

# Newsletter AUTUMN 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This year the biennial FEET conference would have taken place in Prague. Because of the Covid-19 crisis, we met online. It was wonderful to see so many participants from all over Europe. At the end I felt I had travelled a long way, from Ukraine to Norway to Italy to Finland (and so on), all of this just sitting in my chair in front of the computer! In this newsletter you find a conference report.



At the heart of this second FEET newsletter for 2020 you find reports on the activities of some organisations of evangelical theologians

in various countries. As FEET we tend to see these groups as our 'daughters'; see how they describe themselves! It is exciting to read how evangelical theology is flourishing in so many different parts of Europe! We did invite reports from other countries as well, and they would still be welcome.

Stephen Dray shares personal memories of Dr James I. Packer, who was a member of our advisory board but died earlier this year. The rest of the newsletter is filled with well, news. The news about our journal, EJT, continues to be exciting. Have a look at the reduced rates!

The Executive Committee of FEET will soon be meeting to decide on the 2022 conference: the subject, the speakers and (crucially these days) the venue: somewhere in Europe or in front of your screen?

If you appreciate the work of FEET, we would appreciate it if you became a member. Please go to <https://feet-europe.org/join-us>

**Hetty Lalleman, editor**

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**REPORT ON THE 2020 CONFERENCE OF FEET**

**European evangelical theology expands**

At the end of August FEET held its biennial meeting, this time on the work of the Holy Spirit. The number of participants was 120, whereas on previous occasions it was around 70.

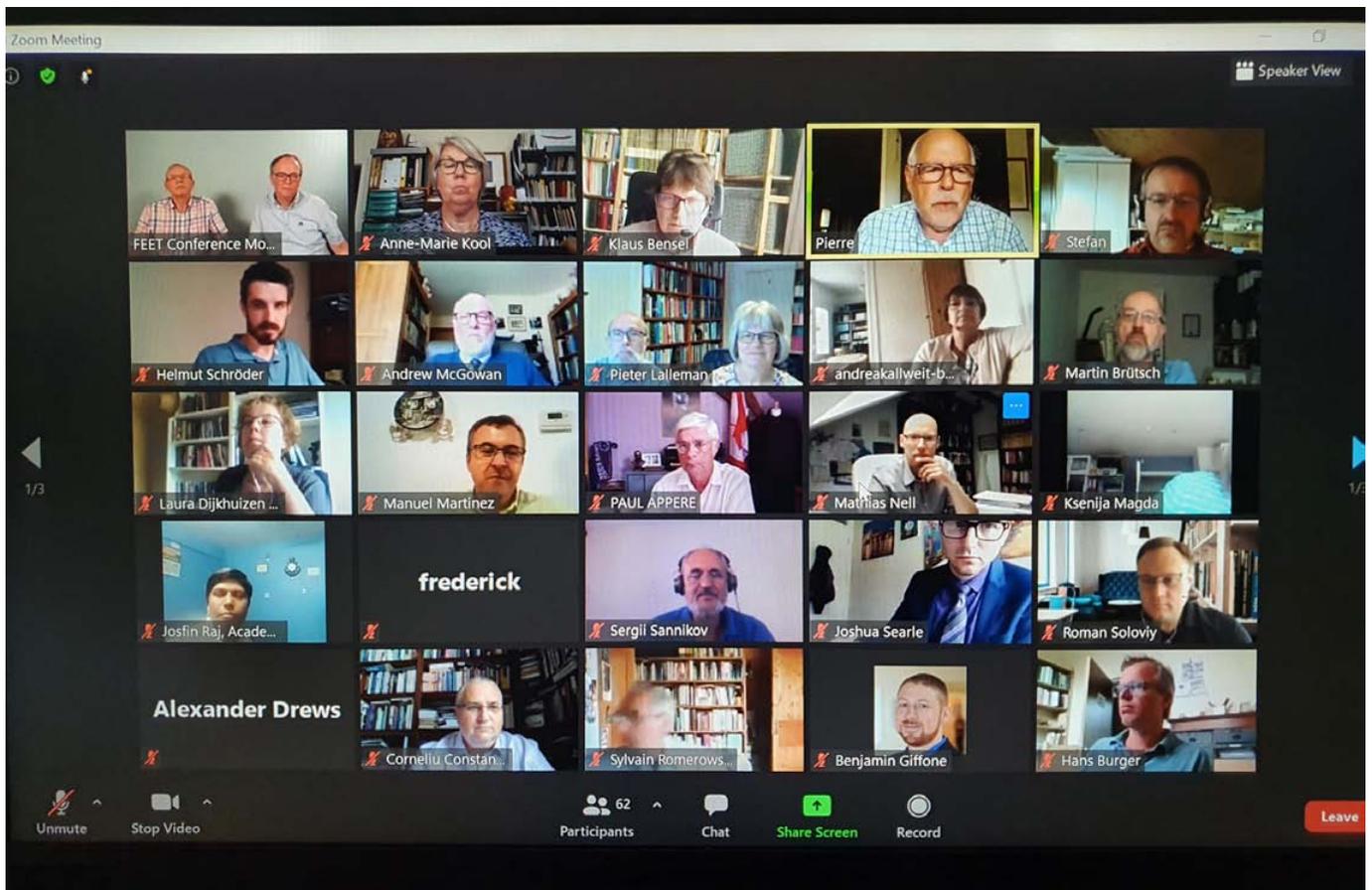
The Finnish professor Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, who also teaches in the USA, argued that the work of the Spirit should be understood much more widely than often happens. The Spirit works not only in the church, but also in creation, in movements that stand up for its preservation, in politics and art, as much as in the church. Kärkkäinen went on to say that the Spirit works in all aspects of the process of personal salvation and conversion: not only in election, rebirth and sanctification, but also in mental and physical healing and in handing out gifts. On questions about the criteria we have for testing the work of the Spirit, Kärkkäinen replied that we as fallible people have often made

