have put into mentoring us throughout the process. The Lord be praised!

Rev. Casthelia Kartika, D.Th.
President, Amanat Agung Theological Seminary

Bandung Theological Seminary Indonesia is very grateful for the opportunity to go through a consultation process provided by Scholar Leaders International in partnership with ATA. The survey tools, the questions, and the feedback have been wonderfully helpful for me and for our leadership team in our journey to better understand God’s calling for BTS- both in the task of formation of Christian leaders and in its prophetic role in the Indonesian church and society- and how to achieve it strategically.

The process started with an email from Dr. Theresa Lua offering us this wonderful opportunity.

We then proceeded with a pre-engagement survey followed by the VSI team visit led by Dr Emmanuel Bellon. The first phase has been very helpful for us to understand our seminary thoroughly from multiple strategic angles. A summary of the overall situation analysis, potential opportunities and questions for strategy planning provided by the VSI team based on the first visit were a wonderful bridge for us to enter the next phase of strategy planning.

During the second VSI team visit in early March 2023, this time led by Dr. Linzay Rinqest, we were helped to consolidate our four-year strategic planning draft with a sharpened focus in our vision-mission statements, and its translation into highly relevant strategic initiatives, goals and action plans to achieve it.

As we are heading toward the final phase, we are so grateful that the consultation process has been very helpful for us to have a stronger sense of direction, and to know how to translate our vision into a clear strategic plan.

Sutrisna Harjanto, PhD
Principal, Bandung Theological Seminary

We praise God for the opportunity to walk alongside and see our member institutions flourish and achieve their mission strategically! We are excited to see how the Lord will continue to grow these institutions- and many more- as we walk alongside you, our members! ◆

ORIENTAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY: BRINGING WHAT IS WRONG INTO THE LIGHT

*“You are the salt of the earth...
You are the light of the world...”
Jesus in Matthew 5: 13 & 14*

It doesn't take much to see that societies across the globe, both in a macro and micro scale, are dark and decaying. Everywhere, injustice is pervasive and systemic. But rather than retreat into our own little ghettos, we are called to go out there and be the salt that preserves and the light that pierces the darkness- and that was what Oriental Theological Seminary (OTS) in Nagaland did when the state was moving towards its recently held election. Last February 11, the institution initiated a sensitization campaign in Dimapur with the theme, "Your Stand Decides the Future". 66 students participated, holding placards all of which pushed for clean elections and "One Person, One Vote", which calls out proxy voting. Standing with the students were OTS professors M Sashi Jamir, Associate Professor of Old Testament, and Dr. Sani Athisu, Professor of Ethics. Both professors have been very vocal about the injustices and anomalies that happen during election season.

Read more about how the Lord is working in and through OTS and its community by clicking on these links:

<http://morungexpress.com/nagaland-your-stand-decides-the-future>

<https://www.outlookindia.com/national/nagaland-elections-ruled-by-money-power-says-professor-leading-youth-against-corruption-news-263343>

We praise God for how He is working in and through OTS and how the school chooses to be salt and light. We continue to pray that the school will persevere and press on in the work of transforming society and continue to raise up transformational leaders. ◆

FACULTY VOCATIONAL ENRICHMENT

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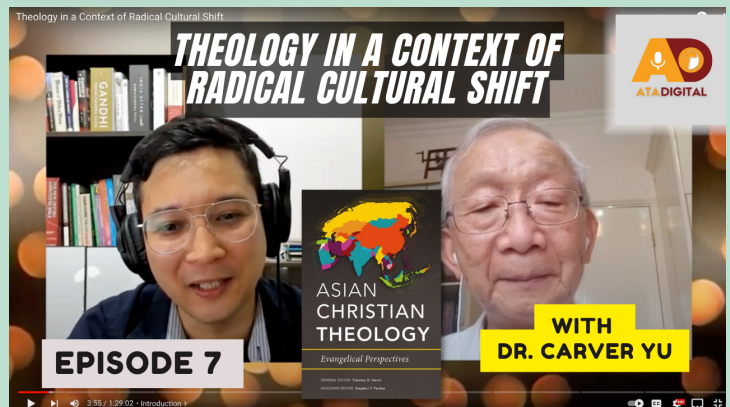
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New Episode: Theology in a Context of Radical Cultural Shift



From New Normal to Next Normal: Wins, Gains, and Challenges

After a little over two years of restrictions, lockdowns, and holding all events online, the second half of 2022 allowed us to see some normalcy with the resumption of in person gatherings and travel. The world has moved from the new normal to the next normal- and, despite the challenges that come with it, it was a welcome change for the ATA!

