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‘Discerning the Obedience of Faith’

A Short History of the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission

Part 3: 1994-2004

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TC at 20 years¹

Despite a busy and productive year in 1993, the TC Executive had not met. This meant that it did not have the opportunity to address the significant changes to its role that had been proposed by the WEF which would change it from a body committed primarily to theological reflection to one working at

the grassroots level in leadership development and training. This disturbance was symptomatic of more to come during the twentieth year of the organization's history.

The TC Executive finally met at Elburn, Illinois 7-10 January 1994 with a large agenda, catching up the backlog since the previous meeting a year and a half earlier in Manila. In particular, WEF International Director Jun Vencer personally presented his new vision for the TC, and urged the TC to fall into line with moves towards greater integration and unity which were taking place within the WEF. Dr Bong Rin Ro (now known as Executive Director) reinforced this policy by proposing a threefold plan—tackling major theological issues through the Study Unit program, training church leaders and strengthening national evangelical fellowships.

He emphasized that the TC could accomplish its accreditation work and

1 The sources for this history are mostly the official records of the WEF/A Theological Commission. For this section, acknowledgement is also made for assistance by R. Kemp, P. Kuzmič, C. Weber, the Billy Graham Center Archives, the WEA International Office, and present and former members of the Theological Commission.

the establishment of seminaries through the ICAA, but there was a need to expand the scholarship and library development schemes, and to work through national alliances and developing networks of theologians, including the encouragement of younger ones. He urged the establishment of the previously proposed Evangelical Leadership Development Fund to meet the great demand for financial resources, and to work closely with groups such as Overseas Council and the Langham Trust who were also involved in supporting theological education globally. However, the Executive concluded that his suggestion about the TC conducting seminars in churches was one that needed more thought because it was doubtful that it was appropriate for the TC as a global body to be working at this local level.

Publications were again a major concern at this Executive meeting, with serious consideration given to the plans of the WEF Publications Commission for a coordinated approach to the task, and also the idea of expanding TC publications into various world languages. Although *Beyond Canberra* had finally appeared, there was uncertainty about whether the book from the 1992 consultation could be funded by Paternoster. However, approval was given for the publication of the papers from the consultation on the Evangelisation of the Poor when that issue was clarified. Bruce Nicholls would now be assisted in his work as editor of *Evangelical Review of Theology* by two new appointments—Dr John Roxborough of the Bible College of New Zealand, as Associate Editor, and TC member, Dr David Parker (Australia) as Book Review Editor. *Theological News* con-

tinued to be supported financially but there were no issues published in 1994.

There was little to report from the Study Units (apart from Ecumenical Issues)—they seemed to have run out of momentum. Finances were very difficult. No new Scholarship applications were considered.

Nevertheless, some concrete plans were laid for the future with a decision to endorse and co-sponsor with the Overseas Council the Consultation of Theological Education Leaders of Schools in the Post-Communist world at Oradea, Romania, 4-7 October 1994. This proved to be a highly constructive event in helping to develop a vision for theological education in the region. In addition, there was a commitment by the participants to the creation of an organizational structure to facilitate study, faculty development, networking, research and publication. As a result of these efforts, the East European Accrediting Association was formed in 1997 with more than forty members and became a constituent of ICAA (or ICETE as it was known by then).

The next TC consultation and general meeting was due in 1995, but these events were deferred because of the major plans for the WEF General Assembly the following year. In any case, the large impact that GCOWE II would have made such a decision a necessity.²

2 GCOWE II was held 17-25 May 1995 at the Korean Center for World Mission, attracting nearly 4,000 Christian leaders representing 186 nations, and was regarded as a highly significant event, especially for third-world Christians.

Pace slackens

There was a positive mood and plenty of ideas for the development of the TC at the January meeting in Elburn, but these hopeful signs did not translate into action. Instead, the rest of 1994 was characterised by a marked slow-down in TC operations. Bong Ro was often on the move travelling, and he had also added to his teaching responsibilities at ACTS. In addition, he was now Overseas Ministry Director for the Korean Center for World Missions; he hoped this activity might develop local support for the TC, especially in the area of publications, but nothing concrete emerged. Plans to hold a second Executive meeting in 1994, this time in Seoul in association with a consultation on 'Prosperity Theology and the Theology of Suffering', were also part of this strategy.

This consultation was speedily arranged with the enthusiastic interest and support of the Korea Evangelical Theological Society. Despite the short time for preparation, it was highly successful, attracting fifty people, including the TC Executive members who participated fully. There were seven major papers from biblical, theological and geographical perspectives. There was also a lengthy statement pointing out, among other matters, the suitability of the holding of such a consultation in Korea which, 'having passed through the fires of intense persecution and suffering during the first part of this century, has become quite prosperous and is rapidly becoming one of the dominant sending churches in the world Christian mission'.³

The Executive meeting, held 26-28 September just before the Consultation, was well attended, but reports indicated that TC activity was weak and many of the initiatives from the previous meeting had not been pursued. The outlook for scholarships continued to be poor, and no new offers were made. In fact, applicants had been referred to the Overseas Council.

There was little substantial Study Unit activity to report, with the exception of the Ecumenical Issues Unit. It had met 23-26 May 1994 for the Scripture and Tradition project, first established in 1992, and now had material ready for publication.⁴ The Convenor, Dr Paul Schrotenboer, also advised that he had been informed that the conversations with the Roman Catholic Church would now be moved from the responsibility of the WEF International Director (where they had lain since the beginning), and would now come under the direct control of the TC. He hoped this arrangement would make for smoother and more efficient administration.

Publications was one area in which there was a more positive outlook. After the multiple additions to the monograph series in 1993, the full length book of the 1992 consultation, *The Unique Christ in our Pluralistic World* would appear in October 1994, and work on the book from the consultation on the Evangelization of the Poor (1993) was well advanced.

The biggest matter facing the TC Executive was the next general meeting and consultation, which were scheduled for 1996 when the 10th

3 The papers were published in *ERT* Vol 20 No 1 (Jan 1996).

4 *ERT* Vol 19 No 2 (April 1995).

WEF General Assembly would meet. Due to restrictions on the amount of time Dr Ro was able to give to TC matters, Dr Bruce Nicholls was appointed to organize the consultation, and his initial proposals about speakers and funding were endorsed. Dr David Parker of Australia was also appointed as an assistant to Dr Nicholls for the consultation organization in addition to his work with *ERT*.

The Chairman, Dr Peter Kuzmič, was also struggling to find time to devote to TC work because he was increasingly involved in the worsening military and political conditions in his homeland area. He was also much in demand as an international speaker and now had responsibilities as a professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston, USA, where he had taken up a prestigious appointment in 1993.

