



# ARAB BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## كلية اللاهوت المعمدانية العربية

ABTS Newsletter

March 2015

### Challenging Insights into the New Testament

In the final week of February, ABTS was host to three exciting events with special guest, distinguished New Testament scholar Dr. David deSilva, who joined us all the way from the US for the launching of the Arabic translation of his theological work, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Context, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Each of the events, described below, was a unique educational opportunity for our seminary students and our wider evangelical community in Lebanon.

On Monday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, ABTS and Christian publishing house Dar Manhal al Hayat co-launched three new Arabic-language theology books, including the translated version of Professor Grant R. Osborne's classic title *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, as well as *An Introduction to the Old Testament* written in Arabic by Lebanese theologian and scholar Dr. Issa Diab. [Read about this event and about the three books here.](#)

On Wednesday, February 25, deSilva met with our seminary students for a roundtable discussion. Students were given an essay to read before the discussion on Paul's teachings about the manner by

which God changes those who accept Christ to be more like Him. With the help of a translator, deSilva answered questions from our students about the New Testament and the Early Church. Rather than lecture, deSilva worked together with our students to arrive at answers to questions posed, such as how to live out the Christian faith in a Muslim community and while facing persecution, and how the Biblical idea of Christian transformation can be applied in the Arab-Muslim context. They also explored the manner by which Paul comforted those rejected by their society for their faith, highlighting the fact that Paul went first to the Jews before going to the Gentile communities, even though persecution awaited him from his own people.

A second-year male Syrian student shared with us, "Dr. deSilva took us on a deep journey through Paul's mind on how he understands transformation and sanctification. This gave me a good example for how the believer should deal with the Bible. Every idea that he hears about Jesus or God, he measures it against the Bible." A third-year female Egyptian student added, "This discussion with Dr. deSilva was very important for us. He has a new vision for interpretation and he opened my mind to new aspects of



David deSilva sharing with the attendees, February 25, 2015

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interpretation and contextualization of the scripture.”

Finally, on Thursday evening, February 26<sup>th</sup>, deSilva gave a public lecture on a political reading of the Book of Revelation. He brought a challenge to our traditional understanding of Revelation, while exploring its writing



and communication as an act of political, economic, and ideological critique. He argued that the symbols were easily identifiable by the letter recipients and anyone familiar with the politics of the time, and noted, “*John’s communication of the image of the great prostitute Babylon (Revelation 17), therefore, is a shocking act of ideological vandalism, challenging the public and official presentation of Rome’s character and impact on the known world and challenging all Christians to withdraw from any show of support for or any kind of partnership with its systems of domination.*”

Watch footage of this event, including deSilva’s lecture and the responses by ABTS faculty Dr. Hikmat Kashouh and Near East School of Theology faculty Dr. Johnny Awwad, subtitled into English, on [ABTS’s YouTube channel](#). ♦

### Staff and Students Prayer Requests

*Ammar, Sudanese, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year student*

Please pray for my plans after graduation. I want to know God’s will for my future steps. I also ask for prayer for my family, with whom I’m struggling to stay in contact.

*Tassadit, Algerian, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year student*

I ask for prayers for my family back in Algeria. I also pray for the Church in Algeria and God’s protection for our Church and our country. After what happened with ISIS and the Christians in neighboring Libya, we ask God to keep us safe from what happened there. Also, as I am getting ready to graduate, I ask for prayers that I am able to continue with my studies.

*Hanna, Egyptian, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year student*

I ask for prayer for my family’s future, especially for my husband to be able to continue his studies after we graduate this year.

*Toufic, Algerian, 1<sup>st</sup> Year student*

I ask that you pray for my studies here at ABTS. Please pray that I will learn how I can best serve God, and for my church back in Algeria. I thank you for your help.

*Rabih, Translation Coordinator, ABTS Staff*

Please pray for my brother who is dealing with health issues. His kidneys are not working well and he’s currently undergoing some tests so the doctors can understand the specific problem, however they are saying it looks very

serious.

*Christina, Event and Marketing Coordinator, ABTS Staff*

I ask for prayers for my father who is in the hospital right now after a huge fall at work – roughly four stories. He had to go through surgery, which went well praise God, and now we are praying for his quick recovery.