The shift to the next normal has once again allowed us to have in person accreditation visits, hold an in person General Assembly, and participate in other events and gatherings! Furthermore, the shift to the next normal has likewise allowed for the resumption of the GATE workshops- particularly the one in Mongolia. After a two-year hiatus, 56 participants from 7 institutions once again gathered for GATE workshop year 3! These institutions were the *Union Bible Theological College, Mongolian Theological Education by Extension, Kingdom Leadership Training Center, Mongolia Assemblies of God Bible School, Mongolian Evangelical Lutheran Church Bible School, River of Life Ministry School, and Darkhan Union Bible Theological College*. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Gary Griffith, GATE Global International Coordinator, and Dr. Edwardneil Benavidez, GATE Associate from the Philippines. The workshop will continue this year as institutions in Mongolia will gather once again on October for GATE year 4. On the other hand, this resumption of the GATE Workshop in Mongolia is just the beginning as we are working on the resumption of the GATE Workshop in North and South India and Nepal.

But apart from these events and gatherings, the ATA annual leaders' meetings (Publications committee, AGST Council, CAED, and the Executive Board) were finally conducted in person- and it was filled with the Lord's favor! The various meetings were held from February 14-17 in Pattaya Thailand and was made possible through a generous Thai Businessman. The leaders of ATA were given free accommodation, meals, and use of conference room at The Sanctuary Hotel. How faithful and how generous the Lord has



After a little over two years of meeting online, the leaders of ATA gathered in person for the ATA Annual Leaders' meeting.

been to the ministry of the Asia Theological Association!

Indeed the Lord is faithful- and as He has faithfully led us in completing our Strategic Plan for the next 5 years, He is now leading us in its implementation. Several initiatives and objectives require a good IT support, and we have a full strategic initiative on strengthening ATA's operational service through technology. Thus, we have engaged the services of an IT Consultant to do a detailed study of processes and functions of the various departments of ATA which are requiring IT services and to propose IT solutions, the implementation plan of solutions, and the overall costings.

Our steadily growing community

As we continue to seek to give our best service to our member institutions, the Lord continues to bless the work of our hands and add to our community. Our community is now made up of 390 members, both Accredited and Associate, with 198 of those members belonging to ATA India.

In order that we may effectively serve the Asian Church...

As the world continues to shift to the next normal and as events take place in both the physical and virtual world, we, as a ministry, aim to stay relevant and abreast- along with working alongside others so that we can effectively serve the Asian Church. While the pandemic was grueling in every way and grief met everyone at every corner, it birthed many new things as well. As we continue to move forward in this next normal, we continue to trust the Lord to meet all our needs and be our guide as we carry out His calling for us. ♦



A Tribute to a Writer, Editor, Teacher, Missionary, and Friend: Dr. George Harper

On the morning of March 16, a beloved member of the ATA community went home to be with the Lord- Dr. George Harper. Dr. George Harper battled with COVID-19 and eventually succumbed to it.

Dr. George Harper had served through the ministry of ATA in many ways. He began serving through the Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST)-Philippines in 2001 as Professor of Christian History and Thought. He likewise helped establish and lead AGST's Th.M./ Ph.D. program in Theological Studies. After a short hiatus, Dr. George Harper returned to AGST and served as Program Director of AGST's Th.M./ Ph.D. programs in Theological Studies and Church History. Then in 2011, he was appointed Editor of the Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology.

But more than all he had accomplished, Dr. George Harper was a blessing to his teammates,

students, and friends, as attested by the words of those who have walked closely with him in life and ministry:

Dr. George W. Harper Jr. was a theologian and scholar with eagle eyes for meticulous accuracy. He served as the editor of the Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology (JAET), a publication of the Asia Theological Association, since 2011. He diligently searched for Asian theologians to contribute to the journal and worked tirelessly to bring out the writers' intentions and messages. For some of these authors, English wasn't their mother tongue or primary source of communication. Dr. Harper worked with them to ensure their thoughts and messages were carefully preserved in his edited articles. Frankness and directness are not Asian characteristics but were second nature to Dr. Harper. Yet, he found a perfect way to mix truth with love. Those who worked with him closely, including me, knew him as a gentle, kind, honest, and generous gentleman and will miss him immensely.

– Andrew B. Spurgeon, Publications Secretary, ATA

Dr. George Harper has given me the opportunity to study theology under his supervision. He was not only an inspiring teacher in my studies, but he was also an outstanding mentor in my spiritual journey. When we, as international students, felt lonely, he and his wife, Dr. Ann, provided hospitality. His spiritual, family, and academic contributions have borne fruit in my exciting ministry in my country. I'd like to express my gratitude to you for your efforts, contributions, and efforts to better prepare me for my journey with the Lord and my academic life. You will be remembered.

– Shahbaz Masih Boota, former student of Dr. George Harper and Principal of Zarepath Bible Seminary, Pakistan

I am saddened to hear about George's death; I fondly called him Dr. Harper. I had the privilege to study under him for my ThM and PhD at the Asia Graduate School of Theology-Philippines.