mistakes in this. If God and his Son receive honour, this is a sign of the presence of God’s Spirit.

The Croatian Dr Ksenija Magda gave an overview of what the Bible says about the Spirit, focussing on Romans 8 in particular. She paid much attention to Genesis 3 as the background of Romans 1-11 and the way in which power structures have worked through church hierarchies, in particular for women. The opposite of a power structured church is the church as ‘a charismatically structured, eschatological community’ in the words of Miroslav Volf.

**Worship**

The third speaker, the Norwegian professor Terje Hegertun, dealt with the work of the Spirit in the church. He said that charismatic Christians regard their worship songs as a kind of sacrament, and that singing in the worship of many churches takes more time than



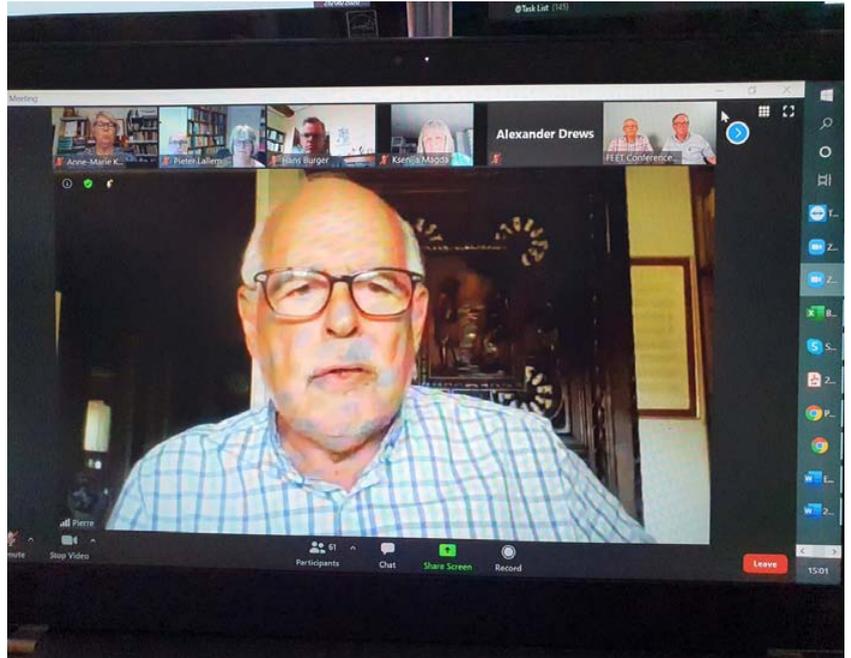
One screen with few participants

preaching. In such churches, visitors feel directly addressed by God and come to faith in Jesus Christ. Hegertun stated that the church anticipates the kingdom of God through its worship (*leiturgia*), that it preaches the gospel through its testimony (*kerugma*) and serves humanity through its actions (*diakonia*). These aspects must be well balanced. In form and style, the church can fit in with modern culture, even with youth culture, but the source and content must be the unchanged gospel – and he believes that this can be done. In the discussion Hegertun argued that the church can overcome the current corona crisis by encouraging creativity and forming small groups, in which believers themselves are responsible for their own spiritual well-being.

The Spanish psychiatrist Dr Pablo Martinez spoke of the work of the Spirit in the believer. He took the view that the core of the Christian faith is that the Spirit changes people so that they become like Jesus Christ. Rebirth may not change our temperament, but the Holy Spirit shapes and polishes it; he gives us the grace to live with ourselves.

Finally, the Romanian professor Corneliu Constantineanu commented on the work of the Spirit in the public witness of the church. He argued that for too long the churches in Eastern Europe have separated faith from the rest of life. This was, of course, encouraged by the Communist regimes. Faith happened in the church and during one's own time with God, but not in public life. Christians spoke of winning 'souls', not complete people – a jargon that also exists in the West. Thirty years on, faith is still seen primarily as a private matter.

Constantineanu called on the churches to offer an authentic testimony in the public domain, so that the light of the Gospel will shine on social, economic and political topics. The Spirit-filled church can make an important contribution to combat suffering in our complex and divided world. The Bible teaches us to be radically hospitable and even feed our enemies.



