

Newsletter 2013

A word from the chairman

Dear colleagues,

In the midst of the many challenges Christians face in Europe as they seek to share the Gospel with their contemporaries, one can of course mention the Muslim faith, but even more so the ultra-modern secular mindset with its emphasis on relativism, its lack of idealism, its reluctance to commitment and its disrespect towards authority and the sacred. As a minority in the midst of a pagan cultural environment where imminent religion, agnosticism and atheism live side by side, how does one proceed to share the living and true word of the Lord?

Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8, on the occasion of the dedication of the Temple, sheds some light on the question. The king's petition is an expression of the diversity, intensity and significance of the spiritual battle in which he is involved in his sevenfold prayer. Five of his petitions are related to trials and sufferings experienced by the covenant people and brought about by the unfaithfulness, rebellion and sin of individuals and/or the community. These petitions concern the people of Israel whether they are still in the land (verses 31-40; 44, 45) or far away, even in exile (44-50). One petition is related to a military action undertaken by Israel with divine sanction: may God uphold the just cause of his people and protect them from self-sufficiency and presumption (44, 45). The last petition is related to the insistent and vital quest of the stranger, a heathen or a Gentile who - though standing outside the covenant - has witnessed the faithfulness of the living God and the mighty and majestic deeds he has accomplished in the midst of Israel (41-43) and been drawn to him. We will briefly comment on this last petition emphasizing the behaviour of the stranger, Solomon as intercessor – mediator and the significance of answered prayer.

The Gentile has heard of the name of the Lord and has witnessed that the Lord is a living God. He acts in history, in the history of his people, Israel, who are his treasured possession. This person has been deeply moved by the greatness, wisdom, and power of his name, the LORD, so much so that he has undertaken a long journey from a distant land to come to the place of the manifestation of his presence in the temple of Jerusalem. Perhaps one of the most beautiful illustrations of such an eagerness to learn and benefit from the life-giving wisdom of God is the visit the queen of Sheba made to King Solomon in Jerusalem (1 Kings 10:1-13). But there is a difference: the stranger wants to pray, to communicate with the living God, the creator of the

universe, who is majestic and wise, who is able to act in history and to change the mindset and lives of people and nations. He too is eager to receive the message of redemption that will bring reconciliation, healing and restoration.

In order for such a radical transformation to take place, the prayer of Solomon, the intercessor–mediator is essential. The insistence with which he pleads in favour of the Gentile is striking and overwhelming: “... when he comes and prays toward the temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and do whatever the stranger asks of you...” (43). The son of David is totally convinced that the LORD in his generosity will not remain indifferent to the plight of the stranger who has heard and seen God in his glory actively involved in the affairs of humans and has come to his temple to find lasting peace. Yes, Solomon is sure that the Lord will hear his prayer and satisfy his quest.

But why should the LORD hear and answer the prayer of the Gentile? The petition at hand is quite explicit. By answering the prayer of the stranger who has drawn near to him, the LORD indicates that his desire is to see “all the peoples of the earth know his name and fear him” (43), in other words, he wants to see them come to saving faith. But even more, his desire is for all the peoples of the earth “to know that this house bears his name”. (43) The temple is the place where the presence of the creator is manifested, where the LORD reveals himself and where it is possible for someone to become his treasured possession. What is true of Israel is also true of the nations. In order to come to saving faith and thus to be incorporated into the covenant of grace, it is crucial to draw near to the place of meeting that the LORD himself has designated. The theological roots of Jesus’ great commission are not only grounded in Abraham’s initial call (Genesis 12:1-3), but also in this most extraordinary petition of the prayer that Solomon uttered on the day of the dedication of the temple.

