

# Newsletter 2015

## From the Chairman

Dear colleagues,

We live in most fascinating, uncertain and challenging times. With the decline of the Christian faith both in the established Churches and on the public square, Christians are slowly but surely realising that in Europe, the cultural and social impact of the Christian Church has insignificant. Many secular analysts have even concluded that Christianity, at least in Europe, actually belongs to the past.

With this new awareness, believers are learning what it means to be a minority in an ultramodern setting which is largely ignorant of and shows little sympathy towards the Christian heritage. Being a minority can be an asset, but it is essential to assume such a status and to plan and act accordingly. To be visible and have a significant impact on the cultural and social environment implies being coherent, consistent and convinced in one's thinking and action. It also means to be willing to question and evaluate the present consensus in the light of the Christian world- and life-view and to show how the latter bears on the private and public issues of our day. Nostalgia for the *'former glory'* of established Christianity will not do. Now is the time for realism, creative thinking and innovative action as one proclaims the good news of God's sovereign saving grace.

Many see Islam as the major challenge that confronts Europe today and especially the Christian Church. Indeed specific doctrines such as the doctrine of God, of the human being (man-woman relationships), of sin and redemption as well as the link between religion and society (politics, economy and culture) need to be addressed from a thoroughly biblical and theological point of view. The way one responds to such issues has major consequences for both our private and public lifestyles.

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Prof. Pierre Berthoud

FEET	Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians
GEET	Gemeinschaft Europäischer Evangelikaler Theologen
AETE	Association Européenne de Théologiens Évangéliques

Because of its global and universal claim, the aim of the Islamic faith is 'to convert the dress, the bodies, the relationships, the arts, the crèches, the schools, the songs, the culture...'

It is crucial for Christians to be aware of such an ambition and to respond respectfully to it in a thoughtful resolute and peaceful manner. More than humanism, the Christian faith has the means to counter in depth the Islamic world and life perspective. This is no doubt one of the reasons why Christians are often persecuted in Muslim countries. But we shouldn't minimise the secularisation of the European societies which goes hand in hand with the decline of Christianity. In fact, this is an even greater challenge for the Christian Church. As we all know, secularisation, since the Age of the Enlightenment, rhymes with a purely horizontal world and life view which at best relegates and confines religion to the private sphere. But as recent events and debates have shown, many are those who consider God and the supernatural world superfluous and unreal and therefore related to a speech-event and fiction. With the Muslims, the discussion begins with the question of the nature of God; with the majority of our contemporaries who are more or less influenced by the humanism of the present cultural climate, the question of the very

existence of God needs to be resolved before one can tackle such issues as the nature of God, the divine revelation and communication and the uniqueness of the Christ centred message of Scripture.

The theme of the next FEET Conference (2016) is *The Reformation, its Roots and its Legacy*. The emphasis is on how this unique and diverse theological and spiritual movement can contribute to the renaissance of the Christian faith in contemporary Europe. In a book that has just been translated into English, *A New Day of Small Beginnings* (Tallahassee, Florida 32308: Zurich Publishing, 2015), the French theologian Pierre Courthial, in a thought-provoking study of the law and the Gospel within a covenantal context, offers some vital theological clues to a proper understanding of the history and development of the Christian Church. With his emphasis on the whole council of the Lord, he highlights the relevance of the divine Word both written and incarnate and reminds us that such a Wisdom will only have a lasting impact if it sheds light on every aspect of human thought and existence, both private and public.

With my warm greetings in Christ Jesus,

Pierre Berthoud

## New Website

As Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) we are very happy with our new website: [www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/about-feet](http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/about-feet)

You will see that the site is largely dedicated to the *European Journal of Theology*, which we publish. We are grateful to our publishers for building this site for us. It presents all relevant information about the Journal, about projects and about the FEET conferences. New on the website in 2015 are monthly blog posts on current issues, see [www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/blog](http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/blog)

We also have a featured author for each issue and we hope that this will encourage you to come back to the site regularly.

## Conference Report

### 'Toward a Christian ethic in contemporary Europe'. The 2014 FEET-Afete conference in Paris

Six plenary lectures, seven workshops, three Bible studies, meetings of six discipline groups, exchanges between specialists and doctoral students filled this five day conference attended by 90 Evangelical theologians. The joint conference between FEET (Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians) and AFETE (Association Francophone Européenne de Théologiens Evangéliques) took place in Paris (29 August – 2 September 2014) and engaged the theological challenges for Christian ethics in present-day Europe.

contributing to all aspects of life, both private and public. This is the task to which the *Cape Town Commitment* (2010) calls the whole church to be engaged in. Some of the papers presented at the Conference will be published in the next issue of the *European Journal of Theology* (October 2015).

