

NEWS LETTER

April 2024

Biennial FEET Conference on 'Evangelical Identity in Europe Today: Unity in Diversity'

This summer FEET will consider the state and the future of the Evangelical movement in Europe. The European Evangelical Alliance is close involved in the organisation of our conference and the Czech Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians is our local partner.

Where have we come from? How does our source of authority function? How do we relate to Orthodox Churches, to 'the world' and to populist movements? What can sociology tell us about ourselves? These and other questions will be addressed in the warm atmosphere of Hotel Olsanka, which also hosted us in 2018 and 2022.

Full details can be found here:

<https://feet-europe.org/conferences/2024-prague>. The early-bird prices run until May 31, so it is advisable to book before then.

There will also be the usual Bible readings, discipline groups, national groups and Sunday worship. In the discipline groups you could give a paper on your current research. We are looking forward to meeting you and each other! Please pray with us for a successful conference.



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Short Papers

At the conference we will be running parallel discipline groups in Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology, Church History, Practical Theology, Missiology, and Ethics and Apologetics (depending on numbers). We encourage you to give a short paper in one of these groups. If you would like to participate in this way, please contact Dr David Kramer (secretary@feet-europe.org) with the title of your proposed paper and an abstract. Further information will be given on <https://feet-europe.org>.

Editorial

When I received my first degree in theology, a feature of the ceremony was that the theological graduands received their awards last, after the students from all other subjects had received their own. This was deliberate. London University was, thereby, expressing the conviction of its founders that theology was the ‘queen’ of all the other disciplines.

Students of Abraham Kuyper and his disciples will know that this is an inadequate idea since theology inhabits, shapes and inspires all disciplines. Moreover, most contemporary theologising is expected to be undertaken within the framework of the humanities. A PhD in theology is now largely indistinguishable from one in, for example, history.

Recently, this has given me pause for thought. I have sought to remind myself that theology is, first and foremost, not an academic discipline but the pursuit of the knowledge of God. I have then asked myself the question, granted that I may seek to express my mature theological reflections (thus understood) in ‘academic’ language, what is the context in which ‘theology’ is first experienced and articulated?



Looking back over nearly seventy years as a Christian, I recognise that my own ‘theology’ and a primary source of my ‘theologising’ has often been sharing the life experiences and reflections of godly women and men. I am indebted to my father, Albert Harry Dray, and my first minister, Erfyl Jones. Then there are mentors and friends, ‘mothers and fathers in the faith’ such as Joyce Baldwin, Alec Motyer, Jim Packer and Donald Macleod.

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Each of them thought deeply about their experience of God and this, in turn, was outworked in (and sometimes stimulated by) their exegetical and theological endeavours; many of which I treasure. However, it was probably casual conversation in fellowship over a meal or some sort of beverage that reflected their knowledge of God that most shaped my thinking and, sometimes, theirs.

Fellowship with other voices from the past has also deeply shaped my own pursuit and experience of God. First, but not necessarily foremost, are hymnwriters and Christian poets. It is a platitude that many people learn their theology above all through what they sing. The biblical mysticism of the Welsh farmer's wife, Ann Griffiths, has deeply influenced me – as have the writings of Dora Greenwell, William Cowper, Amy Carmichael and others. Sometimes it is only a few words. John Greenleaf Whittier's verse about Jesus' experience have challenged me to recognise that awed fellowship with God is to be deeply affective and, sometimes, wordless. He wrote:

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

Other poets have the ability to put into a few words a profound truth that academic theology can discuss but never surpass. I have in mind, for example, Charles Wesley's words, "Tis mystery all, the Immortal dies!" This one phrase has shaped my experience of and theological reflection on the passion for many decades.

There are, of course, many other voices. In some respects, I live in fellowship with the community of past believers who passed on their experience and reflections. Many are deeply theological (in the profoundest sense) and some were magisterial works. I have in mind, for example, John of Damascus' An Exact Exposition of the Christian Faith and Calvin's Institutes and others. But their writings were often written in what we might describe as a non-theological way. They do not conform to the expectations of the modern academy for a scholarly work. As examples, I might cite Athanasius' Life of Antony, Augustine's Confessions, Luther's Table Talk, Samuel Rutherford's Letters, the Letters of Barsanuphius, John and Dorotheus of Gaza.... The list could continue almost endlessly. More recently, I might mention Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Letters from Prison. Most of these are what might be described as 'casual' writings. They were rarely intended to be (nor are they) theological treatises. However, in sharing their own reflected experiences, they have all proved a fertile source for theological discussion and reflection in the academy and, above all, for leading others into the presence of God.