In the light of the history of revelation Solomon’s petition in favour of the Gentile invites us to go one step further, to understand it in the light of the coming of the Messiah. With the coming of Jesus, the Christ, the LORD drew near to us so that we might be enabled by his grace to call upon his name and communicate with him. He is the incarnate temple of God (John 2:19-22). Whoever draws near to him, Jew or Gentile, will not be disappointed for he is “the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him” (John 14:6). With the coming of Jesus, the Christ, the mediator–intercessor has been fully revealed. The assurance of the people of God and of those who draw near to him, whether Jew or Gentile, resides, as Paul says so well, in the Messiah’s intercessory ministry: “Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). Because of his atoning work, the universal mission that Jesus, the Christ, confided to his disciples can henceforth be fully carried out: “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

With the coming of Jesus, the Christ, believers are gathered together to form a body. The Lord himself is “the head of this body, [that is] the Church” (Colossians 1:18). In fact, the community of the new covenant is the temple of the Lord, in which he chooses to manifest his presence and through which he

makes known the good news to all the peoples of the earth. The temple of Solomon with its spectacular beauty was eventually destroyed when the Babylonians took Jerusalem, but the true temple of the Lord, the Church that was built on the rock, Jesus-Christ, will not be destroyed! “The gates of Hades (the powers of death) will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). As it anticipates eagerly the return of Christ in glory, the Church is therefore called to proclaim timelessly and boldly the word of truth that brings meaning and life to all who receive it with faith; it is called to demonstrate moment by moment that the living God is passionately and actively involved in the life of the Church and the world; it is called to practice sincerely and tirelessly the love of God and of one’s neighbour, specifically the stranger whether he is on our doorstep or in a distant land. In the midst of the present crisis, of a secularized and often hostile and cynical world, such is the path that leads to reformation, renewal and restoration that will have significant and lasting effects on both the body of Christ and on our cultural environments. May the Lord hear our prayer and grant our requests!

Pierre Berthoud
Chairman of FEET
Faculté Jean Calvin
Aix-en-Provence, France

FEET *Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians*

Report of the FEET Conference, 2012

Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology and Practice

The biennial conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians took place in Woltersdorf, near Berlin, from 24 to 28 August, 2012. Over seventy scholars from all over Europe gathered to discuss the movement from the exegetical study of the Scriptures towards the formulation of doctrine and Christian praxis. The conference was a great success, with some stimulating presentations and good times of fellowship and mutual encouragement.

Plenary sessions

There were six main papers throughout the conference.

Dr Richard Briggs, from Durham University in the UK, read a paper on the topic of ‘Beyond the Bible – within the Canon’. Briggs provided a helpful hermeneutical overview regarding the task of moving from the Bible to contemporary application. One of his main points was that the Christian should use more than the standard toolbox of hermeneutical skills; we should apply those practices that are indicated in the Scriptures themselves, for example, well-reasoned and exegetically-grounded typology.

Dr Tchavdar 'Charlie' Hadjiev (from Bulgaria but now lecturing at Belfast Bible College in Northern Ireland) presented his thoughts on 'Reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture'. One of the main foci of this presentation was that Christian interpreters should first thoroughly investigate the Old Testament on its own terms before moving on to interpretation in the light of the Christ-event and the New Testament. Hadjiev's point was that we will never properly understand the Old Testament as Christian Scripture unless we first understand the text in its original historical context.

Professor Roland Deines (from Germany and working at the University of Nottingham in the UK) then gave a stimulating paper on 'The Writing of Scripture in First Century Judaism'. Among many fascinating observations, Deines argued that in all likelihood the writers of the New Testament texts were aware that they were writing 'Scripture'. Many introductions to the New Testament imply or state that the authors would be surprised that their texts were still being read two thousand years after the event. However, Deines suggested that a remarkable divine revelation was normally followed by a formal written record; therefore it would not be surprising that the events of the life, death and resurrection of Christ were quite quickly committed to writing and that those texts were treated as authoritative by the community of faith.

The fourth plenary session was presented by Professor Patrick Nullens (Rector of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium) who led the participants in consideration of 'The Moral Authority of Scripture and the Hermeneutics of Love: Rereading 2 Tim 3:16-17'. His basic premise was that the primary hermeneutic to be applied in the consideration of Scripture is a hermeneutic of love. Jesus highlighted the command to love God and our neighbour as the primary Christian responsibility and this paper suggested that this too must govern our interpretation and application of the Scriptures. Nullens then sought to apply this basic premise to the text of 2 Timothy 3 and showed how a right attitude towards the Scriptures is marked by love. The rejection of a true Christian ethic is marked by wrong love or love for the wrong thing.