The FEET-AFETE conference was the first collaboration between the two associations and was an enriching experience for all. Yesterday's answers need to be constantly reviewed in the light of Scripture and in making every effort to stay in touch with the contemporary situation we face.

Leonardo De Chirico



Prof. Henri Blocher

Christian ethics cannot be reduced to a list of 'dos and don'ts', i.e. prescriptions and prohibitions. It needs to begin from God himself who is the Lord of creation and revelation and to study the different situations and hear the concerns of the world. The task of Christian ethics is to understand the modern worldview, its values and ways of thinking, recognizing its positive sides and contributions, and appreciating truth wherever it comes from. Yet the foundation of ethics is rooted in the very being of God who has revealed Himself. Christian ethics needs to grasp the current problems in the light of the whole of Scripture while applying a responsible hermeneutics which is faithful to the whole of God's Word.

Christian ethics is also the result of the integration between confession and commitment to action in



The Conference venue

## 'The Reformation: its Roots and its Legacy': Next FEET Conference in Lutherstadt Wittenberg August 26 - 30, 2016

In view of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, the FEET conference in August 2016 will be dedicated to this important event. We will gather in the Leucorea, the guest house and conference centre of the University of Wittenberg where Martin Luther taught and where he initiated the Reformation of the Church. This historically important site will give us the opportunity to visit places like the Schlosskirche, the City Church St. Marien, Luther's house, Melancthon's house and Cranach's house.

The conference theme focuses both on the theological foundation of the Reformation and on its present time legacy as well as the challenge the Reformation poses to the future of the Church.



Leading scholars will present the following papers:

- 'Guilt, shame and forgiveness: The crucial questions of life in the Perspective of Reformation Theology' (Prof. Christoph Raedel, Germany)
- 'Reformation and Denominationalism - Question of the unity of the Church' (Prof. Thomas Schirrmacher, Germany)
- 'Reformation, Freedom of conscience, and the advent of secularism' (Dr Paul Wells, France)
- 'The Reformation and the questions of authority and truth' (Prof. Andrew McGowan, Scotland)
- 'Reformation and Leadership in the Church' (Dr Bernhard Rothen, Switzerland)

In addition Prof. Christoph Stenschke will give the Bible studies. There will be workshops on aspects of the conference theme (music, arts, Islam, Judaism, education, missiology, historical-critical method), meetings which deal with the relevance of the Reformation for various parts of Europe, meetings with papers by conference participants, a meeting for doctoral students and on Sunday after worship a guided tour to museums and historical sites in Wittenberg.

The conference brochure will soon be available and can be obtained from any member of the FEET committee or downloaded from the website: [www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology](http://www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology)



London 2015:  
The FEET Committee  
when it planned  
the 2016 conference

## Evangelicalism in the Caucasus

Over the last couple of years I have undertaken seven trips to Georgia. This has been to work alongside the (episcopal) Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia and to support the IFES (International Fellowship of Evangelical Students) in the Caucasus. This involvement continues and develops.

Evangelicals in Georgia are a small minority: the Georgian Orthodox Church dominates the scene and (especially through the present Metropolitan Ilia) has a powerful political role. New Orthodox church buildings are 'popping up' everywhere; including in communities where no (or very few) Christians live: such as south western Ajara. Of the remaining groups (Catholics, Lutherans, etc.) the Evangelical Baptist Church is the largest and through its energetic and gifted leadership it has more influence than one would expect. In particular, it has had an effective and very public role in standing alongside other minority groups in Georgia. It has also had a prominent role in supporting those in poverty, internally displaced persons, the elderly and infirm through a number of practical initiatives. IFES is

active within the main universities and the graduates' network provides a strong supportive framework to those who often find themselves isolated after leaving university. However, it still tends to look for its funding outside of the country and it probably needs to develop further effective indigenous means of evangelism both in and beyond university.



There are few academically qualified evangelical theologians in the country and training programmes rudimentary. The Ilia Academy, where I teach, is one promising development. While it will depend for some time on a mix of local and visiting lecturers, it is seeking to develop a part-time programme of theological and spiritual formation that, in time, may become part of an accredited programme within one of the local universities.

It is to be hoped that, as this programme develops, it will provide the means to equip Georgian evangelicalism with well-equipped church leaders and to develop means by which it can generate its own theologians.