*Rana, Registrar, ABTS Staff*

Please pray for our new online Certificate in Ministry program, which was just introduced last month. Pray that we are able to reach the unreached through the online theological education this program can bring to the Arab world. We currently have 8 enrolled students and are still reviewing many more applications. ♦

ABTS wishes to congratulate our Partnerships Manager Wissam al-Saliby on his upcoming marriage to Ashley Wollam at the end of this month! We ask that you join us in praying for this couple, and for their families in Texas and Lebanon. We pray that their wedding goes smoothly and that they are able to start their married life with a God-centered focus. We also pray that Ashley, who will be joining Wissam in ministry in Lebanon, has an easy transition and that God can work through her to make an impact in our region.



**ABTS Mission:** To serve the Church in our region as it realizes its Biblical mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord by offering specialized learning resources and equipping faithful men and women for effective service.

## The IMES Blog: Christ-Centered Perspectives from the Middle East

Each week, the Institute of Middle East Studies (IMES) addresses a variety of topics significant to the Middle East and North Africa on its blog site, [IMESLebanon.wordpress.com](http://IMESLebanon.wordpress.com). The following is a selection of some of our most popular posts from the last year:

**Beating Back ISIS**, by Martin Accad, February 20, 2015. “We all need to form our opinions based on our own analysis of the arguments offered, but here are 5 takeaways that I propose, taken from the most recent events and their analyses...”

**ISIS and the Apocalypse**, by Mike Kuhn, March 6, 2015. “When John calls us to be willing to die in pursuit of Jesus’ Kingdom, it may seem overwhelming—something like a culture of death, but it is not that. We need a vision reorientation. That’s what apostles do for us. John is calling us to embrace the true life offered to us in union with Jesus.”

**Israel, Palestine and the International Criminal Court**, by Wissam al-Saliby, February 12, 2015. “Even if we have different theologies or belief systems stemming from our various interpretations of the Scriptures, no interpretation justifies the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity – of which the ICC is competent to judge.”

**When It Gets Personal**, by Arthur Brown, July 10, 2014. “I was sitting in church last Sunday trying to worship when my phone [which was fortunately on silent] vibrated. I know I should have ignored it, but like many others, I failed to subdue the temptation to look. As I subtly looked down to my screen, I read about the latest loss of lives as a result of the latest attack.”

**Bad Theology Kills: How We Justify Killing Arabs**, by Jesse Wheeler, April 17, 2014. “For theology (along with its secular twin – ideology) encompasses our very core beliefs as to how the universe functions

and how we function within it. It drives our very sense of purpose and provides us with the interpretive lenses through which we make sense of and find meaning in our daily lives. And, some theologies are good. Others are bad.”

**A New Kind of Consensus: Reforming Islam in the Internet Generation**, by Rose Khouri, January 29, 2015. “... In this article, I seek not to ask whether Islam can be reformed, but who will be reforming? Whose voices, as we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, will become the most important?”

**The Local Church: A Place of Compassion in the Syrian Crisis**, by Rupen Das, October 23, 2014. “... the Lebanese Baptist community (...) decided to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis. Being a church based agency, it worked to empower local churches inside Syria and in Lebanon to reach beyond their comfort zones and social boundaries to help those in need. This is a story of

reconciliation that has not yet been told.”

**There Are Happy Stories, Too!** By Kathryn Kraft, November 26, 2014. “A few months ago, I did a storytelling training for employees of an educational organisation working in Syria. At the beginning, one of the participants told me why she wanted this training: ‘We know that what we are doing has a deep spiritual impact, but we don’t know what it is. We are hoping that if we tell more stories, and tell them better, we will be able to capture what we are doing.’”

**“If You Pour Yourself Out for the Hungry”: A Call to the Church amidst the Ongoing Suffering of Syrian Refugees**, by Ashley Wollam, December 18, 2014. “*But where will I get food for my children? What can we do?* It was one of the few moments I was glad that my Arabic is still far from fluent. One of my Lebanese brothers or sisters on the ministry team would have to find the words to answer this refugee mother, and many more like her. But what could they possibly say? How could they explain that, long before the need had subsided, help had run out?” ♦