Over the next few months, interest was focused mainly on preparations for the 1996 consultation, other activities having seriously declined. Dr Paul Schrotenboer was looking for a decision from the TC Executive on the next stage of the talks with the Roman Catholic Church. The Ethics and Society Unit was planning for a further consultation to be held in Korea early in 1996 on the vexed topic of bribery, but because of organizational problems, it failed to eventuate. *TN* appeared again in early 1995 after a year's break and there was some hope of better publishing arrangements after top level talks in March and April 1995 between WEF and Paternoster (which was by now the theological publishing arm of the STL group within Operation Mobilization). The ICAA developed an increasing sense of purpose, which was reflected

in news that it was considering adopting a new name that would be more descriptive of its functions as an autonomous full service organization.

New focus at Prague

These developments meant that decisive action was required by the TC Executive when it met next in Prague, April 3-5, 1995. It was a small session, with only five members present, apologies being received from Ward Gasque, Bong Ho Son and Bishop Gbonigi. Roger Kemp represented the ICAA. Dr Jun Vencer, WEF International Director, was present to reinforce his views about the new vision and strategies for the TC, and to give details about how the commissions were expected to integrate with the forthcoming General Assembly. It was clear that the most important task of the meeting was to focus on organizing a stimulating consultation and to plan for a TC meeting that would provide a launching pad for the revival of the Commission.

With just one year to go, the Executive endorsed the plans which had been developed by Dr Bruce Nicholls and Dr David Parker for a consultation which would have as its theme, 'Faith and Hope for the Future: Towards a vital and coherent theology for the 21st Century'. There was a strong emphasis on gaining the active involvement of TC members with whom there had been little contact for some time; it was also planned to broaden the scope of the TC by attracting representatives from national fellowships and other key theological bodies. It was hoped that these strategies would provide new personnel, effective leadership and a program of activities which would

allow the TC to resume its positive thrust once again.

Decisions were also necessary on the leadership of the TC. Dr Peter Kuzmič's term as Chairman would expire in 1996. Furthermore, Dr Bong Ro was due to take a year's furlough from mid-1995, so it was decided that he would conclude his active involvement as TC Executive Director at that point. Dr David Parker was appointed Honorary Administrator to prepare for the 1996 Consultation and general meeting. Dr Bong Ro would be officially farewelled at the consultation, and honoured for his contribution over a seven year period.

In the first stage of his leadership, he had skilfully balanced several responsibilities and succeeded in giving a great deal of hope for the TC, despite being engaged only on an interim basis. After being appointed on a full time basis and returning to Korea, his passion, energy and vision produced a flood of activity, but from about 1992, new concepts and a variety of influences resulted in a loss of focus. Bong Ro himself gave increasing time to important local activities, which he was able to pursue more fully following his furlough until his retirement in 1999.

The future vitality of the TC now depended on a successful consultation in April 1996 and the appointment of a new Executive Director who could develop its potential, but there was a great deal to be done to prepare the TC for this new opportunity. With Ro's departure on furlough, the TC office in Seoul was closed on 31 July 1995, and a thorough review of the TC organization, finances and programs began. Regular publication of *TN* was contin-

ued in the form of a modest four-page xeroxed edition quarterly.

There was a good response to preparation for the consultation which was originally planned to take place in conjunction with WEF General Assembly (and other Commission meetings) at Minehead, Somerset, UK. This event, in turn, was to be part of the large Spring Harvest convention which took place there every year.

However, a major interruption to preparations occurred in late June 1995 when the WEF administration advised its constituency that it had encountered major financial problems because of the collapse of a pyramid type fund raising scheme in USA.⁵ Furthermore, the GCOWE conference in Seoul, Korea in May 1995 created divided loyalties amongst the constituency for a major world conference. There were also concerns about the cost and other arrangements at the venue in Minehead, UK. The WEF leadership therefore announced that it was postponing the Assembly to some other date and place. This had a major impact on the Commissions which were already well advanced in their planning. The TC decided to go ahead with its Consultation at the same time as originally planned, but at another site. Soon, arrangements were provisionally made to hold it at London Bible College, Northwood, London, 9-15 April, 1996.

By moving to London Bible College, the Theological Commission was

⁵ The collapse of the Foundation for New Era Philanthropy in May 1995 was reported in *Christianity Today* 19 June and 17 July, 1995.

returning to its roots at a crucial time in its history. The first consultation and full meeting ever conducted by the Commission was held at LBC in 1975. The new location and circumstances proved to be advantageous, and as preparations drew to a close early in 1996 and the review of TC administration was completed, there was mounting expectation of an outcome that would match the theme selected for the occasion, 'Faith and Hope for the Future'.

'Faith and Hope for the Future'

The Consultation was attended by about one hundred people from virtually every major area of the world. Many had long associations with the TC, but others were first timers, and a good number represented national Evangelical Fellowships. The aim of the conference was to prepare papers and a final consultation statement analysing contemporary trends in the light of the theme, 'Towards a Vital and Coherent Evangelical Theology for the 21st Century', identifying key issues for evangelical theology and proposing responses on a global basis across a range of topics.

Participants were divided into twelve work groups, one for each of the sub-topics of the theme; they covered the entire range of theology and touched on relevant contemporary issues in fields such as mission, ethics, contextualisation, ecology, discipleship and gender distinctions. It was intended that the findings would provide useful insights for the evangelical public and guidelines for future theo-

logical reflection. In particular, they would provide the essence of a program for the TC Study Units in the following triennium.

The consultation was an outstanding success, and the reports of the working groups produced statements which provided promising materials for future development. The group reports and plenary papers were published in *ERT*.⁶ Participants were encouraged to volunteer to take the process further by forming on-going groups that would continue to meet after the consultation with the intention of producing full sized reports. As it turned out, only one of the groups was able to reach the stage of publication.

With so little activity in the recent past, the main function of the general TC meeting was to plan for the future. The arrival of the outgoing chairman, Peter Kuzmič was delayed because of his involvement in activities related to the political situation in his homeland. It was hoped that the long run down in support for the Scholarship program, which was now virtually defunct, would be reversed by asking the ICAA to take responsibility for it, especially since the program was originally designed as a way of developing the faculty of theological institutions. However, a message from the ICAA which was meeting simultaneously at Moorlands Bible College, Sopley, Dorset, about 100 miles away, indicated that the scheme was not high on its priorities and it was unable to take

6 *ERT* Vol 20 No 4 (Oct 1996) and Vol 21 No 1 (Jan 1997) contained the papers and working group statements.

responsibility for it. So the program was suspended indefinitely, after a life of thirteen years.