Dr Hannes Wiher (Bern, Switzerland) gave a paper on 'The Bible, mission and contextualisation' in which he highlighted the vital significance of mission in our Christian identity by showing a variety of motivations for mission. He also highlighted the significance of the contextualisation of Scripture for the settings in which it is heard. This, of course, does not change or adapt the message of the Gospel but is meant to make that message understandable to the hearer. Wiher was careful to point out that contextualisation does not just apply to far-flung parts of the world but that the Gospel needs to be contextualised for an increasingly secular Europe.

The final plenary session was presented by Dr Yannick Imbert of the Faculté Jean Calvin (Aix-en-Provence, France). His paper, entitled 'The New Atheism and the Bible: the apologetic challenge' explored, in particular, the manner in

which Scripture and Theology are used by the New Atheists and how this might be best addressed apologetically. He suggested that the arguments of the New Atheists are emotional, selective, frequently inaccurate, utilitarian and adopt a neo-fundamentalist hermeneutic. Meanwhile, evangelicals must face the challenge that society presents in its willingness to receive such ill-reflected presentations and note that behind the simplistic challenge there is a fundamental naturalistic hermeneutic that denies the validity of all religious language; seeing it a merely self-referential. Imbert suggested that evangelicals need to reaffirm an epistemology (including hermeneutics) that addresses these needs and ensure that this must be located within the realm of public theology: otherwise we have already lost the challenge.

Other sessions

Over and above the plenary sessions, Prof. Thomas Schirrmacher of Martin Bucer Seminar (Bonn, Germany) led the Bible readings each morning around the main conference theme. There were three sessions in which the participants met according to their specialisms: Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic and Historical Theology, Ethics and Apologetics and Practical Theology. In these groups, conference participants presented short papers on a wide variety of themes. This was the first conference with an extensive focus on subject-specific discussion groups and this development proved very popular with the participants.

A final reflection was given by the chair of FEET, Prof. Pierre Berthoud. He suggested that the diversity within the papers suggested that there was a greater need for metaphysics to engage with hermeneutics, that there was a need to assert a unified field of knowledge and that the use of methods and tools was to be circumscribed: not all tools are neutral. In the light of this, he suggested, we need to ensure evangelical identity is grounded in the historical apostolic faith. He provided an outline investigation of Calvin's methodology that might be a fruitful means to explore such ends.

At the business meeting of the Fellowship, Mr. Gert Hain was reappointed as treasurer of FEET and Dr Leonardo de Chirico of the Istituto di Formazione Evangelica e Documentazione in Padova, Italy, was appointed to the Executive Committee of the Fellowship. On the Sunday of the conference, the participants visited the Evangelisch-Freikirchliche Gemeinde (Baptist) in Berlin Schöneberg and then enjoyed a fascinating bus tour of the city, hosted by Rev. Axel Nehlsen.

Summary

In brief, the 2012 conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians was a great encouragement to all those taking part and everyone is looking forward to the next conference in Paris, August 29 –September 2, 2014.

See photos of the Conference taken by Gert Hein: [Klicken Sie hier, um „FEET conference Berlin 2012“ aufzurufen.](#)

Next conference in Paris

Friday Aug 29 – Tuesday Sep 2, 2014

Theme: Towards a Christian Ethics in contemporary Europe

All evangelical theologians in Europe are warmly invited to the next FEET conference which will be a joint meeting with the French speaking group AFETE; for this reason we will meet near Paris! A conference brochure will soon be available and can be obtained from any member of the FEET and AFETE committees.