Of course, all those named above were committed to the Bible as the place where they encountered the very words of God. They were also all people who used their minds. To quote Augustine, they were involved in the pursuit of 'faith seeking understanding'. But they never mistook work in the academy for the knowledge of God – for theology in its truest sense.

This is a reminder to me that, for all my

academic endeavours over many decades, it is the pursuit of God in Christ by his Spirit in the Scriptures that should be the motivation for such work – not least that I may share my encounters with others.

But where might I look for ‘theology’ today? It will, of course, be among crafted academic works. But, perhaps above all, it will be found in conversations with and among the casual writings of Christian sisters and brothers. Specifically in the present situation in Europe, I believe that it is and will be in the letters and occasional writings of our FEET brothers and sisters in Ukraine who are living

through the Russian invasion of their country.

Interestingly, it is other European conflicts that have been the anvil upon which refreshed theological experience and writing have emerged. I already mentioned Bonhoeffer, but the theologically renewing voices of Barth and Moltmann, children of the first and second world wars, also continue to chart the pathway to God for those of us living in the twenty-first century. I think this will be true of our sisters and brothers in Ukraine.

Revd Dr Stephen Dray
Billericay, England

Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might be interested in FEET.

Another conference:

International Conference on Theology and Leadership

The University of Lucerne and the Institute of Leadership and Social Ethics (ILSE) of the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium (ETF) are organizing a conference on the topic of Leadership and Theology in Lucerne on 19-21 June 2024. The question ‘What is the S/spirit of our leadership?’ will be central. More details from FEET-member Prof. Dr Jack Barentsen, jack.barentsen@etf.edu.

Please notify the secretary (and the publisher of EJT, if applicable) of any changes to your address. Please use the addresses secretary@feet-europe.org and subscriptions@aup.nl.

Members of FEET, please remember to pay your membership fees.

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An Interview with Dr Frank Hinkelmann

Frank Hinkelmann was born in Germany and grew up for some years as a missionary kid in Indonesia. He has now been living in Austria for 30 years. He is married with three adult children. The youngest one will graduate from school this summer.

Frank studied at the FTA in Giessen and specialised in church history at the Theological University of Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. In 2014 he completed his PhD at the Free University of Amsterdam, writing on the history of the Evangelical Movement in Austria after World War II. He has written numerous books and articles, some of them for the European Journal of Theology.

Frank says, 'I love gardening and for many years I have been specialising on growing tomatoes. One year, I grew 50 kinds of different size and colour – from white to purple! Altogether I have seeds of around 150 kinds.'

Frank, what is your current job?

All of my ministry life I've been involved with Operation Mobilisation in different leadership capacities. In 2017 I stepped down as European director and since then I'm an international associate for board development in OM. Another part of my time goes into the Evangelical Alliance. I'm currently the president of the European EA and vice chair of the International Council of the World Evangelical Alliance, while also offering ministry governance training (board development) within WEA. And lastly, I'm very much involved in research and theological training.



I'm the principal of Martin Bucer Seminary International with study hubs in Germany, Turkey, Switzerland and Albania as well as lecturer in church history at the Akademie für Kirche und Gesellschaft in Vienna; and I will join the doctoral school of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Aurel Vlaicu University in Arad, Romania. My area of research is the history of evangelicalism in Europe with special emphasis on Austria.

Tell us about the upcoming conference of FEET and EEA

The upcoming conference on evangelical identity in Europe is a joint venture between FEET and the European Evangelical Alliance. At a time when for the public and especially for media the term 'evangelical' seems to be more linked with political positions than with

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theological convictions, I believe we need to re-define what evangelical really means and this with a special focus on our European context.

Do you have a favourite theologian? A favourite theological book?

One of my favourite theologians is certainly John Stott, who has influenced global evangelicalism like no other person during the last century. One of my many favourite books is David Bosch's 'Transforming mission', and here especially the chapter where he speaks about the influence of the Enlightenment on Christian mission.

'I believe we need to re-define what evangelical really means.'

How is evangelical theology developing in Europe?