**Pierre Berthoud addressing the participants from France**



**Gert Kwakkel moderating the video conference and Pavel Černý**

### **Widening**

During the General Assembly of FEET, the Dutch professor Gert Kwakkel (Kampen and Aix-en-Provence) was introduced as the new chairman. He succeeds the Frenchman professor Pierre Berthoud (Aix-en-Provence) who led FEET for twelve years. Theologians from Ukraine, Norway and Georgia were newly elected

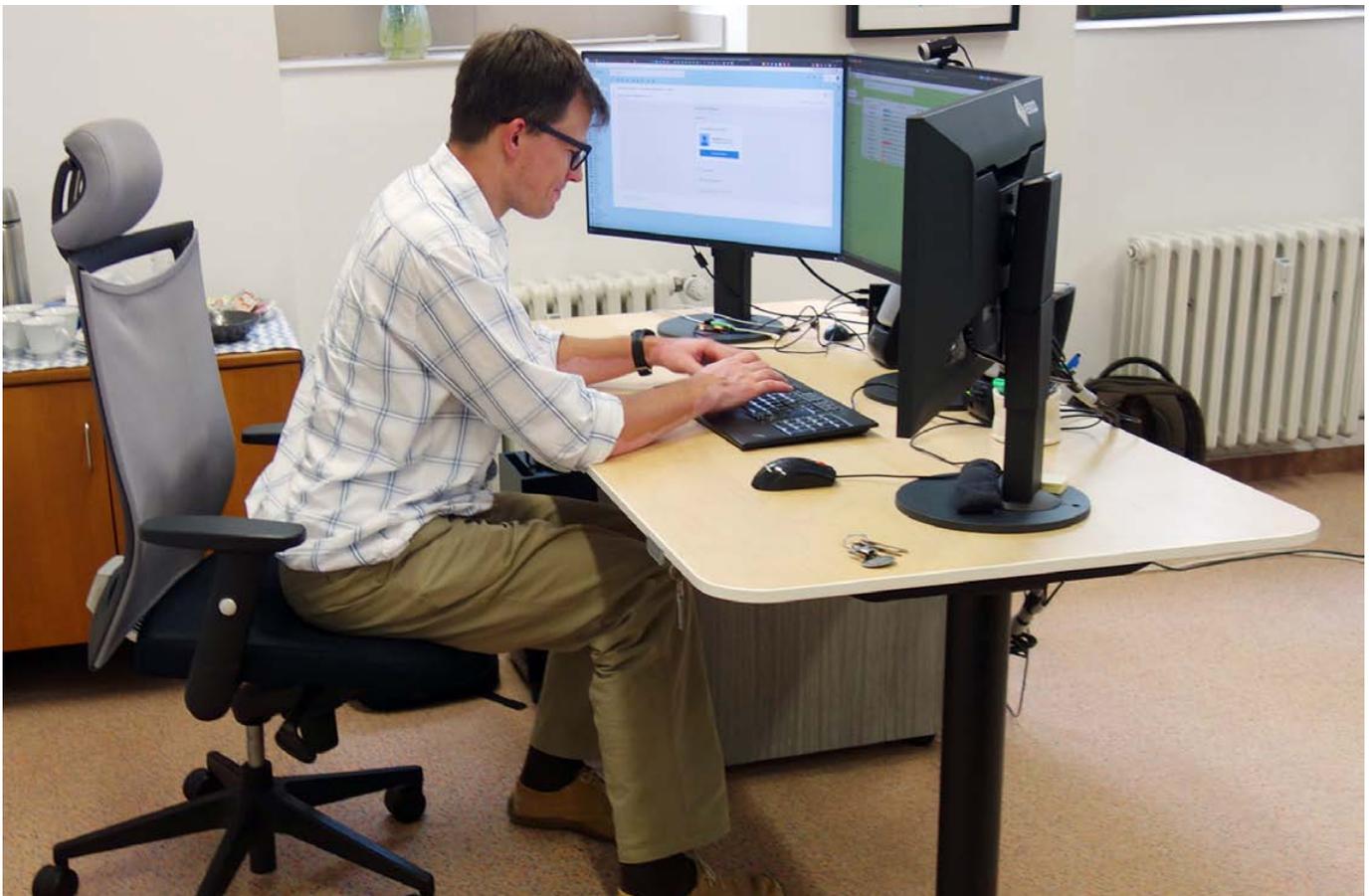


Gert Kwakkel and Jakub Černý

to the Executive Committee and two others from Hungary and Ukraine to the advisory committee. Those who left the Executive Committee were the Dutch professor Anne-Marie Kool (Croatia), professor Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen (Denmark/Norway) and pastor Stanislav Alexiev (Bulgaria). Kool joins the advisory board, together with Sergiy Sannikov (Ukraine).

These changes shift the centre of gravity in FEET further to the east. The shift was also evident in the fact that for the first time there were no speakers from England and Germany at the conference. Evangelical theology in other parts of Europe is coming of age.

The conference was due to take place in Prague, but was held online due to the pandemic. Although the number of participants was higher than usual, the personal contacts were sadly missed.