A slate of new TC members was proposed, numbering about fifty with a good global coverage, in the pattern that had been established over the years. A new Executive was appointed,⁷ with Dr Rolf Hille of Germany as the chairman. Dr Hille had joined the Executive first in 1986 and had served on several study units. He had been on the faculty of Albrecht Bengel Haus, Tuebingen since 1995, and would soon be made rector of this strategic institution. He was Chairman of the German Evangelical Alliance, and was active in other national and regional theological and evangelical bodies, as well as being a respected member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wuerttemberg (ELCW), which had long supported the work of WEF and the TC in particular.

Dr Bong Rin Ro concluded his term of service as Executive Director at this conference and was honoured for his work. Dr David Parker's role as Administrator also concluded. However, the Search Committee had not been able to bring forward a nomination for a new Executive Director, so until a new appointment could be made, Dr Hille became Executive Chairman, responsible for both the overall leadership and the day to day

administration of the TC. He soon appointed James Kautt of Tuebingen as his administrative assistant making it possible for him to carry out this demanding dual role as well as maintaining his other responsibilities, especially as head of Bengel Haus.

Other members of the Executive members were also expected to share some of the work load. Dr Bruce Nicholls remained as editor of *ERT*, and Dr Hille took temporary responsibility for *TW*. A priority for the Executive was the search for a new Director, who, it was hoped, could be appointed at the next meeting due to be held in conjunction with the rescheduled WEF General Assembly a year later in Canada. A mini-consultation would also be held at that time.

Immediately following the Consultation, two other meetings took place which were intended to boost the work of the TC and its cooperation with the wider WEF family—a gathering of evangelical publishers with the aim of increasing cooperation, especially between western and third world organizations, and an informal joint meeting of Commission leaders. It was hoped that this latter meeting especially would capture some of the intentions behind the original plan of holding the Commission meetings together at Minehead.

During this session, representatives from the accrediting associations announced that ICAA had changed its name to The International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE—pronounced *eye-set*), which was a better indication of the new function towards which it had been working for several years. It was now officially an organization, operating under the

7 P. Kuzmič, E. Gbonigi, Bong Ho Son concluded their terms of service; R Hille (Germany), P. Arana (Peru), R Daidanso (Chad), and W. Gasque (Canada) continued, and were joined by Judith Gundry-Volf (USA), K. Gnanakan (India) and Bong R. Ro (the former Executive Director, Korea).

auspices of the WEF (not the TC), serving the entire needs of theological education, rather than accreditation alone—as its mission statement put it, ‘Strengthening evangelical theological education through international contact and cooperation’. This meant that ICETE would be free to pursue its own activities while maintaining loose links to WEF. Financially it was hoped that earlier experience would repeat itself when it received greater support as an independent body than when funding was channelled through WEF and TC.

During the consultation and other meetings, there had been many good ideas for the development of the TC, and it seemed as if there had been a genuine recovery of ‘faith and hope for the future’. But it would be a struggle with many setbacks and disappointments before the way forward seemed clear again. ICETE too had found a new vision, but its finances were poor and the General Secretary, Dr Roger Kemp, announced he would soon conclude his service. After he did so in May 1997, completing an eight year term, ICETE was not represented at TC Executive meetings as it had been from its inception. Hence the two organizations began to drift apart, which would once again raise the need for talks to reestablish a closer working relationship.

Revisioning

Pasadena 1996

There was little TC activity during the rest of the year—only one issue of *TN* was published, but new Executive member, Dr Judy Gundry-Volf, was

able to arrange for the Executive to meet in December at Pasadena, California. Ward Gasque, Ken Gnanakan, Judith Gundry-Volf, Bong Ro and Rolf Hille gathered at Fuller Theological Seminary; the WEF leadership was represented for some of the time by Dwight Gibson from the North American office, and Roger Kemp was present for ICETE. This strategic venue provided opportunity for interaction with some important theologians, including Dr Richard Mouw, President of the seminary and Dr William Dyrness; former TC Executive Secretary, Dr Sunand Sumithra who was visiting the seminary and shared details of his current research project.

During the business sessions there began to develop a new vision of the TC as a body networking with other theological associations and institutions, national evangelical fellowships and churches, as well as a group of individuals. The Study Units would be refocused with this new approach in mind. The membership was reviewed and the scholarship program was formally terminated with the hope that the gap might be filled by other organizations, a wish that was more than adequately realized in the rapid growth of the Langham Scholarship scheme.

Although there was little information available from the WEF office about the financial situation, the Executive pressed ahead with a new budget and creative plans for publications, involvement in the 1997 General Assembly program, joint meetings with the Interchurch Relief and Development Alliance (IRDA), and a ‘World Forum on Evangelical Theology’. The situation in Hong Kong after its re-unification with China in 1997 was also a

topic of concern. However, there was no definite progress on the most important question of all—the appointment of a new Executive Director—some general ideas were discussed and various names were suggested but the adoption of a job description would have to wait until the next meeting at the General Assembly in May.

Nevertheless, the ideas for a new vision ventilated at Pasadena were taken a step forward by chairman Dr Rolf Hille and vice-chairman Dr Ken Gnanakan, when they met at Tuebingen in two months later, February 1997. After a period of intense discussion, they drew up a seven-page position paper titled, 'A comprehensive vision for the Theological Commission of the WEF'. The vision centred on the TC being transformed from an established commission of about fifty members into a dynamic international network of theologians and institutions. The emphasis would change from large periodic consultations to flexible ongoing activities, aided by the growing availability of electronic mail and the internet. This paper became the major source of ideas for the next Executive meeting planned to be held just prior to the postponed WEF General Assembly, which was now set down for Abbotsford, near Vancouver, Canada in 6-9 May 1997. The general ideas in this document guided the development of the TC into the years ahead.

Abbotsford 1997

However, arrangements for the TC meeting at the Abbotsford Assembly were thrown into turmoil when the chairman, Dr Hille was struck with a family tragedy immediately prior to the

meeting and was unable to attend. In his absence, informal meetings were held, attended by the other Executive members and several visitors. During the 'think-tank' that this meeting became, the general ideas expressed at the Pasadena meeting and reflected in the 'Comprehensive Vision' paper were studied and supported in principle. It was realized that the TC should focus on its main calling of theological reflection, which meant that subsidiary activities such as theological education and scholarship funding could be left to other bodies, especially ICETE. This represented a considerable change of direction from the policies being considered earlier in the 1990s, in which the focus was more on the training of local church leaders.

Ken Gnanakan was given charge of the study unit program which needed to be refocused to fit in with the new approach. Only one of the groups from the 1996 Consultation was still active, and none of the previous Units was operative. So it was decided to set up a small coordinating group to develop this area of the work.

Arrangements for the TC publications, especially *ERT*, were a matter of considerable attention. It was hoped that with the expansion of the TC's role and changes in its mode of operation, *ERT* would take on added significance, perhaps even with non-English versions, and that an enlargement of its circulation could lead to better subscription pricing. Dr Bruce Nicholls called for urgent action to develop the publications work, but at the same time indicated that he was available as editor only for a further year.