Dr Stephen P. Dray

## The Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus, Denmark

Those who once took the initiative to establish the Lutheran School of Theology in Aarhus (in German: Gemeindefakultät; in Danish: Menighedsfakultet, MF) acted in faith. They were convinced that God is a living reality. They set to work, even though they lacked political and economic support. They had a vision.

### *The first step*

On 13 September 1967, the 'Association for the establishment and operation of a Lutheran School of Theology in Denmark' was founded. It was a slow start with no money, without students, without much support from the priests and the laity in Denmark and without any support from the larger church organisations. A small group was behind the initiative. Their academic experience was limited, but they had one wish: a revival in and a renewal of the Danish State Church, and they were convinced that one of the ways to obtain this goal was an evangelical education of priests. They were of the opinion that faith knows about theology and theology knows about faith; there should be no separation between faith and theology.

### *The first period*

The first period saw intense discussions about the ways to achieve this goal. Would it be possible to create a complete faculty/school from the beginning or would it be better to start on a small scale with some courses? In the beginning of the 1970's the vision got strong support among young theological students. Many of them had taken part in the evangelical student-movement IFES. They wanted to serve the gospel and they began their theological studies, but the education at the university was a great disappointment. The separation of theory and practice and the all-dominant historical criticism meant that many theological students felt a great need for an alternative.



### *The first lectures*

It was a great day when the first lecture was given in September 1972. We borrowed facilities at the mission house Bethania in Aarhus. Pastor H.O. Okkels Herning lectured on the Lutheran confessional book *Confessio Augustana*, and a few students (now both teachers at the school) cared for the students' translation of the Latin texts. A bookcase with a few books served as library of the school. We had started.

### *The first teacher*

In the beginning the lectures were given by pastors from the Lutheran State Church. They were willing to help and gave a very talented theological teaching. However, the goal was to have full time teachers. They succeeded in 1973 with the appointment of Kai Kjaer-Hansen. He was a newly trained theologian from the University of Copenhagen. The students were proud because they now had their own well qualified teacher in the New Testament.

### *The first building*

At the same time there was a great desire to have our own premises. It was not possible to create a fruitful environment in a room where you came for only two hours once a week. But would it be economically and practically possible to have our own house? The situation was put to God in many prayers, and God heard the prayers. Suddenly it proved possible to buy an old parsonage. After a thorough renovation, the house was opened in the summer of the 1973 with words of King Solomon about the house which will be used for the glory of God.

The house swarmed with people. Many theological students wanted to join the fellowship, to sit in the reading room and attend classes. In the mid 70-s MF was endorsed by more than 100 students. It was therefore necessary to build a hut on the lawn in the garden. It was encouraging to have space problems!

There was also growing support from the church people in Denmark. At its tenth anniversary MF had approximately 5000 registered recipients of our newsletter. They were called 'friends' and they made great sacrifices. Because of their prayer and with their financial support, in the second half of the 70s MF was undergoing a rapid development. Among other things it meant a four-fold increase in the teaching staff.

### *The second building*

In a surprisingly short period of time the space became too narrow. Considerable efforts were put into finding an alternative to the house. Many buildings were inspected. But as one person later put it: God saved the best for last. There proved to be an unexpected opportunity to purchase a vacant and centrally located lot. In the course of a year, the current building was constructed. Thanks to formidable volunteer labour from friends and students, it was possible to inaugurate the large brick building (1628 m<sup>2</sup>) in 1982.

### *The first doctor*

The goal was to have the right to set our own exams. A prerequisite for this is that the teachers are fully trained scholars. The Board of the school therefore gave research a high priority. It was a milestone, when in November 1982 the first lecturer defended his doctoral thesis in Lund, Sweden. Now MF had its first doctor of divinity. The thesis was a study of the name of Jesus. It was prepared under primitive conditions with a typewriter, scissors, glue and a light box. That was before the computer age, but the thesis gained respect and recognition, although some complained that it was not defended at a Danish theological faculty.

Since then, most of the teachers at MF have been involved in various research projects in an effort to achieve a scholarly recognized qualification. At the moment several of the teachers have a PhD or DDiv or similar. From now on a theologian will not be employed if he or she does not have a doctoral degree.

### *Validation of the BA programme*

MF did not have its own education; instead, the students were enrolled at the faculty of theology at the University of Aarhus. They got most of their education at MF but they went to the university for their exams. Therefore the education at MF was complementary.