Jakub Černý as a technician of the conference

## The Evangelical Theological Association of Croatia

### Stanko Jambrek, president

The story of *Evangelical Theological Association of Croatia* (ETAC) began with the Bible Institute in Zagreb. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Croatia, more than a hundred local churches were planted, mostly under the influence of the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements. Upon strengthening local churches and starting new churches, a need emerged for well-educated pastors and spiritual workers. For this purpose, several theological schools were founded. Those include the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek and the Bible Institute in Zagreb, whose researchers and lecturers make up the core of the Evangelical Theological Association and the editorial team of *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* (<https://hrcak.srce.hr/kairos>), which is published twice a year in Croatian and English. *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* was started by Stanko Jambrek in 2007 and he has been the editor-in-chief since. The main publisher of the journal is the Bible Institute in Zagreb; from 2010, the Bible Institute was joined by the Evangelical Theological Seminary from Osijek as the co-publisher.

At the request of *Kairos* on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, the *Evangelical Theological Association of Croatia* (ETAC) (Croatian: Evandeosko teološko društvo – ETD) was founded as a Non-Governmental Organisation. The president of the Association is Stanko Jambrek from the Bible Institute in Zagreb, and the vice-president is Gregory Scott Thellman from the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek. The ETAC headquarters are in the Bible Institute facilities in Zagreb. The Evangelical Theological Association was founded in response to the need for high educational, theological and scholarly support to Evangelical Christianity in Croatia and neighbouring countries.

The purpose of the Association's activities is exploring and applying Biblical Evangelical teaching and gathering Evangelical theologians, both male and female, from Croatia and neighbouring countries. The

Association's goals include gaining a deeper knowledge of the Triune God: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and worshiping Him; promoting the Gospel, the Word of God, and Evangelical Christianity; encouraging spiritual and cultural nurturing based on the Word of God; exploring God's agencies and the influence of his Word in history and in contemporary times; encouraging a dialogue between the Church and the society; encouraging a theological dialogue and research within theological disciplines, as well as on an interdisciplinary level.

The areas of work of the Evangelical Theological Association include spirituality, culture and arts; human rights; international cooperation and education; science; and research. The accomplishment of these goals will, among other things, be reflected in organising seminars, lectures, workshops, round tables, debates, meetings, publishing, and cooperating with other theological societies, groups and individuals on the national, European and international levels.

Becoming a member of the Evangelical Theological Association of Croatia is open to any Christian in Croatia and the surrounding countries who accepts the principles of Evangelical belief, who is a member of a local Evangelical church, and who has a PhD or a Master's degree in theology. As an exception, people can become a member of the Association if they have a PhD or a Master's degree in some other scholarly field and have made a significant contribution to theological thinking through their publications and through serving their own local Evangelical church.

Currently, twenty persons are involved in projects like Evangelical round-table talk, 'Footnote of Life – Old faith for contemporary time' (work with young theologians and leaders), and the Leksikon evandeoskoga kršćanstva online (Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity online).

The English-language issues of *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology* from 2007 are all freely available online at <https://hrcak.srce.hr/kairos-eng>.

## Sdružení evangelikálních teologů (Czech Republic)

### Jiří Hedánek

The Czech Sdružení evangelikálních teologů (SET) is a trans-denominational association of scholars and ministers involved in theology, students and Christians who engage in theologically relevant domains and who are interested in evangelical theology.

Apart from common features of evangelicalism, evangelical theology also has a spiritual mission. Rather than recognising academic and church theologies as two distinct disciplines, we maintain the traditional concept of a single discipline whose aim it is to serve the Church first and then to communicate with academia. Scholarly standards must be met in both areas.

Czech evangelical theologians and ministers used to have contacts abroad as early as in the 1980s and some got rare chances to attend a FEET conference. After meeting John Stott and connecting to FEET, SET was established in 1998, in which Karel Taschner and missionary Marshall Brown were involved. The first meeting confirmed the confession of the European Evangelical Alliance and approved statutes. Early 1999 saw the launch of regular theological forums and the publication of proceedings which were later to become a peer-reviewed journal in Czech, *Theologia vitae*. So far, 32 forums have been held on topics such as biblical studies, missiology, education, inter-religious dialogue and challenges in current theology.

We aim to promote evangelical theology as a practical discipline, which takes account of a specific Czech situation: For many decades theology was put in active opposition to evangelicalism and this anti-evangelical theology virtually monopolised scholarship and education. This theology also used the four decades of isolation of the country to limit or eliminate the

influence of foreign evangelical theologians. As a result many evangelical Christians rejected theology along with other destroyers; some even went to the extreme of disregarding higher education in general. Luckily, this anti-intellectualism was balanced by the local centuries-old tradition of maintaining biblical knowledge in the tradition of the Czech Reformation, which involved reading and studying the Bible by homes and individuals. This tradition now, however, only supported the belief that a sincere, decisive Christianity needs no scholarly theology and is enough for all purposes.

Currently, 30 years after Communism, whose power was employed by anti-evangelicals, the prejudice against theology seems not so strong anymore. But conditions differ across denominations, even across congregations. That is why SET tries to spread over various churches, so far with incremental success. Our aim is cooperation with the full scope of evangelical churches and fellowships and also to cover education establishments and Christian events.

We try to steer regular forums to produce scholarly essays for *Theologia vitae*. We also cooperate with the Czech Evangelical Alliance and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague, which pays half of our publishing costs.

Our original thirty members have grown to 65 academics, pastors, elders and students from the Apostolic Church, the Baptist Union, the Church of the Brethren, the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Moravian Church, the Christian Fellowship and even Roman Catholics. The attendance at our forums is between 30 and 160 persons from ten denominations.