Financial considerations were critical to the implementation of the new

vision, but prospects were not good. It was decided to approach the North American WEF Director for assistance, and consideration was given to introducing membership fees for individuals and institutions. There was still no possibility for the immediate appointment of an Executive Director, so the existing administrative arrangements were maintained.

In an effort to revive the study unit activity which had been so important earlier, Dr Ken Gnanakan met with Dr Paul Murdoch (Germany) and Dr Brian Edgar (Australia) at Wheaton in January 1998. They prepared a wide-ranging report which advocated a dynamic program of interaction between up to 500 theologians using electronic communication in a community atmosphere. They would produce papers and statements relating to immediate concerns facing the evangelical world, ongoing issues relative to local communities and reflecting on evangelical identity. These documents would be circulated in the most efficient means possible and be directed towards the WEF and its membership and constituency, as well as other publications and groups. The team identified five areas on which work could commence immediately under the leadership of TC-related personnel, including the team members themselves. If these plans eventuated, the TC would be well on the way to re-establishing itself with a new updated *modus operandi*.

The long awaited next phase of the WEF/Roman Catholic Church talks were held 12-19 October 1997 at Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem on the theme, 'The nature and mission of the church'. Increasing mutual confidence between the two partners was

reflected in the fact that for the first time a communiqué about this meeting was published.⁸

Tuebingen 1998

By the time of the next Executive Committee meeting, held at Tuebingen, Germany 28 May to 2 June 1998,⁹ there was considerable expectation that the worst was behind the TC. Publication of *TW* had resumed under the leadership of Dr Ken Gnanakan with regular four-page issues appearing quarterly throughout 1997. Dr David Parker was appointed editor of *ERT* to replace Dr Bruce Nicholls who would retire at the end of the year. However, by this time, the need for a full time Executive Director was becoming urgent. Notices placed in *TW* and elsewhere resulted in several enquiries. Preliminary steps were being taken for another general consultation to be held in 1999.

The major business was the adoption of the new concept for the structure and work of the TC, and some of the ideas in the report of the Wheaton task force. This meant the TC would be seen as a large representative community of theologians endorsed by their

⁸ The communiqué and papers were published both in the *ERT* Vol 23 No 1 (Jan 1999) and *One in Christ*, Vol 35 No 1 (1999), pp. 11-92.

⁹ Present were Executive members R. Hille, K. Gnanakan, Bong Ro, Ward Gasque and Pedro Arana. There were also seven invited guests including B. J. Nicholls and D. Parker, and others who were potential TC members or contributors to its study program. D. Gibson, North American WEF Director represented the WEF International Director.

national fellowships which would work primarily through study groups and dynamic task forces. There would be a core group of about twenty-five representing a regional cross-section and able to network effectively in their own areas who would take responsibility and give time to specific aspects of the work. An executive of five plus the Executive Director and WEF International Director would supervise policy and business.

The Ecumenical Issues Task Force was the object of special attention due to news of a serious decline in the health of its long-time convenor, Dr Paul Schrotenboer. It was agreed that the momentum of previous activities be not lost. Accordingly, Dr George Vandervelde (Canada), who had been involved over a lengthy period, was appointed as the new convenor with approval to continue the talks later in the year. Only a few weeks later Dr. Paul Schrotenboer died. His deep commitment to the process was reflected in the fact that throughout the whole series of meetings he was struggling with his health and in the latter stages, physical disability.

However, despite these positive and forward-looking plans, the financial situation was still dismal. The appointment of a Director was critical to the success of efforts towards renewal, but there was no chance of paying a salary; it was hoped that this would not be necessary as all the previous appointees had been supported by outside sources.

New Director

Efforts prior to and also during the Executive meeting to find a suitable appointee were unsuccessful. But

some progress was made when it was realized that Dr James Stamoolis, who was about to conclude as Dean of Wheaton Graduate School, might be available. He was well known to some of the members already, and in addition, was a TC member and had been leading the Orthodox Task Force. Previously he had been Theological Student Fellowship Secretary for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), which gave him responsibility for assisting the national Christian student associations in more than a hundred countries. For several years prior to his IFES work, he had worked in mission appointments in theological education in South Africa. During this time he gained his doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch specializing in Eastern Orthodox missiology.

This background made him an attractive candidate, so negotiations were opened up with him, on the assurances of the North American office and himself that funds could be raised from new sources for his support and for the general TC budget. The TC Chairman welcomed the possibility of appointing Dr Stamoolis, but realistically offered only limited financial support from TC sources as a bridge until the new funding was found. According to WEF procedures, Jun Vencer as International Director then proceeded to make the appointment. The new Director took up his position in October 1998, thus ending a gap of more than three years since the last director had concluded his activities. Living in Wheaton, Stamoolis was able to relate closely to the North American WEF office, headed by Dwight Gibson, located at nearby Carol Stream.

Now it was expected that plans for the new core group, study units, networks and consultations that had been developed at meetings going back to Pasadena December 1996 would begin to materialise. Dr Hille could step back from the dual role of Chairman and Administrator. Using a system described by Dr Ken Gnanakan as 'Cyberlogue', it was hoped to make increased use of internet facilities for networking of theologians by expanding the TC web-site set up two years earlier by David Parker. Parker also took over as *ERT* editor from the January 1998 issue, with an increasing focus on the journal as a forum of the now flourishing global evangelical theological scholarship. However, it was more difficult to tackle the continuing problems of high subscription costs and lower circulation than desired—problems that Dr Stamoolis began to address.

The next opportunity to develop and focus the work was at the Executive meeting held in Jamaica in February 1999; it was held at this location to take advantage of the opportunity to network with members of the WEA leadership and also of the Caribbean Evangelical Association who would all be meeting there at the time. Although the meeting was poorly attended, the new Director was able to review in detail the work of the TC with the officers who were present. WEF officials who were attending other meetings at the same venue helped with an analysis of finances and related matters. Dr David Parker, attending as *ERT* Editor, was confirmed as editor since Dr Stamoolis was not intending to take over this aspect of the work; Dr Parker was also appointed to the Executive.

Dr Stamoolis took charge of the Study Units, in association with Dr Hille and Dr Gnanakan. One satisfying feature was the report that the eschatology group from the London consultation, led by Dr Jochen Eber (Switzerland) was close to publishing its book. There was also productive discussion about the talks proceeding with the Roman Catholic Church and preliminary ideas were aired about similar meetings with the Orthodox.