We have invited well-qualified scholars to present the following papers:

1. Values in our society - with historical, anthropological and social aspects
2. Theological foundation of Christian Ethics - methodological issues
3. The present context in the light of the New Testament and its background
4. How do we apply the biblical Ethics into the contemporary context?
5. The agenda of secularism in France. A case study
6. Ethics, Mission and Evangelism in the Cape Town Commitment

In addition there will be workshops on aspects of the conference theme, meetings of discipline groups, Bible readings, a meeting for doctoral students and on Sunday after worship a tour of Paris. Please mark the conference dates out in your diaries now.

A history of the Evangelical Congregational Churches in Bulgaria

1. The Protestant Reformation made no impact upon the Orthodox Slavic peoples, except in a few isolated cases¹. Protestantism was introduced in Bulgaria in the nineteenth century, which was then occupied by the Ottoman Empire. It coincided with the large movement for national and spiritual independence, the Bulgarian Renaissance, and with the involvement and support of American missionaries in this movement.

¹ Paul B. MOJZES, *A history of the Congregational and Methodist Churches in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia*, Dissertation, 2 vols (Boston University Graduate School, 1965) p. 46

At the same time, we have reason to think that there were some pre-reformation roots in the Middle Ages, especially in the spiritual movement of *hesyshasm* which flourished on the Balkan peninsula in the fourteenth century.

The American mission to Bulgarians, Macedonians and later Albanians, Serbians and Greeks was a direct outgrowth of the mission to Turkey which had started in 1819.² “It is evident that the earliest missionaries in Turkey little imagined that they would develop one of their most successful missions among the Bulgarian.”³ Later renamed as American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM), it was “the major Congregational agency, sending out missionaries of various denominations to many areas of the world”.⁴ The ABCFM developed its work on the south side of the Balkan Mountains (Stara Planina), in parallel - and sometimes in cooperation - with the Board of Foreign Mission of Methodist Church in the north.

Although the missionaries did not intend to organise a separate church apart from the Orthodox Church, that separation came largely because of persecutions by some of the Orthodox, and only indirectly as the result of missionary activities.⁵ The first separate Protestant (evangelical) churches appeared in Sofia, Bansko, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Samokov, Meritchlery and Pazardjik. The first Bulgarian evangelical Protestants distinguished themselves by honesty, abstinence from alcohol and a puritan lifestyle.

2. After the Second World War, Christians in many communist-dominated countries, such as Bulgaria, were forbidden any contact with Christians in the West.⁶ The Communists could not allow the vigorous Protestant minority to operate freely.⁷ Gradually restrictions were imposed. Religious education in schools and in church was forbidden. The government had to approve any pastoral appointments. The printing of religious publications was increasingly limited. “The end of 1948 saw the climax of religious persecutions in most Eastern European countries,”⁸ including Bulgaria. Many evangelical ministers and prominent laymen were arrested, sentenced and put in jail or in concentration camps. Among them were pastors such as Vassil Zyapkov, Lambri Mishkov and Georgi Sivriev. Most of them were accused of being “spies of Anglo-American imperialism” and some stayed in prison for more than ten years in horrible conditions. Yet during this time the churches continued their services led by not so “dangerous” pastors and laymen who were under the control of and who endured different kinds of brutal intrusions by the communist authorities.

3. After the political changes on 1989 the evangelical churches in Bulgaria received more freedom. But there are repressions and lack of tolerance towards the Protestant community still in our day, especially in places where the churches are new. There are currently 36 Evangelical Congregational Churches in Bulgaria and around 35 evangelical fellowships connected with them, with almost 3800 church members, members of the community of the

² Ibid p. 54

³ Ibid, p.58, quoting Tsvetko S. BAGRIANOFF, *The American Mission's Share in the Regeneration and Defence of Bulgaria* (n.p.: American Bulgarian Good Neighbor League, 1947) p.2

⁴ Mojses, op.cit. p.4

⁵ Ibid., p.92

⁶ Ibid., p.490

⁷ Ibid., p.498

⁸ Ibid., p.510

local church and children involved in Bible education. We have about 60 pastors, preachers and women as Bible workers.