## Southern Europe

### Leonardo De Chirico

Since the early days of FEET, evangelical theologians from Southern European countries have both benefited from and contributed to the life of the Fellowship. Pastors-scholars like José Grau (1931–2014), José Martínez (1924–2016) from Spain, Rinaldo Diprose (1944–2015) and Pietro Bolognesi from Italy, among others, were instrumental in translating papers given at FEET conferences, inviting colleagues whom they met there to speak in their countries, as well as writing for the *European Journal of Theology*. Coming from minority contexts for evangelicals, being part of FEET has always been a source of encouragement and inspiration for them.

In order to strengthen participation at FEET from Southern European countries, a colloquium was organized at IFED (Padova, Italy) on 2–4 June 2011. A group of twelve theologians from Portugal, Spain, France, Italy and Romania met to discuss issues impacting theology in neo-Latin countries.

Following it a second colloquium was held at IBSTE-Facultad Internacional de Teología, **Castelldefels, near Barcelona** (Spain) on 27–29 August 2013 with fourteen theologians from Spain, Italy, France and Romania. Approaching the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1974 Lausanne Covenant, it was felt appropriate to have two sessions: one looked back at the heritage of the Lausanne documents and movement; and the second reflected on what contribution Lausanne can make to our situations.

The latest event was a series of meetings held in Barcelona, Spain, where an intensive seminar on Roman Catholicism was held on 3–5 December 2019. This seminar was held within the framework of the initiatives of the European Leadership Forum and under the patronage of FEET. Dr Leonardo De Chirico led sessions on

topics such as ‘A systemic vision of Roman Catholicism’, ‘Interpreting Vatican II’, ‘An evangelical perspective on Pope Francis’, ‘Contemporary Catholic missiology’ and ‘Is the Reformation Over?’. Among the participants were leaders of the Portuguese GBU ministry, who came together to be trained on the challenges presented by the ecumenical openings of contemporary Roman Catholicism at work also among students.

Southern European evangelical theologians face several challenges:

- for some, the language barrier is still an obstacle to full participation in FEET’s activities;
- as they do theology in minority contexts, some are often overburdened with so many tasks that make it difficult to add yet another commitment;
- in larger gatherings, specific and deeply felt issues in Southern Europe are not always addressed in a way that is conversant with the needs of Southern European evangelicalism; such issues include:
  - dealing with both secularisation and a majority Roman Catholic heritage,
  - being totally in favour of evangelical unity but very sceptical towards ‘ecumenical’ agendas in line with liberal and/or Roman Catholic theologies,
  - working mainly within the framework of ‘free churches’.

These are real challenges to be dealt with. FEET remains a useful context for Southern European Evangelical Theologians to share the theological richness they bring and to exchange gifts with brothers and sisters from around Europe who have been called to serve the cause of evangelical theology in their own contexts.

## **Switzerland: In search of biblically renewed theology** **Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft für biblisch erneuerte Theologie (AfbeT)**

**Andreas Allemann, secretary**

In 1982 the AfbeT was founded by a group of Swiss theologians to provide an alternative within a theological climate dominated by the historical-critical method. As the programmatic name suggests, the aim was to foster a theology rooted in the Word of God and in the way the church has since the days of the Reformation understood itself to be in constant need of renewal; a theology to be in the explicit service of both church and missions. Thus, like-minded theologians, primarily on the level of Th.D., built a network and sought to inspire scholarly theological work.

Since then, the context has changed, but the aims have remained the same, although resources – which means mainly time and human power – have often been scarce and have turned out to be a limiting factor.

Basically, our activities take place in three areas. Our main event each year is a study day where a topic is examined from different angles, mostly the perspectives of Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology and Practical Theology. In recent years, the following topics have engaged our hearts and minds: Biblical Impulses for Church Services; Embodied Faith: Discovering Aspects of Corporeality; The Message of Hudson Taylor for Today; The Drama of Theology; Salvation Within Missional Theology; Sin; and (Why) Did Jesus Have to Die?

These study days are attended by a few dozen members and non-members alike and they usually are structured into presentations given by experts

followed by discussion in groups. That is one aspect of our *working group* (Arbeitsgemeinschaft), sometimes also pursued by regional lecture groups, though these groups tend to come and go.

The other aspect of our working group takes place within the board. Of course the yearly study day has to be planned – but most often this involves theological work by the members of the board, as they either are in charge of the study day themselves or want to get acquainted with the work of a possible speaker. As Switzerland is too small to allow for working groups along the lines of theological disciplines, we have a mix of theological disciplines represented within the board. This makes for an always interesting, fruitful and beneficial exchange.

Finally, we want to further biblically renewed theology by publishing books. Sometimes papers of our study days can be published, but most often we support the publication of doctoral dissertations by subsidising the printing costs.

Our membership of around 60 persons is comprised of both members of the Swiss Reformed Churches and various free churches. Many are pastors while some are teachers or students at one of the theological institutions which exist in Switzerland. Lay people with a strong interest in theology are also welcome.

We are a member of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance and entertain friendly relationships with its representatives.