Wide ranging projects

The Jamaica meeting laid the groundwork for the continued development of the TC under an Executive Director who could give the program focus, purpose and continuity along the lines previously developed. During the subsequent months, Dr Stamoolis became involved in a number of other activities on behalf of the WEF. One of these was the Global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology organized by WEF Missions Commission at Iguassu, Brazil in October 1999. Another was an international leadership conference organized by WEF and held in Larnaca, Cyprus in 21-24 February 2000, in which, at the direction of the WEF leadership, he took a key role in planning and leadership.

Perhaps the most far reaching of these activities was the Conference of Itinerant Evangelists sponsored by Billy Graham, to be held in Amsterdam in August 2000, involving 10,000 participants. Dr Stamoolis believed that the theology track of this conference provided a strategic opportunity to advance the work of the TC in the area where it needed to be seen, the grass-roots level of the church worldwide.

Hence he was keen to see members of the TC involved as much as possible, and made strong representations along these lines to Dr Jim Packer who was responsible for this track.

In addition to this, Dr Stamoolis became involved in the preparation of a CD-ROM for distribution to participants to promote the ministry of WEF and as a useful ministry tool. There had been general discussion in the TC about the possibility of putting TC publications on CD for easy and cost-effective circulation. Due to the destruction of most of the early stock of *ERT* and other publications in the Paternoster fire in 1990, it was an attractive proposition to consider having this material available again in such a handy form. The WEF leadership also saw benefits in the CD-ROM, which eventually contained much more than TC material—a number of books from the WEF itself, some from the Missions Commission, a range of Bibles and other theological books and documents. Finally, 12,000 copies of the CD were distributed freely to all the participants, where it was a great success. To comply with licensing arrangements, a new, slightly different version was prepared for commercial release, and 2000 copies were produced for release later in the year. Funding of this very costly venture was to come from special appeals and revenue from sales, but a large deficit resulted, even though sales were brisk.

The serious financial and structural difficulties being encountered by the WEF organization at the time meant that the TC was obliged to carry this heavy load. This was exacerbated by the need for ongoing financial support for the Executive Director's salary due to the absence of the expected funding

from other sources. This left the TC in an even more difficult situation financially. Progress on the other areas of its work like Study Units, Core Group development, networking and consultations was limited, and there was no movement either on improved publication arrangements for *ERT*, despite considerable effort. Dr Stamoolis' vision for the TC was to make it a 'force to be recognized' globally, and he wanted to bring its operations closer to the life of the churches. This he believed would make it not only more attractive to funding agencies but also more effective in its role as a WEF commission. But these were long term goals which were not always well understood by others, and so far there was little tangible result from his efforts.

The third session of the WEF/Roman Catholic Church talks was held 7-13 November 1999; at the invitation of WEF they were held at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, USA. By this time it was agreed to proceed with these meetings on a regular basis. This session focused on the theme of the church as communion, and included papers on the important related issues of religious freedom, common witness and proselytism. An important development was the visits by all members of the group to evangelical institutions such as Wheaton College, the Billy Graham Centre and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on the one hand, and a Roman Catholic seminary in Chicago on the other hand.

Consolidation and Vision at Vancouver 2000

The next time the Executive met to review progress was 29 June—1 July 2000 at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada.¹⁰ The Amsterdam conference was soon approaching, so much of Dr Stamoolis's attention was focused on this event, although apart from the CD-ROM project there would not be much opportunity for direct TC involvement. However, the general direction of the TC was consolidated through a review of a paper prepared by Dr Rolf Hille as chairman, 'The Fundamental Strategy of the TC in the future', which summarised existing thinking. Building on earlier statements, it presented a view of the unique niche into which the TC could fit, bearing in mind the many theological organizations already active at local, national and regional levels, and the limited resources of the TC. It also took account of the role of ICETE as a WEF-related organization devoted to the area of theological education.

This relationship was confirmed in talks between ICETE and the TC chairman, Dr Rolf Hille, in October 2001. This meeting, which was a resumption of formal discussions which had taken place from time to time over many years, issued a statement reaffirming that the two bodies saw themselves as 'distinct entities serving parallel functions within the WEA's objectives and mission' and that they recognized 'distinct but adjacent tasks and the benefit of partnering in specific ways'. It recommitted the TC and ICAA to

mutual cooperation and joint activity wherever possible. It also restored the idea of official representation at each other's executive meetings 'for on-going liaison'. It was hoped that this statement would 'adequately address any concerns within WEA that some lingering confusion or tension has been operative between these two WEA bodies'.¹¹ The Vancouver TC meeting also heard Dr Stamoolis outline his understanding of his role and of his vision for the TC.

The immediate outcome of this review by the chairman and the Executive Director was the development of an agreed vision statement which consolidated ideas about the work of the TC itself that had been crystallising over recent meetings. This new statement summed up the main purpose of the TC in this slogan: '*to promote biblical truth by networking theologians to serve the church in obedience to Christ*'. It explained that the TC would achieve this goal by internationalizing theological frameworks, encouraging original theological reflection and research, defending and confirming the gospel, focusing discussion on practical and relevant themes in varied contexts, and by articulating biblical truth in forms accessible to all Christians.

The means used would be networking evangelical theological organizations and theologians worldwide, organizing theological reflection teams,

¹¹ Letter of agreement 2 Feb 2002 addressed to the chairman, WEA International Council, jointly signed by ICETE and TC; the document also addressed ICETE's relationship to WEA in that it did not fit easily into either the category of Commission or of Affiliate.

¹⁰ R. Hille attended, with K. Gnanakan, W. Gasque, and D. Parker.

task forces, study groups, dialogue groups and other international gatherings, and disseminating theological reflection about biblical truth in clear and concise formats for use by the church at all levels.

In the process the TC would establish effective communicative networks of theologians, educators and church leaders; it would partner with regional and national Evangelical Fellowships of Theologians to sponsor joint conferences, plan joint publications and foster exchange of theological educators, and with other organizations that are involved in theological education, dissemination of literature and student scholarship programs. It would also form strategic alliances with organizations that share its goals and objectives, mobilize volunteers, part-time staff and recruit other full-time staff to work toward agreed goals, and engage in a vigorous program of research and publications of topics to apply biblical understanding to relevant problems facing the churches in their ministry. Despite this clear vision of its future ministry, there was still uncertainty about the organizational structures and accountability relationships between the TC, its Executive Director and the WEF leadership.

Throughout the Vancouver meetings, many useful suggestions were made for networking with evangelical bodies and theologians. The understanding was that the Executive Director would follow up with contacts and visits aimed at establishing good relationships and seeking out potential members of the TC and its Study Units.