I was naive about various theological persuasions, but despite his monumental experiences, he was there to come down to help me/us. He was a man of few words with immense theological knowledge, an ardent

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and convincing advocator of Calvinism. I admired him for his scholarship and commitment. He had shaped and touched many lives. His dedication to training Asian Christian leaders was a great source of inspiration to me.

He was quiet, funny, sharp, critical, and compassionate to students. His energy, patience, and enthusiasm to teach were something I cherish. He loved books and loved to give them to students. During Christmas, he asked students to choose books that were helpful to them. He was a thorough gentleman with simplicity, generosity, and scholarship. He is gone, but his legacy continues.

-Dr. Ashong Serto, former student of Dr. George Harper and Principal of United College of Theology and Missions, Nagaland, India

I remember vividly the Harper's home in Antipolo where our AGST class on Reformed Theology under Dr. George Harper was held. Although I wasn't a coffee drinker that time, the fresh aroma of coffee prepared by his wife, Dr. Anne, filled the living room that I found it hard to resist not having a cup or two. What made it even more enjoyable was the discussions with George. I really appreciated his erudition and how he wisely guided our class. His high standards when it comes to our papers, especially, helped me to write better when I pursued further studies. Our class was also blessed by his generosity as we all received numerous books that until now are an important part of my personal collection.

It would be another 10 years after I finished my ThM in 2004 that George and I got connected again. His invitation for me to be part of AGST's Theological Studies Program was a huge encouragement to me, for I was at a crossroads in my ministry during that time. It was indeed a privilege to work with George, who involved me in various aspects of the Program--teaching, advising students in thesis writing, and participating as a member of the Program Committee. I am grateful to George for his trust—although I am not a Calvinist—and I will always remember his efforts and concern for the Program despite the limitations brought about by his health condition.

Thank you very much, Dr. George Harper, for the big impact you have made in my ministry.

~Dr. Aldrin Penamora, former student of Dr. George Harper, Professor, Author, and Executive Director of

the Philippine Council for Evangelical Churches (PCEC) Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Commission, and PCEC Theological Commission

George and I have been colleagues in ministry for many years. We both served as faculty at the Alliance Graduate School (formerly Alliance Biblical Seminary). Later we worked together at the Asia Graduate School of Theology-Philippines where I served as Dean and George as Program Director of the ThM-PhD in Theological Studies and Church History. Students admired George for his wealth of knowledge and mastery of his subject areas. He was known for his meticulous checking of student papers to make sure they observe proper citation of sources. But he was also genuinely concerned for the well-being of his students. He and Anne have provided pastoral care especially to international students who were facing various challenges.

George served as Editor of the Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology from 2011 until his death. We are grateful for his faithful service to ATA.

~Dr. Theresa Lua, ATA General Secretary



(From R to L) Dr. George Harper with Drs. Andrew Spurgeon, his wife, Anne Harper, and Theresa Lua

Dr. George Harper will definitely be missed by many- and during this time of immense grief, please remember to pray for Dr. George's bereaved family- his wife, Dr. Anne Harper and children Ruth, Meg, and Michael. ♦

FELLOWSHIP MEMBERS: A NEW CATEGORY IN THE ATA MEMBERSHIP

In its over 50 years of existence, the Lord has exponentially grown the community of ATA, adding to its number year after year. We praise God that, as we remain steadfast to the mission He has called us to, He brings institutions and organizations that want to be part of what He is doing in and through our ministry our way. So, for us to better accommodate the growing diversity of institutions and organizations in our community, we are launching a new category of membership: the **FELLOWSHIP MEMBERS**. This new category was approved by the ATA Board during its most recent meeting in Pattaya Thailand.

So what are Fellowship Members and what are the requirements to be one?

Well, FELLOWSHIP MEMBERS are organizations, institutions, and associations involved in theological education (training, publications, etc.) seeking fellowship or collaboration with ATA.

Eligibility Criteria for Fellowship Members is as follows:

- The mission and purpose must be complementary and supportive of the mission and purpose of ATA.
- Must affirm its agreement with, and willingness to abide by the ATA Constitution and Statement of Faith.
- Must be well-known and well-regarded within its region.
- Must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the ATA Board.
- Must pay the specified Application Fee; and agree to pay Annual Fees if accepted.

As we add this third category of membership into our community, we look forward to seeing more institutions and organizations involved in the community of ATA. Of course, the other 2 categories remain: *accredited members* (institutional members whose educational program/s is/ are accredited by ATA) and *associate members* (are organizations, associations, and institution members that are either in the process of seeking accreditation from or in fellowship with ATA). We also look forward to better serving our diverse community in order that each of our member institutions can faithfully serve the very diverse Asian Church. ♦

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ATA News is a bi-monthly publication of the Asia Theological Association

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