The governance of our church life is based on the Statute and Collection of doctrinal positions which follows the Reformed tradition. As a result of the historical development of our society, the form of church governance has become something between classical congregationalism and the presbyterian rule of the reformed churches. The General Assembly is the main ruling authority.

During the last fifteen years, evangelistic work has produced the fruit of several new churches and many new daughter fellowships. We developed projects for new ways of evangelism. In partnership with the Child Evangelism Fellowship and Scripture Union we are investing in different activities for children such as Sunday schools, holiday Bible schools, news clubs and camps. For groups of young people who are over 17 years old, we developed a Union. An important number of women are involved in activities such as Bible study groups with "Rendez-vous avec la Bible".

The Union of Evangelical Congregational Churches in Bulgaria is a member of the Evangelical Alliance in Bulgaria and has a good partnership with different European and world church organisations. We offer human and financial resources in support of Agape Bulgaria, CEF, the Bulgarian branch of Transworld radio, the Gideons and other organisations. We have also developed various social and cultural projects with evangelistic goals.

Many of our ministers received their theological education in the Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute. Together with the Slavic Gospel Association, we set up a course for the first level of Bible education fifteen years ago. Recently we started our own theological programme in partnership with the Miami International Theological Seminary and we already have 22 students.

We have a Christian centre in the Rodopi Mountains where we organise educational courses, children's' and youth camps, spiritual retreats, and national and international conferences.

Pastor Danail Ignatov

An interview with Dr Gerhard Maier, a member of FEET's Advisory Board

1. Als Teilnehmer an der Lausanne-Konferenz 1974 war ich 1975 mitbeteiligt an der Gründung des AfeT (Arbeitskreis für Evangelikale Theologie) und seitdem im Vorstand des AfeT. Wir wurden bald Mitglied der FEET, und seit Ende der 1970er Jahre

besuchte ich auch deren Konferenzen.

2. Mein Leben war geprägt durch eine bewusste Entscheidung für Jesus im Alter von 24 Jahren, als ich schon das 1. juristische Examen erfolgreich abgelegt hatte. Ich

studierte danach Evangelische Theologie an der Universität Tübingen, wurde dort wissenschaftlicher Assistent und 1969 promoviert zum Dr. Theol. Anschliessend war ich im Gemeindepfarramt und wurde 1973/1980 Studienleiter und Rektor des Albrecht-Bengel-Hauses in Tübingen.

In der Württembergischen Evangelischen Landessynode leitete ich zwölf Jahre lang den Ausschuss für Kirche, Gesellschaft und Öffentlichkeit. 1995 wurde ich Prälat / Regionalbischof in Ulm (dort bin ich 1937 geboren), 2001 dann Landesbischof unserer Württembergischen Landeskirche mit 2.5 Millionen Mitgliedern. 1991 wurde ich Professor in der ETF Leuven-Heverlee (Belgien).

1. I took part in the 1974 Lausanne Conference, and in 1975 I was one of founding members of the AfeT (the German wing of FEET). From that time I was on its Committee. The AfeT soon joined FEET and from the late 70s I also attended its conferences.

2. My life was stamped by a conscious choice for Jesus at the age of 24. At that time I was already well advanced with my study of Law. I changed to studying Protestant Theology at the University of Tübingen, where I first became an assistant and in 1969 achieved the PhD in Theology. Subsequently I was a local minister and from 1973 I was tutor (1980 Principal) of the Albrecht Bengel Haus in Tübingen.

For twelve years I chaired the committee on Church, Society and

Government of the national church of Württemberg. In 1995 I was made bishop of Ulm, the town in which I was born in 1937; in 2001 I became the bishop of the national church of Württemberg, which has a membership of 2.5 million. In 1991 I became a professor at the ETF in Leuven.

3. Literarisch tätig bin ich als Autor und Herausgeber, z.B. schrieb ich *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode, Biblische Hermeneutik, Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche* und viele Kommentare. Menschlich am meisten dankbar bin ich für meine Frau und unsere vier Kinder, die mit uns den Glaubensweg gehen. Geistlich haben wir zahllose Wunder erfahren und danken Jesus jeden Tag, dass er bei uns ist.