In the meantime, the next year's program was decided. Of particular importance was the WEF General

Assembly to be held in Kuala Lumpur. It was hoped that many theologians expected to be present could be attracted to take an interest in the work of the TC. A mini-consultation was planned to precede the Assembly, and there would be joint sessions in the Assembly program with the Commission on Women's Concerns. The Study Unit program was again reviewed, with decisions made about further ecumenical talks, a project on environmental issues, a series of conferences on Church and Education, and the revision of the WEF statement of faith. Publications again received considerable attention. Dr David Parker was appointed to the additional post of editor of *Theological News*, with the task of re-establishing the journal which had not appeared for some time.¹²

The fourth meeting of the WEF/Roman Catholic talks took place at Mundelein, Illinois, 18-24 February, 2001. The evolution of this dialogue was reflected in the fact that for the first time it had before it an initial draft of a common text, namely, on the theme of *koinonia* (fellowship), developed by Avery Dulles in cooperation with Henry Blocher. Another text, prepared by Dr. Thomas Oden, gathered representative materials from previous dialogue documents on the themes of religious liberty and proselytism. This and a number of brief theses reflecting on this material, prepared by Rev. John Haughey, S.J., were discussed as well. The next meeting, the final one in the current series, would follow in a year's time

¹² Publication of *TN* resumed again in January 2001, as a 4-page xeroxed quarterly; only one issue had appeared since Dec 1998.

Ecclesiology at Kuala Lumpur 2001

The mini-consultation prior to the 2001 General Assembly arranged by the Executive Director was held May 2-3, 2001 on the subject of ecclesiology, to coincide with the Assembly theme. It was a loosely organized event, more in the nature of round-table with a flexible program than a normal consultation with plenary and group work arranged on a formal timetable. About 18 people attended various sessions, some of whom were new to the TC; their presence provided a fresh and hopeful dynamic, especially those who had connections with NEFs and other significant theological bodies in their home areas. Seven papers were presented, several of which were later published in *ERT*,¹³ and a valuable brain-storming session gathered ideas for TC work from participants at the consultation.

In addition to the mini-consultation, the TC conducted several sessions in the Assembly program. Two of them were joint sessions with the Commission on Women's Concerns, in which they launched books and papers and made a highly significant statement on the problem of the abuse of women.¹⁴

There were also two open sessions

conducted by the TC, the first explaining its work and seeking to attract interest from Assembly participants. Dr Ken Gnanakan spoke about his interest in environmental stewardship and announced details of a study project on the topic, which gained several responses. The other session was a seminar on globalisation led by Dr Donald Tinder. All four of these sessions were well attended and generated considerable sympathy and support for the TC.

Director concludes

The General Assembly signalled the end of a term for the TC and its Executive. However, there was no general meeting because the membership system was now defunct since it had not been followed up from the last general meeting in 1996. Only three of the seven members of the Executive appointed at that time were still active; they, with other invited guests, discussed business between consultation and other sessions.¹⁵

The starting point was the confirmation of the role and vision of the TC previously developed in Tuebingen in 1998, and finalised in Vancouver in 2000. This saw the TC as a global network with a central representative core group carrying the focus of the

13 Papers from the TC Consultation and the Assembly appeared in *ERT* Vol 25 No 4 (Oct 2001); Vol 26 No 1 (Jan 2002); Vol 26 No 2 (April 2002), and Vol 27 No 1 (Jan 2003).

14 These sessions featured Mrs Lynn Smith, Dr Catherine Clark Kroeger and Dr Nancy Nason-Clark for CWC and Dr T. Oden for the TC. The volume *No Place for Abuse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001) by Kroeger and Nason-Clark was also launched.

15 Attended by the three official members, R. Hille (Chair), K. Gnanakan (Vice-Chair) and D. Parker (Editor) along with J. Stamoilis, Executive Director. An apology was received from W. Gasque whose involvement in the Executive concluded with this session. G. Vandervelde (convenor Ecumenical Issues), D. Hilborn (UK) and B.J. Nicholls were present as guests.

work, supported by specific study units, task forces and publications. The most serious business, however, was the financial situation which was now extremely critical due to the large expense associated with salary payments and the CD-ROM project.

It was obvious to all that the TC was in an extremely difficult position. After much consideration it was decided that Dr Stamoolis would conclude his service as Executive Director forthwith, after three years in the position. There were also implications in this situation for relationships between the TC and the WEF organization, but they were not resolved, not least because the WEF itself was entering on a period of organizational uncertainty at the same time. Of necessity, therefore, Dr Rolf Hille resumed his previous dual role of Executive Chair and various aspects of the work would be shared among the remaining members. Dr George Vandervelde (Canada, convenor of the Ecumenical Task Force) and Dr David Hilborn (Director of the UK EA Theological Commission) were added to the Executive, making five in all, with approaches to other potential members to be made as soon as possible.

One element of the program which was deliberately retained was the long running series of talks with the Roman Catholic Church which were now expected to come to a conclusion in sessions set for early in 2002. The Orthodox dialogue mooted for many years was now not likely to occur for the present time due to Dr Stamoolis' departure. The Environmental stewardship study initiated earlier by Dr Ken Gnanakan was also endorsed again.

Regrouping amidst setbacks

At the end of this decisive TC meeting, re-grouping was starting to take effect, providing good hope for future. Plans for the following year's program, a joint consultation with the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET), were endorsed and preliminary plans were laid for the program for the following year.

Later in 2001, Dr David Parker was scheduled to visit Korea to promote the work of the TC during participation in theological consultations there. He would also represent the TC at the General Assembly of the ATA when Dr Ken Gnanakan would conclude twenty years' leadership of that body. Dr Parker would also represent the TC at the biennial meeting of the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges and discuss with them the proposal to hold a joint conference in 2003.

One other positive sign towards the end of the year was the publication of the book, *Hope Does Not Disappoint*, by the Eschatology Study Unit from the 1996 London consultation, headed by Dr Jochen Eber, then of Chrischona Seminary, Basel, Switzerland. This was conceived as a textbook on the model of the successful Carson Faith and Church Study Unit volumes, and accessible to a wide range of readers, especially students beginning their theological studies. It featured sixteen writers from all continents.¹⁶

In late 2001, as the constructive ini-

¹⁶ Jochen Eber (editor), *Hope Does Not Disappoint: Studies in Eschatology—Essays from different contexts* (Bangalore: TBT, 2001) and published in Germany by Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft.

tiatives from the Kuala Lumpur meeting were beginning to be implemented, the most serious problem of all occurred. The WEF was in the process of a radical restructuring following reports at its recent General Assembly of a critical financial situation and the end of Jun Vencer's term as International Director. Because of its deficit arising from the unexpected salary payments and the unrecouped costs of the CD-ROM project, TC finances were frozen by the WEA leadership, suspending most operations. Only generous special private funding by long term friends of the TC prevented a complete close down, including the publications.