## The Association francophone européenne de théologiens évangéliques (AFETE)

Donald E. Cobb, chair

Protestants make up less than 3% of the population in France today. In the francophone region of Belgium, these figures are smaller still. Although the situation is somewhat better in the French-speaking cantons of Switzerland, the overall Protestant situation in French-speaking Europe is that of a small minority. Consequently, theological production is modest, compared to other parts of the world such as Anglophone countries, the Netherlands or neighbouring Germany. Although there is a strong theological tradition, much comes either from Roman Catholic circles or reaches back more than a generation to the Neo-orthodox theological renewal spearheaded by Barth in the mid-twentieth century. In such a situation, the danger of merely focussing on church growth and neglecting the theological basis necessary for a solid and vibrant church life, or building on an insufficient theological foundation, "is great.

The *Association francophone européenne de théologiens évangéliques* (AFETE) was formed in 2004, following an initial conference in 2002, in order to encourage theological reflection among Evangelicals in French-speaking Europe and to stimulate the production of serious Evangelical theological writing in French. Among its founding members were Henri Blocher (*Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine*), Pierre Berthoud (*Faculté Jean Calvin, Aix-en-Provence* and President Emeritus of FEET). Today it has slightly more than one hundred members. A number of non-members also attend its activities and receive updates on its projects. Its current president is Donald E. Cobb, PhD, professor of Greek and New Testament at the *Faculté Jean Calvin* (Aix-en-Provence). Past presidents have been Jacques Buchhold, Paul Wells and Sylvain Romerowski. In addition to bringing together teachers

from the two aforementioned theological colleges or from francophone Bible schools (such as *L'Institut Biblique de Nogent*, Nogent-sur-Marne, France, and the newly-formed *Haute école de théologie*, Saint-Légier, Switzerland), it also provides theological stimulus for pastors from various church milieus.

AFETE's main activity is the organisation of an interdisciplinary biennial colloquium. These colloquia address such diverse topics as 'the Trinity', 'Eschatologies of Hope and the 16th century Reformation movements', 'The Apostolic Fathers', 'Discovering the Septuagint' and 'The Fourth Gospel'. In 2014 AFETE also co-hosted the FEET conference on Christian ethics which took place in Orsay near Paris. In addition to featuring Evangelical French-European theologians, AFETE occasionally invites Roman Catholic speakers with expertise in a particular field and scholars from the English speaking world, such as Richard Bauckham and George Kalantzis. From the beginning, AFETE has enjoyed regular collaboration with the theological journal *Hokhma*, which publishes the acts of the colloquia, making them available to a wider Evangelical audience.

AFETE additionally seeks to act as a bridge between various Evangelical milieus. As in most parts of the world, French Evangelicals range from Historic Reformed and Lutheran Conservatives, to non-Charismatics, Charismatics and Pentecostals. Like elsewhere, there is often a tendency to remain ignorant of reflection outside of one's theological circle. One thus misses opportunities to learn from others, but also to encourage each other to a greater faithfulness to Scripture. A recently created email list – although a modest contribution – allows AFETE members to be aware of, and make known, new theological publications and recent events relevant to the Evangelical world.

## Eastern European Institute of Theology (EEIT)

### Roman Soloviy, director

The Eastern European Institute of Theology in Lviv, Ukraine, is an academic and educational institution established to broaden and deepen research in Eastern European Evangelical theology. The Institute's mission is to create an open academic and educational environment in which theological researchers can work together to develop the Evangelical intellectual culture by engaging in high-quality theological research, producing relevant theological knowledge, and facilitating its effective transmission and reproduction.

The Institute was only established in 2019, but it continues the ministry of the Resource and Research Centre of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association which existed since 2008. The Euro-Asian Accrediting Association has, since the beginning of its activities in 1997, supported various research projects aimed at ensuring the quality of higher theological education and developing standards and procedures for the accreditation of theological schools and colleges. In 2008 the Association established the Resource and Research Centre, which initiated research projects in the history and theology of the Evangelical movement, historical and modern theology, and biblical studies. Work was also begun on the *Slavic Bible Commentary*, which was published in 2016.<sup>1</sup> In 2015 and 2017, a programme on commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was implemented, within which four international conferences (in Lithuania, Ukraine and Russia) and six interfaith roundtables (in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and Russia) took place; three collections of materials and several books were published.

In 2015, the Centre launched an ongoing methodological seminar. Since then, twenty-two meetings have been held with the participation of leading national and international theologians and philosophers. The seminar's goal is to help theologians move to a methodological approach to education, oriented toward developing a culture of thought and the capability to work out new knowledge. The Institute holds annual

international conferences on critical theological issues. It also publishes *Theological Reflections: Euro-Asian Journal of Theology* (beginning in 2003) that includes scholarly articles by authors in the Evangelical tradition. An important project of the Institute is the series *Contemporary Protestant Theology*, published by the publishing house *Spirit and Letter* in Kyiv (see <https://duh-i-litera.com>). The series includes works on the problems of theological knowledge, ecclesiastical research, and explaining the church's role in addressing society's most pressing challenges. In addition to publishing, organising and conducting seminars and conferences, the Institute also carries out several research projects in biblical studies, philosophical, systematic and liturgical theology.