4. Was FEET betrifft, the strengths are dominant. Wir brauchen in Europa einen Zusammenschluss von Theologen/-innen, der nicht nur Sacharbeit leistet, sondern auch geistliche Gemeinschaft schenkt. Bei den Schwächen kann man vielleicht neben der numerischen Schwäche die Schwierigkeit nennen, allen nationalen Entwicklungen gerecht zu werden.

5. Hopes and ideas: Das wichtigste ist, dass wir ungebrochen auf dem Boden der Bibel stehen. Ich hoffe, dass wir den andern Regionen gegenüber treu zu Jesus Christus stehen und den Christen Europas für ihr Zeugnis sehr gute Argumente liefern.

In Glaubensverbundenheit und mit persönlichen Segenswünschen,
Ihr Gerhard Maier

3. I am the author of books such as *Das Ende der historisch-kritischen Methode*, *Biblische Hermeneutik*, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche* and many commentaries. At the human level I am most grateful for my wife and our four children, who each share our faith. At the spiritual level we have experienced many miracles and we thank Jesus every day for his presence with us.

4. As for FEET, the strengths are dominant. In Europe we need the cooperation of male and female theologians who do not just do a proper job but also offer a spiritual community. As to the weaknesses, apart from the numerical weakness there is the problem of keeping up with all the national developments.

5. Hopes and ideas: The most important thing is that we continue to stand unwavering on the foundation of the Bible. I hope that over against other areas we can remain faithful to Jesus and that we can supply the Christians of Europe with excellent arguments for their testimony.

Connected in the faith and with personal blessings,
Gerhard Maier

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Church and Islam

Theological Conference organised by the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague November 2012

It was already the 23rd Annual Evangelical Theological Conference in Prague. These conferences started immediately after the collapse of communism in 1989. Among the guest speakers have been John Stott, Richard Pratt, Martin Goldsmith, Paul Cedar, Bill Hull, Stuart Briscoe, Harold Netland, Christopher Wright and others. Local speakers from the Evangelical Theological Seminary and from the Czech ecumenical entity, including the Charles University, have also led some conferences. These conferences are designed for seminary tutors, pastors, theology students and teaching elders in various denominations.

In 2012 for the first time the main focus was on the relation of Christianity and Islam. There is hardly another religion which arouses so many emotions and questions in Europe than Islam. There are about 50 million Muslims living in Europe and their number is growing. What is the main object of their belief? What is their opinion of Christians and their view of Christianity? What is the right attitude of the Church to Islam? These were the basic concerns of the Theological Conference.

Glaser

The main speakers were Dr. Ida Glaser, academic director of the Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies in Oxford and David, a long-term missionary to Muslims and author of several books on Islam. Dr. Glaser put strong emphasis on the subject of Christianity in Muslim perspective, underlining common misunderstandings between these two entities. Many participants were surprised by that fact that Christianity and Islam have some beliefs in common. The Qur'anic material on Christians and Christianity is varied, and is therefore open to a variety of interpretations. The next day Ida Glaser took us deeper into the question: What is the Muslim view of Jesus? Is Jesus a Muslim prophet or the Christian God? We read together several passages from Qur'an, trying to clarify these uneasy questions. Most participants in the Conference realised for the first time that Allah in Islam is a picture of our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We also enjoyed a very interesting workshop led by Ida on 'Reading Genesis in the context of Islam: Windows on the texts'.

David

Missionary David led us into more sensitive thinking and talking about Muslims. His experiences covered problems and experiences of mission in Islamic states. As very valuable we appreciated his lecture on: 'How can the Church approach Muslims?' The experiences he had gained over many years also covered the place of women in Islam. David's lectures were followed by very interesting discussions. During the conferences David's new book was presented in Czech (Afghanistan, My Tears).