In this unexpected and critical context it was even suggested by one senior WEA leader that the TC should change from being a WEA Commission to become an independent body with affiliate status. The idea of expanding into an international evangelical theological association in some form had been under consideration by the TC leadership already for some time, but it was finally concluded that any advantage such an arrangement might bring would be outweighed by the need for the WEA to support a theological commission and for the TC to serve the WEA constituency as it had done since its inception. However, this idea would soon come back onto the agenda.

After considerable discussion in the ensuing months, during which some misunderstandings were clarified, the suspension of TC finances was lifted in mid-2002, enabling its operations to resume. However, finances were still severely restricted requiring tight controls on all expenditure.

The WEF also made progress with its restructuring, appointing a Secre-

tary-General as the chief administrator. The appointee, who took up the position from July 2002, was Gary L. Edmonds, who had previously served with the development organization, Interdev; he had also been a pastor in USA and European director of Christian Associates International. He set up his office in Seattle, USA, and other offices in Singapore and Wheaton were closed. The name of the organization, now representing over one million local churches in 110 nations, was also changed to World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to better represent its nature as a cooperative body.

The WEF/Roman Catholic talks, which had extended over almost a decade, were finalised at a session held at Swanwick, England, 17-26 February, 2002. Significant changes had taken place in both sponsoring bodies in the time between the previous meeting and this one. Three new participants on the WEA side attended for the first time: Dr. Rolf Hille, TC Chairman, Dr. David Hilborn, Theological Advisor to the Evangelical Alliance UK, and Rev. Carlos Rodríguez Mansur, *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* in Brazil. The Consultation had before it an integrated draft of a proposed common report, and aimed at bringing it to a completed form. The text achieved at the end of the week included two main parts. Part I focused on convergences between Catholics and Evangelicals on *koinonia*; and Part II on the relationship of *koinonia* to evangelization.

It was agreed that the completed report would be presented to the sponsoring bodies requesting approval for its publication as a 'study document' in the hope that 'it may be widely discussed'. It was stressed that it was

'not an authoritative declaration' of either of sponsoring bodies, both of which themselves would 'evaluate' it. The completion of this text brought a phase of conversations to a close. As they finalised the session, the participants expressed the hope that this consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church would continue.

Global perspective in Germany 2002

One strand in the TC's new strategy was to hold conferences in cooperation with other theological groups. The first of these was a joint conference with FEET at Woelmersen, Germany in 16-20 August 2002. About one hundred people, including the regular FEET participants and members of the TC, focused on the theme, 'European Theology in World Perspective,' featuring speakers from Europe and many areas of the developing world. Most of the papers from this highly successful venture were published in *ERT*¹⁷, and the positive experience confirmed the value of the strategy.

The value of the conference was further enhanced by the fact that ICETE also held its Executive meeting at the same site prior to the main conference and some participants stayed on to share in it. This allowed some consolidation of the relationships between the two bodies which had been re-affirmed at the October 2001 meeting. The TC agreed that its next cooperative conference would be with ICETE in 2003.

Moving on

The annual TC Executive meeting which took place 20-22 August 2002, following the TC/FEET conference, was of crucial importance. It presented the first opportunity to make a definite start to the process of rebuilding the TC in the new environment it faced, now that the financial and personnel crises which had dogged it so continuously in recent years were apparently in the past. However, the financial settlement with WEF left the TC in a difficult position, which made the organization even more grateful to the ELCW for its continued faithful support.

The Executive meeting was attended by the TC members plus several guests, but the WEF leadership was not represented. The new structure of a working core group was formally endorsed, thus officially ending the old arrangement of a larger membership panel, and terminating the uncertainty about the status of those who had been slated for membership in 1996. Dr Brian Edgar (Australia) and Dr Tom Oden (USA) were added to the new core group which now constituted the TC membership. Other names, especially from Africa, Latin America and Asia, would be added as soon as possible to complete the global perspective.

A program of activities was also adopted, contingent on finance and personnel, which included study units, publications, dialogues and a 'rapid response task force'. It was decided that large scale conferences should be held in conjunction with future WEA Assemblies.

One further area of development taken up was renewed cooperation

¹⁷ See *ERT* Vol 27 No 3 (Jul 2003); Vol 27 No 4 (Oct 2003).

with the Lausanne movement, especially in its Forum on World Evangelization planned for Pattya, Thailand in October 2004. Dr Hille had accepted an invitation to become co-chair of the LCWE's Theology Working Group in the spirit of the new vision for the TC which had been forged at its Vancouver meeting two years earlier, calling for it to make 'strategic alliances with organizations that share our goals and objectives'. The Executive made a number of suggestions about the Forum program and built official participation in the Forum into the TC program for 2004.

There was also endorsement of various initiatives in the area of TC publications, including *ERT*, *TN* and electronic publishing. Dr George Vandervelde was appointed as convenor of dialogues, a position which would include both the existing talks with the Roman Catholic Church (which were approaching a critical point in their progress) and others that were under consideration.

Although it was recognized that many of these initiatives were of a long-term nature and that the financial basis of TC was still critical, the meetings ended on a buoyant and positive note. As an act of faith, a process was even established for the appointment of a new Executive Director. Members felt that major steps had been taken to re-establish the TC, and that the future would soon see the fruit born of the years of difficulty. The next meeting was set to coincide with the ICETE consultation exactly a year ahead, in which TC members would also participate.

Less than a month after this decisive session, there was another signif-

icant development from the WEA. The International Council announced that it had appointed its Secretary-General, Gary Edmonds, as acting Executive Director of the TC. Although Edmonds already had an onerous and demanding responsibility in guiding the WEA as it restructured and re-financed itself, Dr Hille was hopeful that this new development would be advantageous for the work of TC and also ease the heavy administrative load which he carried in addition to his work as head of an important theological institution in Germany. He envisaged that the Secretary-General would be of great assistance in relations with the WEA, and especially in the crucial area of fund-raising.

Dr Hille's own role now would be caring for the business sessions, coordinating the joint conferences, maintaining contact with theologians around the world (including the recruitment of additional participants in the TC program), and contributing to the publications. It was also hoped that individual members of the TC could take specific responsibility for various aspects of the program, perhaps on an honorarium basis. The details of the new arrangement would be worked out in discussions between Hille and Edmonds in ensuing months.

During the year further developments in the renewed growth of the TC took place. At the invitation of Dr Hille, Dr Wilson Chow (Hong Kong) re-joined the TC. Dr Hille travelled twice to Asia and Pacific, visiting seminars and making contact with individuals and local evangelical fellowships to promote the work of the TC; he also shared in planning for the LCWE Pattya Forum 2004. Working with Dr Hilborn

there was also progress on the revision of the revision of the WEA statement of faith. As Director of Publications, Dr Parker continued with *ERT* and *TN*, and also arranged to bring the CD ROM (which had sold out) back into limited production, and to update its contents.