However, approximately 10 years ago, the curriculum at the university changed. It became an obligation for the students to attend the lectures at the university. This radically changed our opportunity to provide additional training. The considerations resulted in a decision to provide our own BA programme. After completing this, students could continue at the university to have a master's degree in theology.

In 2005 our four-year BA programme was approved by the University of Wales. This meant that the students formally were students at the University of Wales. They received a BA degree from the University of Wales, and with that they got admission to study at the Faculty of Theology in Aarhus for a master's degree in theology (two years of study).

Unfortunately the University of Wales got into trouble and the result has been that it has cancelled the agreement with MF. No doubt was expressed about the quality of our programme. Actually we went through the British quinquennial review in 2010 and the committee had no complaints. On the contrary, the programme was praised for its level of 'professionalism and commitment'. But the agreement with the University of Wales was terminated, because we teach in Danish. All the external examiners have been able to read and understand Danish, but the University wished to have more control over our programme. This was impossible and therefore they cancelled the agreement.

We very much regret this development because we have been happy to work with Wales, but God has paved the way for a valuable alternative. Our school has been included in the *Network for Education and Research in Europe* (GBFE = Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa). This Network works in cooperation with the University of South Africa (UNISA). As a result of this cooperation our school now offers a Bachelor Degree Programme (3½ years). The students continue at UNISA in a postgraduate programme, the Honours Bachelor Course (1 year, distance learning). In this way the

students are prepared for the Master's studies of Theology at the University in Aarhus, Denmark, or perhaps for a Master study at UNISA.

Finally, I want to mention that MF has entered into a partnership with several mission societies. This has given rise to an extension of our building. This cooperation is a source of daily joy and it is entirely consistent with the overriding objective of MF.

The school's website is  
<http://teologi.dk/om-mf/>

Peter V. Legarth

## II Colloquium of European Evangelical Theologians from Neo-Latin countries (2013)

Following the 2011 colloquium that was held at IFED in Padova (2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> June), a group of 14 people from various Southern European countries (Spain, France, Italy, and Romania) met at IBSTE-Facultad International de Teologia, Castelldefels, near Barcelona



(Spain) on 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> August 2013 for the second colloquium. Though engaged in Gospel work in different contexts, we all share the fact that our countries 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 face comparable challenges in theological work and church life, and we speak languages that have the

same Latin root. The colloquium was convened as an opportunity for on-going training, fellowship, and encouragement to be engaged theologically in our national contexts as well as in FEET.

We heard God's Word challenging us to understand the nature of the 'empire' in which

we live (Esther 1), which is a mixture of religious and secular idolatries. We learned to appreciate God's working his purposes in ways which are sometimes surprising, yet always real (1 Samuel 29). Also, we were challenged to learn from Jesus, the supreme teacher of God's word, as He shows us that the Bible speaks to every area of thought and life (Luke 24:13-35).



The theme of this year's colloquium was 'The Lausanne Legacy: looking in retrospect and looking ahead'. 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.

Jean-Paul Rempp, Lausanne International Deputy Director for Europe, gave two stimulating papers which highlighted the theological and missiological trajectory of Lausanne (1974), Manila (1989) and Cape Town (2010), and investigated the remarkable importance of the 2010 Cape Town Commitment in dealing with important issues of our day. The two papers provided a fruitful basis for discussion.

A general appreciative assessment of the Lausanne heritage was shared by all the participants. These texts witness to a great deal of fundamental Evangelical consensus on core Biblical truths. They are also the expression of the global Evangelical diversity which remarkably allow Evangelicals to speak with one voice on such important topics. Another comment was the importance of Lausanne in building a sense of historical belonging in the Evangelical tradition and a sense of unity in the global family of Evangelical Christians, even in the midst of secondary diversities. For countries where the Evangelical church is a minority, the beneficial effects of Lausanne have been important in defining and consolidating a sense of Evangelical identity.

Various comments underlined the importance of Lausanne for establishing a firm Biblical basis for cooperation, for overcoming the unbiblical dichotomy between proclamation and social responsibility, and for strengthening the Evangelical appreciation of mission as being a call to which every Christian and every church should respond.

Cape Town in particular can help our churches to widen our understanding of mission as embracing

the whole of life and not just a few selected 'religious' activities.