The Conference was completed by other seminars: An Introduction to the Qur'an (Dr. Pavel Hosek), Christianity and Islam from a missiological perspective (Dr. Pavel Cerny), ABC of Islam (Dr. Pavel Hosek), Prayer in Islam (Jiri Bukovsky, ThM), Sharia – the concept of God's Law in Islam and Christianity (Jiri Bukovsky, ThM). In the evening participants were able to see a film showing some of the problems of the Church in Islamic states, especially in Iran.

I dare to say that this Evangelical Theological Conference was really a breakthrough in our viewing and understanding of Islam. Many of us now regard Islam as a religion which has more correspondences with Christianity than we have ever thought. We have realised that our knowledge of Islam must be better and that our Christian love for Muslims also has to be broader and deeper. This doesn't mean that we forget the persecuted Church in some Islamic states. There were prayers at the Conference for our suffering

brothers and sisters, asking for religious and political freedom in those countries. We want to continue serious research of Islam to be better prepared for interreligious dialogue and mission in witness and deeds of love.

Pavel Cerny



Some of the Conference Speakers



Conference Auditorium in Prague



Preparing PowerPoint for another lecture

European Journal of Theology Europäische Theologische Zeitschrift Journal Européen de Théologie

The European Journal of Theology (EJT) is a peer-reviewed scholarly and professional journal carrying articles in English, French and German. For a long time evangelical Christians shied away from scholarship because they saw it as a threat to their faith; now they realise its immense value in supporting the work of pastors and congregations, and they recognise that the church cannot do without it.

EJT is edited on behalf of FEET by Dr Pieter J. Lalleman of Spurgeon's College, London, and published by AlphaGraphics (UK) twice annually.

Among the theological journals it is cheap but at 96 double-column pages it is also rich in content. A unique feature of the Journal are the summaries of all articles and reviews in French, German and English. This journal should be in every theological library in Europe! The editor and the review editors are open to suggestions from the FEET community.

Recent articles include:

- Krish Kandiah, “Authentic Evangelism? Revelation, truth and worship in late modern, pluralistic Europe” (a FEET conference paper)
- Elizabeth Pinder-Ashenden, “How Jewish thinkers come to terms with the Holocaust and why it matters for this generation”
- Zbigniew Wierzchowski. “Broken and Scattered: Polish Baptists during World War II”
- Peter Walker, “Revisiting the Pastoral Epistles” (Two parts)
- Andrew Kloes, “Four calls for religious reforms in the 1780s: Urlsperger, Joseph II of Austria, Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia”
- Christoph Stenschke, „Gefahren und Chancen von materiellem Besitz im Neuen Testament“

The contents of previous issues can be found on www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/ which is a very useful website anyway, with many evangelical articles from a range of periodicals.

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Leonardo de Chirico, member of the FEET Committee

An interview by Pieter J. Lalleman



1. Leonardo, how long have you been a member of FEET or attended the conferences?

The first FEET conference I attended was in 1998 where I presented a seminar paper on “The Cross and the Eucharist”. I remember the joy of meeting personally scholars I had been studying on: Howard Marshall, Gerald Bray, Henri Blocher, Paul Wells, Rolf Hille ... For us Italian Evangelical theologians, coming from a minority situation, FEET has always been a source of encouragement.

2. What is your subject area within the field of theology?

My PhD (King’s College, London, 2002) is on Evangelical interpretations of Vatican II and post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism. Present-day Roman Catholic theology is pretty much at the centre of my study field. I try to understand how the RC theological system works and how it impacts all areas of life. Being a pastor in Rome city centre adds to this task an evangelistic and pastoral flavour. In recent years, I have become more and more aware of the need for Evangelicals to work on ethical issues, especially bioethical ones, working more on the biblical ethical framework rather than jumping into the politically polarised field of “pro-life” versus “pro-choice” camps. It seems to me that the latter is an unwarranted shortcut.