In cooperation with the Dragomanova State National Pedagogical University in Kyiv and with the Overseas Council's support, EEIT developed a PhD programme in theology to educate professors of Ukrainian theological educational institutions. Currently, thirty faculty members from evangelical seminaries are doctoral students of the programme. State accredited PhD degrees help Ukrainian Evangelical theological seminaries to get state educational licences for the legalisation of the status of professors and students of Evangelical schools, which will significantly extend our missional possibilities in the area of higher education.

Through various projects and activities, the Institute aims to build up the intellectual potential of Eastern European Protestantism and to strengthen the social role of theology and theological education by developing research staff in the field of theology. The Institute also represents the Eastern European evangelical theological tradition in dialogue with other faith and academic traditions in public and academic structures and the international arena.

The English-language website of the Eastern European Institute of Theology is <http://eeit.info/home-eng>.

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<sup>1</sup> Editor: See the article in *EJT* 26.2 (2017) and the review in *EJT* 27.2 (2018).

## European Journal of Theology

The European Journal of Theology (EJT) is now published by Amsterdam University Press (AUP), see <https://feet-europe.org/european-journal-of-theology>. The journal looks very different indeed, both inside and outside, yet the editorial board, aims and objectives of the journal are unchanged.

Issue 29.2 (October 2020) will appear around the same time as this newsletter, so it is not too late to order your copy. The issue opens with a guest editorial by the Ukrainian scholar Oleg Tymbalyuk. The renowned archaeologist Alan Millard (UK) then presents an overview over inscriptions and other texts from ancient Israel, arguing that there is ample evidence for the existence of writing during the period of the monarchy. The German Siegbert Riecker follows with a withering critique of the historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch, calling for a real paradigm change. On the basis of his experience of teaching the Old Testament in Lithuania, Benjamin Giffone calls for a reconsideration of the position of the Septuagint by Protestants; he uses the Book of Jeremiah as a test case.

Frank Hinkelmann presents the first-ever research on the Congress for World Evangelization which Youth for Christ organised in the Swiss resort of Beatenberg in 1948, concluding that its results were mixed. Billy Kristanto, a pastor in Germany, analyses the theological aspects of some cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach which have exile and religious identity as their subject. The Russian-German Johannes Reimer argues that the arts, especially music, have a large role to play in reconciliation between people. Finally the German Roland Deines offers English-language readers a lengthy introduction to the important new book on the New Testament by the leading scholar Armin Baum.

Of course the issue concludes with a large number of book reviews, prepared under the responsibility of review author Hans Burger. All in all, this is a truly European issue!

AUP is offering a much-reduced price for many countries. The normal rate below is charged to subscribers in Western and Northern Europe, the USA and Canada; the reduced rate in the rest of the world. We trust that this rate will enable more of you to subscribe.

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| <b>Non-FEET members print + online</b>          | <b>50</b>   | <b>35</b>    |
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| <b>FEET Members and students print + online</b> | <b>40</b>   | <b>25</b>    |

## Jim Packer: A personal reflection

Stephen P. Dray

**Jim Packer (Dr James I. Packer, 1926–2020) was one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians. Here one of his former students and a friend, offers his own very personal tribute.**

Memory is a fickle thing – especially for those who have never been good at detailed recall and quite apart from our getting older! However, I seem the recall that my first ‘encounter’ with Jim Packer was, as with many others, a literary one: and it occurred during my first year at University. As a young Christian, seeking foundations for my faith amid the challenges of an academic environment, I read, and cherished, his *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* and, its twin, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. I suspect their formative effect on me was and is far greater on me than I recognise, even today. I also read *Knowing God* during that time although, as I recently shared with Jim, I think it lacked the impact it should have had until I read it more slowly and reflectively many years later. Yet, I think that his challenge to know God rather than simply know about him was one that gestated then and would, later, come to birth.

I think, too, this challenge to a ‘felt’ faith came to me in one of my earliest personal encounters with him. Having graduated in the June of 1973, I remained in Cambridge with a small grant from my college which enabled me, for a period of a month or so, to bury myself in the University Library. For several weeks, I found myself working away in the Rare Books Room and ploughing through a number of Puritan volumes. Had I got the ‘bug’ from my reading of Jim? I think he must have been a factor! However, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, I took a break to attend the Tyndale Lecture which he was giving that year, entitled *What Did the Cross Achieve?* I have two memories of that occasion. I had graduated in Social Anthropology and my knowledge of theology was at an embryonic stage. Much, then, that Jim shared went ‘over my head’. I was in a world which was still largely mysterious to me. However, what I do recall, is the hushed tones and the tear-filled eyes with which he spoke when he recited Philip Bliss’ words, ‘Guilty, vile and helpless we; spotless Son of God was he, Full atonement, can it be, Hallelujah, what a Saviour!’ Here was theology in its purest sense – the encounter in the heart with him who is the Truth. Those few seconds have lived with me ever since – and I suspect they have

proved deeply formative, and ever more so, as my walk with Christ has progressed.

The summer of 1973 was formative for me in another way. I had considered doing doctoral studies and had obtained a place at Durham University. However, at that point, an active and opinionated, young woman was appointed Minister of Education. Her name was Margaret Thatcher and she could see no value in anthropological studies. I lost my grant! So what was I to do?