There was also a shared recognition that, with exceptions, we still struggle with the issue of reception of these texts. Although translated, these documents need to be known, assimilated, and appropriated by our constituencies. We still face the problem that Lausanne is not well-known and we have the responsibility to encourage a process of penetration of this heritage into the Evangelical mindset of our countries. Ideas that were suggested to address this need were the inclusion of the Lausanne texts in our courses, teaching and writing, as well as taking advantage of the approaching 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lausanne Covenant to organize special events and conferences to help our churches to appreciate it.

Possible critical areas emerging from The Cape Town Commitment were also discussed. First, the insistence on the 'missional' dimension of the whole of life may result in a loss of confidence in the power of the proclaimed Word and the ordinary means of grace. Secondly, the fact that the term 'evangelical' is not used in the document (although its presence is implicit) may result in the weakening of the term as an identity-marker in the global world. This is especially relevant for countries like ours where the dominant Christianity (i.e. Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy) is not evangelical and is in many respects alien to the gospel. Thirdly, there is a problem with the expression 'missio Dei' if it implies that God receives his mission from outside of Himself.

Another highlight of the colloquium was the country presentations in which we learned many details regarding the Gospel work and the theological landscape of the different countries which were represented.

These are the areas where the Colloquium might contribute in the future:

- developing a 'map' of existing theological colleges along various categories such as denomination, level, number of students and accreditation, as well as publications, journals, theological conferences, etc.
- focusing on theological issues to which we can contribute in distinctive ways such as Evangelicalism's relationship with both Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, the understanding of secularism, the danger of confusing the Gospel with a form of moralism, the development of tools to encourage civic and public engagement, the significance of the 500th centenary of the Reformation in order to appreciate the Gospel in a fresh way, and the exploration of Lausanne themes as they apply to our countries.

It was decided to have a third Colloquium in 2015 and a working group was formed in the persons of Leonardo De Chirico from Italy, Jaume Llenas (or José de Segovia) from Spain, Yannick Imbert (or Paul Wells) from France, and Veres Otniel (or Corneliu Simut) from Romania.



Dr Leonardo De Chirico

## List of participants

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## From the Committee of FEET

During the conference in Paris we said farewell to Dr Jamie Grant (Scotland), Dr Danail Ignatov (Bulgaria) and Dr Christoph Stenschke (Germany). We are grateful to them for all they did for Evangelical Theology in Europe. The business meeting elected two new members of Committee: Prof. Gert Kwakkel (Netherlands) and Rev. Stanislav Alexiev (Bulgaria); welcome both!

The other members of the Committee are:

Professor Pierre Berthoud (France), chair

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Professor Gert Kwakkel



Dr Klaus Bensel (secretary)

## European Journal of Theology

The European Journal of Theology (EJT) is now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year and going strong. Issue 24.1 (April 2015) contains eight articles and has a total of 100 pages. Swiss professor Jacob Thiessen writes in German on the Pauline concept of meekness or humility. The other articles are all in English with the usual summaries in German and French.

On the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his martyrdom, Czech professor Ján Liguš pays tribute to the great Czech reformer Jan Hus. Regular contributor professor Stenschke tackles Paul's collection for Jerusalem and his article is followed by the third and final instalment of Rüdiger Fuchs' rehabilitation of Ephesians as a Pauline letter. T.J. Marinello asks if historians can ever point to the hand of God in history while Ian Randall shows that C.H. Spurgeon was a lover of France. Justin Thacker from England uses Jesus' practice of table fellowship for a model of tolerance and Thomas Arabis discusses how Portuguese Christians struggle with the concepts of call and vocation. A series of trenchant book reviews brings the volume to a close.



Issue 24.2 will appear on October and contain some of the papers presented in Paris 2014. We would like to ask you to draw the journal to the attention of colleagues and friends, as well as librarians.

Details about subscription are here:

[www.four51.com/UI/Customer.aspx?autologonid=6bac7961-664c-4694-9f55-8d077ebfc780](http://www.four51.com/UI/Customer.aspx?autologonid=6bac7961-664c-4694-9f55-8d077ebfc780)

The editor of EJT is Dr Pieter J. Lalleman, [p.lalleman@spurgeons.ac.uk](mailto:p.lalleman@spurgeons.ac.uk)

Books for review can be sent to the reviews editor, Dr Joel White, [white@fthgiessen.de](mailto:white@fthgiessen.de)

We would like to review books from all over Europe. If you can review books for us, please also contact Dr White.

**'The Reformation: its Roots and its Legacy':  
Next FEET Conference in Lutherstadt Wittenberg  
August 26 - 30, 2016**

Conference venue: Leucorea, Collegienstr. 62, 06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany  
[www.leucorea.de](http://www.leucorea.de)