Especially in some of the Western European countries I've been concerned about what is called 'post-evangelicalism', a movement which wants to deconstruct traditional, and I would also say biblical positions, in order to be more cultural relevant. This movement seems to aggressively 'evangelise' for their convictions within the evangelical communities. They see themselves as cutting edge without noticing that the global evangelical movement doesn't even take note of them. At the same time I also observe a new generation of younger theologians coming up who strongly hold to traditional evangelical convictions – this is encouraging.

Could you review a book in the European Journal of Theology?

Do you want to recommend a book for review in the Journal?

Please contact the review editor, Professor Hans Burger, at the new address of

Hans.Burger@tuu.nl

An Interview with Jiří Bukovský



Dr Jiří Bukovský is a member of the FEET subcommittee responsible for the conference. Living in Prague, he is playing an essential role in our local contacts, practical issues connected to the venue and in the negotiations with the ESTEC, our service organisation.

Where did you study, Jiří?

I studied at the Charles University in Prague. I did my undergraduate and postgraduate studies in theology, philosophy, cultural anthropology and Middle Eastern studies.

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I spent one year at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. During my time as a PhD student, there were several shorter study stays in Heidelberg, Cambridge, Amsterdam and Bonn.

What is your current job/position?

I divide my time over two main jobs. First, I am one of the pastors in Křesťanské společenství Praha (Christian Fellowship Prague), which is a church that originated from a charismatic revival in a mainline Protestant church in the 1980s. Second, I am academic dean and tutor at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Prague. I teach mostly New Testament classes: Introduction to the NT, Historical Background of the NT and Biblical Interpretation. I am also involved in our mission programme where I teach the basics of cultural anthropology and biblical foundations for missions.

What are your interests in theology?

My main field of study was 1 Corinthians 12–14. This betrays my interest in pneumatology. As someone who grew up between the worlds of a very secular Czech society and devout charismatic Christianity, I developed an interest in religious experience and its role for theology. My research on 1 Corinthians presented an opportunity to explore questions which had intrigued me for a long time: What made those Greeks and Romans in ancient Corinth believe in a crucified Jew? What was happening at their gatherings? What role did their worship and experience play? It also led my attention to the questions of identity formation and cultural transformation.

I loved to study these questions with respect to the first Christians in Corinth, and I love to explore them in the context of today's secular European and Muslim cultures.

Where were you born, where have you lived and where do you live at the moment?

I was born in the beautiful, small, UNESCO heritage town of Kutná Hora in central Bohemia, Czech Republic. I still feel connected to this town, which I left for Prague to study at the Charles University, as I said. Since then, I have lived in Prague, with the exception of the study stays abroad that I already mentioned.

Have you always been a Christian? Can you tell us about your conversion?

All my parents, grandparents and great grandparents were devout Protestants. My grandfather was a pastor in the Moravian Church (Unitas Fratrum); my father and my uncle were also pastors. There was a strong element of Pietistic and later Pentecostal spirituality in the family. In this respect, I had all the information and good examples around.

My conversion moment came when I was around 12 years old. It happened after a church service. I was looking at the people there and felt strongly that they had something I still lacked. Back home, I asked my mother to pray with me. I still remember how light I felt when I stood up from that prayer.

There have been many other important moments in my walk with God and different struggles since, but there have been no huge periods of doubts or detours from the way I started in childhood.

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Do you have a family?

I have a great family but not my own. So far, I live, in this respect, as a good student of 1 Corinthians, according to Paul's recommendations of single life with the advantages and disadvantages it brings.

What are your hobbies?

My great hobby is the job and ministry I have. I take it as a privilege that I can make a living by doing theology, preaching, and by being involved in the church and in people's walk with God.

Also, I love the Middle East, especially the Persian language, culture and cuisine. When I have time, I like to travel and explore. I like mountains, historical places, culinary experiences, and time with good people.

'This connection of theology to church ministry ... shapes our theological thinking.'

Do you have any comments on how (evangelical) theology is developing in the Czech Republic?

I cannot offer more than a few personal thoughts on the development of theology in the Czech Republic.

The situation is much better than in the Communist period, when access to theological education was limited and global evangelical contacts were not accessible. There is now a number of evangelical theologians who can be partners in the dialogue with Catholic or mainline Protestant theologians. The number of theologically educated pastors has grown since the 90s.

On the other hand, the small number of Evangelicals makes it difficult to have full-time theologians. Nearly all evangelical theologians are also involved in church ministry, which brings them close to church life but hinders them to devote themselves deeper to research and academic work. It is hard to find anyone who has teaching or theology as a full-time job. This connection of theology to church ministry and the pressing awareness of the missional need of the church in our secular society shape our theological thinking.

