

Proposal for the Transition of CETA to a North American Theological Association

The Canadian Evangelical Theological Association (CETA) is considering the exciting prospect of transitioning from a primarily Canadian organization, which currently has a number of American members (including three on the executive), to an explicitly Canadian-American organization, possibly called the *North American Theological Association*.

Theological Orientation

This initiative is intended to address the expressed needs of American members and potential members of CETA who do not fit into the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), given its somewhat exclusive theological and sociological focus.

While ETS represents an evangelical scholarly constituency, its history and theological orientations can make it inhospitable to some women as well as those of a Wesleyan-Arminian persuasion. It is also exclusive of other conservative orthodox Christians, especially those of Roman Catholics and Orthodox churches because of some of the requirements of its doctrinal confession.

CETA was originally founded in 1990 as an intentional alternative to having an ETS chapter in Canada. The founders felt that evangelicalism in Canada did not share some of the theological boundaries separating ETS members in the U.S. They did not want to be embroiled with the fractious ETS doctrinal disputes or the ETS requirement for members to sign an inerrancy statement.

A number of American evangelicals are attracted to CETA because they want to work within an umbrella organization that is both theologically orthodox and ecumenical (open to Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Evangelicals) and that would bring together pastors, students, and practitioners of all the theological disciplines for mutual enrichment.

The American Connection

CETA had its fall theology conference in 2013 at Northeastern Seminary, in Rochester, NY. This was CETA's largest conference ever, with 120 attendees; it was mutually agreed that this was a very positive partnership that has future potential.

The Association would continue to serve all Canadians meeting annually (during May/June) as part of the Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences of Canada. The fall conferences would be shared between Canada and the United States; initially the U.S. conferences would be in the Northeast or Midwest to facilitate Canadian attendance. CETA has never been able to serve western Canada or the Maritimes very well, simply because the number of supporting institutions are too scattered and too few. Depending on the growth of a North American Association, it might become possible to have multiple fall conferences in different regions of the U.S. This would depend on individuals in other areas who could plan and promote them.

The CETA executive has been having conversations about the pros and cons of such a transition, including the multitude of logistical decisions that would need to be made. And we are in prayer about the best path ahead.

We invite the CETA membership to join us in conversation and prayer about this momentous decision. We will be having an open discussion of this proposal at the business meeting at the Congress in Calgary on May 29. But it is important to hear the viewpoints of all members. Please send your responses to the president, who will ensure that your perspectives are shared with all the executive before May 29: konkela@mcmaster.ca.

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