3. Can you tell us about the institute where you work?

IFED was founded in 1988 by the visionary work of my senior colleague and mentor, Prof. Pietro Bolognesi, himself a long-time friend of FEET of which he has been a member since the early days. He also founded the theological journal *Studi di teologia* (1978) where a number of papers from FEET conferences have been published over the years. I am now editor of the journal which comes out with two issues per year plus a yearly supplement on ethics. Each issue is a theological monograph on a certain topic and is a good resource for pastors and scholars. Each issue also contains dozens of book reviews. Then we have our theological training course with over 60 students enrolled and a yearly two-day theological conference in September. Our aim is to provide hope to the Italian church which has been struggling with persecution and fragmentation, and a resource to the Italian society which is dominated by Catholic and secular voices and is in need of hearing a different voice.

4. Have you got a family? Hobby's?

I have been married with Valeria for 22 years. She is a real gift and a great companion. God gave us two sons, Filippo and Akille, who are now teenagers. I like reading, visiting libraries and browsing bookshops. Not the most intriguing thing for many ... but I like it. Living in a great city gives us opportunities to visit art exhibitions of all kinds, especially when it's free-entrance day...

5. What is the position of the evangelicals in Italy?

We are a minority, both numerically (1-2%) and culturally. Up to 50 years ago, life for Evangelicals was tough in every respect under the political and cultural dominion of the Roman Catholic Church. We developed a survival mentality and a suspicion towards everything. Training was not on the priority list of churches and sectarian approaches were prevalent. We have to overcome this phase and we are at a crossroad: either we develop a missional attitude taking our situation as a risky business for the Gospel or we maintain our previous outlook and keep our marginal enclaves.

“FEET is the best place I know (perhaps the only place) to address these issues”.

6. What are your hopes and ideas for the future of FEET?

I would like FEET to be more and more the facilitator of theological food for thought for European churches, agencies and groups around the continent in at least three areas. First, in Europe we live in times of transition. What is Europe like to become? What is the theology of the Euro? How do we grapple with the European unity and diversity? These are heavy theological issues which impact our future. I think that part of the current European crisis has been caused by the absence of an evangelical contribution, including the theological input. We have been driven by bankers and bureaucrats. Second, the new momentum that church planting is experiencing in Europe as in other parts of the world. Church planting is a profound theological issue where strategic reflection is needed. Third, since every theology is “regional”, what is the distinct European taste for a global Evangelical theology? FEET is the best place I know (perhaps the only place) to address these issues theologically.

7. Can you tell us more about the initiative for a South-European group of evangelical?

Europe is diverse, yet there are similar situations in the southern countries. We all share the fact that we did not have a significant and lasting Reformation; we find ourselves working in minority situations which are largely shaped by Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox traditions; we speak languages that have the same Latin root (with the exception of the glorious Greek language). In 2011 we had the first colloquium in Padova (Italy) and

we are going to have the second one in Barcelona in August 2013. My hope is that as a result there will be a stronger Southern European contribution to FEET.

Second Colloquium of Evangelical theologians from Neo-Latin and Mediterranean European countries

Castelldefels, Barcelona (Spain) 27th – 29th August 2013

After the positive experience we had in Padova (Italy) in 2011, the second Colloquium of Evangelical theologians from Neo-Latin and Mediterranean European countries will be held in Spain.

Many of us are already engaged in FEET and we want to support this Fellowship. Nonetheless, there are issues, concerns and projects to be addressed in a sub-regional context.

Costs

For the Colloquium: Euro 90 (includes two nights' accommodation, two suppers, two breakfasts, two lunches). Money will be collected at registration.

Programme

Tuesday 27th August 2013

Bible devotion and introduction by Leonardo De Chirico

“The Lausanne Legacy: looking in retrospect”, Jean-Paul Rempp, Lausanne International Deputy Director for Europe

Country presentations with a special focus on the Lausanne legacy

Wednesday 28th August 2013

Bible devotion

“The Lausanne Legacy: looking ahead with special reference to Southern Europe”, Jean-Paul Rempp

Country presentations

Business meeting

Thursday 29th August 2013

Bible devotion

Final business meeting

Registration by the end of May 2013:

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Dr Jamie Grant (Scotland)

Dr Danail Ignatov (Bulgaria)

Dr Hetty Lalleman (Netherlands / England)

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