Expansion in 2003

Although there had been some uncertainty about the way the TC would operate in the light of the unexpected action of the WEF IC in appointing an acting Executive Director, expectations were high for the 2003 meeting of the TC to be held in conjunction with the ICETE consultation, 18-22 August. Originally planned for Kiev, Ukraine, the venue was changed to the Wycliffe Centre near High Wycombe, UK for practical reasons. It attracted a capacity crowd of more than 150, and featured a quality program, with some high profile international speakers; the theme centred on paradigm shifts in global tertiary education and their implications for theological education.¹⁸

Almost all of the TC members attended the Executive meeting held prior to the consultation. In addition, there were two theologians from the Korea Evangelical Theological Society in attendance by invitation with a view to the appointment of one of their nom-

inees to the TC. Subsequently, Dr Jae Sung Kim, of Hapdong Theological Seminary, was added to the TC membership, bringing the total to eight, with vacancies for representatives from Africa and Latin America to be filled as soon as possible.

For the first time in many years, the WEF leadership was represented at a TC meeting in the person of the Secretary General, Gary Edmonds, whose contribution facilitated discussion, especially on matters concerning relations between the TC and WEA. Being more familiar now with the work of the TC, he was happy to relinquish his role as interim Executive Director.

Concrete plans for the future were developed, focusing first on the involvement in the LCWE Pattya Forum in 2004, followed by a joint-consultation and meeting in Korea with the KETS in 2005, leading to a full scale consultation the following year.

There was a positive report on progress in Dr Ken Gnanakan's Environment Stewardship study project, which was authorised for publication. It was also decided to develop a unit, coordinated by Dr David Hilborn, to provide the WEF with brief statements on urgent theological issues facing the global evangelical constituency. Ken Gnanakan was also authorised to work with Gary Edmonds in developing ideas on large scale projects dealing with major theological and related issues such as HIV/AIDS, pluralism, family and gender, which would integrate with the activities of other WEF Commissions and agencies. Initial ideas for another task force on Jewish evangelism were also endorsed.

The possibility of further ecumenical talks were reviewed, although

¹⁸ ICETE adopted a new mission statement at these meetings: 'The mission of ICETE is to promote excellence and renewal in evangelical theological education worldwide by cultivating community and facilitating collaboration among its constituent associations and related entities.'

progress stalled on the publication of the final report of the talks with the Roman Catholic Church due to the uncertainties which arose at the May 2003 WEA International Council meeting. The papers were published later in two Roman Catholic periodicals.¹⁹

A major centre of attention was the involvement of TC members in a joint track with ICETE personnel during the subsequent Consultation on the theological basis for theological education. In a three day program, several present and former TC members helped create the groundwork for an ongoing task force of TC and ICETE members to develop one of the themes of the ICETE Manifesto which calls for a 'theological grounding' for theological education. Papers from this group were planned for publication in 2005 when they are to be distributed widely and used as the basis for further development of the evangelical theological education globally, especially through ICETE and TC networks.²⁰

On the organizational side, it was decided to appoint Dr David Parker as Director of Administration (in addition to his work with publications), thus relieving Dr Hille of much of the day to day work and making it easier for him to continue his role as Executive Chair.

A New Role after Thirty Years

Following the High Wycombe meeting, the rest of the year was spent implementing these forward-looking decisions, although poor finances limited the degree of progress quite severely. Ken Gnanakan continued to make progress with his environmental book and prepared submissions on the integrated study projects and a family project initiated by Gary Edmonds. David Hilborn and George Vandervelde worked on ecumenical issues, while initial ideas on the Jewish evangelism task force began to take shape. David Parker visited South Africa to represent the TC at an ACTEA conference on HIV/AIDS and took the opportunity to meet with key evangelical leaders there and in Singapore. In mid-2004, he carried out the same function in Seoul, Korea while attending other meetings. Several TC members became actively involved in preparation for the Lausanne Forum on World Evangelisation, and planning began for the joint-meeting with the Lausanne Theology Working Group to be held prior to the Forum.

However, the most important move of all came in February 2004 when the WEA Executive announced a plan that would carry forward the ongoing process of restructuring the organization to a further radical degree. One of the main elements of this plan was to do away with its commissions by changing them into independent bodies known as 'affiliates' that would not be integrated into the WEA structure as before. For the TC, this suddenly brought back into view the possibility of creating an 'international evangelical theological society' to link theo-

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) *Information Service*, N. 113 2003/II/III, pp. 85-101; *Origins* (Conference of Catholic Bishops in the U.S.) 16 Oct 2003 Vol. 33, No. 19, pp. 310-320.

²⁰ Dr B. Edgar, Dr D. Hilborn for the TC and Dr L. McKinney for ICETE were appointed to head this project.

gians and institutions around the world. This idea had been considered quite seriously a few years before, only to be rejected. However, in this new context it became a critical option with far-reaching implications, the full extent of which could only be imagined at the outset.

Whatever the ultimate outcome of this new move by the WEA, the work of revisioning the TC which had been so successfully taking place over the last few years would need to be revisited. It was clear that the organization would have to find significantly different ways of pursuing its original goal of helping its evangelical constituency 'discern the obedience of faith'. The task of 'defending, confirming and extending the gospel' on a global level was more complex in the early 21st century than it had been thirty years before when the TC was first established. However, there had been a rapid growth in the numbers of insightful theologians in all parts of the world who could contribute to the task. Furthermore, the advent of vastly improved communications, travel and publication methods provided new and effective means 'to advance biblical truth through networking of theologians'.

Although there were many theological institutions and initiatives at local and regional levels around the world, there was still the conviction that the global evangelical family represented in bodies like the WEA and the Lausanne movement needed a coordinated means of engaging in intense theologi-

cal reflection from an international perspective. Experience had shown that such a body could serve the worldwide evangelical movement by helping it develop sound theological foundations and by challenging it to grow in faith and understanding to meet the times of strategic opportunity that it faced.²¹

The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship/Alliance

Theological Assistance Program (TAP)—established 1968

Theological Commission—established 1974

Chairmen of the Executive Committee

Dr Byang Kato 1975

Dr Arthur Clemenhagen 1975-1980

Dr David Gitari 1980-1986

Dr Peter Kuzmič 1986-1996

Dr. Rolf Hille 1996-

Executive Secretaries/Directors

Dr Bruce J. Nicholls 1969-1986

Dr Sunand Sumithra (1986-89)

Dr Bong Rin Ro 1990-1996 (acting 1989-90) on furlough 1995-96

Dr James J. Stamoolis 1998-2001

Administrators

Dr David Parker 1995-6, 2003-

Dr Rolf Hille 1996-98, 2001-3

²¹ See the TC web page for current activities <http://www.worldevangelical.org/theology.html>