I had, for some time, felt a call to some form of Christian ministry. I concluded that the Lord might be accelerating the pace toward that end. But, if so, where should I undertake my theological studies? Here my best friend at ‘Uni’ intervened. Stephen was the son of the principal at Trinity College, Bristol, Alec Motyer. Alec had become a great favourite of mine because his books and ministry (he had recently completed a term-long series of Bible readings at the Christian Union) had brought the Old Testament scripture alive to me in an unparalleled way. Stephen suggested that ‘Dad’ might well welcome me as a student – even if I was a Baptist! The thought of learning under Alec and Jim, who was Associate Principal, was very attractive and, as the weeks passed, proved to be God’s will. I also met my wife when at Bristol!

Of course, I made every attempt to attend all of Jim’s lectures, even though none were part of my course. I still retain his ‘pink sheet’ handouts which set out briefly and succinctly the framework of an evangelical theology and spirituality. But there are the more personal interactions with Jim in my college days that I remember more clearly. It was as a person that Jim most impacted me (and, I am sure, many others). On one occasion, I was undertaking the solo in the College Carol service in which we were singing ‘Three kings from Persian lands afar’. The choir was rather over-enthusiastic and its members were singing ever more loudly. So I had to raise my voice to ensure (as required by the score) not to be drowned out. Jim commented afterwards, ‘It reminded me somewhat of Wagner.’ A trivial moment, but one that I recall as evidence of both his sense of humour and also the easy way in which he interacted with all around him.

I left college and, shortly thereafter, Jim departed to Vancouver. For a number of years we had very little contact. However, what developed into what he called a 'friendship' was a visit he agreed to make to Moorlands College where I was now teaching. He stayed with Anne, my wife, and our family. Several incidents from that visit remain firmly etched in my mind. Again, I think they are those things that have subsequently shaped me. In incidental little things, because Jim walked with God, he shaped those around him. My children, none yet teenagers at the time, loved him and recall the times he spent with us with affection. One evening, he sat in our kitchen and shared with Anne some of the challenges his family were facing and into which he felt she could speak. He had no 'airs and graces'. He never pretended to be anything other than a brother saved by divine grace. This was deeply winsome.

On that first visit, knowing Jim's love of trains, I had arranged for him to travel on the footplate of a nearby steam railway. It was to be a 'first' for him. I had a tutee who had formerly been in prison but had come to faith and been largely discipled by Jim's books. However, he was struggling in college and so I invited him to join us. I recall Jim and the student deep in conversation as we met over a meal in a local pub later that day: one with a cider and the other with a Guinness in their hands! That encounter proved a stabilizing influence. The student is now heading up a world-wide initiative to reach the 'under-classes' with the gospel; and Jim wrote a lovely message to him and his wife on the occasion of their subsequent marriage.

In subsequent years, I returned to pastoral ministry. In a lovely letter, Jim commended me wholeheartedly to the church. In the subsequent years the church had considerable problems with its denominational leadership. At that time, Jim wrote a letter in my support which prompted the comment 'Stephen, you have some very high-ranking friends!' But he also acted. On subsequent visits to the UK he made a point of inviting himself to spend time with our family and to speak to our small congregation. I am not sure this 'inner urban' clientele understood much of what he said, but they did warm to him as a person. They still love him.

More latterly, fellowship was maintained by phone. He was always pleased to share and, in our last brief conversation, just a few weeks before his death, blind and infirm, he said to me, 'I am content.' My next planned call never happened...

I appreciate that this is a very personal account of Jim. I recognize it errs on the side of hagiography: but the Jim I knew, behind the public persona, was a deeply



Jim Packer and Stephen Dray

spiritual man. What, then, can we learn from him? First of all, he was a deeply humble man. He knew he was saved by grace and, consequently, he had to live as a brother of the 'friend of sinners'. This is what made him so approachable or, in his shy way, to initiate relationships with those who might feel 'beneath' him. Secondly, this profound sense of who he was created within him a deep-seated integrity. It was, of course, possible to disagree with Jim and even conclude he was wrong. Yet, even in those matters in which others might consider he had lost the way, his motive was always to step out faithfully (whatever the cost) along the path he believed his Saviour was beckoning him. Thirdly, his knowledge of God made him supremely human. He loved jazz, trains – above all his family – with a happy, almost naïve, joy. I recall his excitement when I gave him some railway whodunnits! Fourthly, he dedicated his mind to his God and, right to the end, his conversation was extraordinarily lucid and crafted. None, however, could call him an ivory-tower theologian. He was loved and appreciated by those who had little idea of what he was saying, precisely because they recognized his love for them, strangers for the most part – a love that was a reflection of the God of love.

Others have, and will, write about Jim. They will reflect upon his contribution to the Christian (and especially the evangelical) Church worldwide. He will appear as the giant he was and will remain. I cannot, nor do I wish to compete with these contributions. There is no question he shaped my thinking theologically and that he awakened in me the pursuit of God. But I will remember him (and miss him) as a friend whose memory I cherish and, above all, as a man of God who challenges me, even now, to get to know my Saviour better.

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