It seems to me that Czech Evangelical theology is committed both to be faithful to the text of the Scripture and to translate its message into current cultural, societal and church context. In my view, Czech evangelical theology is ecumenically open, it prefers morality over doctrine, and it is missionally oriented.

We congratulate our daughter-organisation AfeT (Arbeitskreis für evangelikale Theologie, Germany) on reaching a membership of 200. If ever a daughter outgrew her parent, it is here. Many blessings for the future!

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Digital Conference on C. S. Lewis

November 2023 marked the 125th anniversary of the birth of C.S. Lewis (29 November 1898) and the 60th anniversary of his death (22 November 1963). FEET marked these anniversaries by organising a digital conference on the legacy and ongoing relevance of Lewis. The conference took place on 24-25 November and between 25-35 attendees appeared on the screen during the time we had together.

After a biographical sketch presented by Knut Kåre Kirkholm, the participants listened to interesting and engaging presentations on Lewis' works by Alister McGrath, Fabian Grassl and Pavel Hošek. On the Friday evening Professor McGrath, who has written a well-received biography on Lewis, gave an inspiring presentation on what we can learn from C.S. Lewis in the fields of apologetics, preaching and pedagogy.

On Saturday morning, Grassl and Hošek took a narrower approach and focused on selected works by Lewis. Grassl gave a presentation on *The Abolition of Man*, the book Lewis himself considered as his most important, a book that is very relevant in our time in which everybody seeks to form their own truth and identity. Hošek focused mainly on Lewis' most famous books, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and gave an engaging talk about how Lewis communicates by means of fiction.

One of the good outcomes of the Covid pandemic has been a more widespread use of digital platforms for hosting small conferences like this one. This situation allows us to gather people from all over Europe (and even the whole world). This time we even had a participant who was in Ecuador. Based on our experiences so far, the members of the FEET executive committee are hoping to offer more conferences like this in the future and we are open to suggestions of themes.

Knut Kåre Kirkholm

German Theological Literature Available

In Germany various theological libraries are closing. As a result, some German theological literature from 1950-1980 (such as ATD, NTD, etc.) is available. FEET has been asked to help find a new place for these books in Bible Schools, seminaries and Christian universities elsewhere in Europe. (The obvious presupposition is that staff and student in that place can read German.)

Please contact our secretary, Dr David Kramer, if you are interested: secretary@feet-europe.org

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Professor Burger

Warm congratulations to the book review editor of the European Journal of Theology, Dr Hans Burger, who in November became professor of systematic theology at the University of Kampen | Utrecht (a Dutch theological university moving from Kampen to Utrecht).

FEET currently has 98 members. Will you be the 100th member? That will win you a mention in the next newsletter!

European Journal of Theology Issue 33.1 (April 2024)

This issue of the European Journal of Theology opens with a contribution by Wolfgang Köhler, who shows how the theme of hardening the people's hearts is important in the various parts of the Book of Isaiah. Tracing how the theme develops, Köhler uncovers a cycle of sin – hardening – judgement – repentance. Jacob Thiessen suggests that there is a connection between Paul's Letter to the Romans and his speech in Miletus as recorded in Acts 20. In both these contemporaneous texts Paul sets out 'the whole counsel of God'. Thiessen also brings Isaiah into play when it comes to Paul's sense of call.

Christoph Stenschke takes a closer look at death and dying in the Book of Acts. Not only the Lord Jesus died and rose again; many others die as well, whereas others again are saved from death. Stenschke also brings out the contemporary relevance of the topic. Arjan Markus and Benno van den Toren propose a narrative rather than argumentative style of apologetics, for which C.S. Lewis serves as the model. Their reason for this choice is that modern people no longer see the relevance of Christianity.

In the editorial Stephen Dray calls on evangelical theologians to stay close to the values of the Church of the ages, not least because the Church Fathers already struggled with many of the same issues that we face. As usual the issue concludes with some book reviews, prepared under the responsibility of review editor Professor Hans Burger.

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Amsterdam University Press (AUP) is offering the Journal at a reduced price to subscribers in many countries. Do note that the advertised rate only applies to subscribers in Western and Northern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada; the reduced rate applies in the rest of the world!

After two years, all content of EJT becomes open access, see <https://www.aup-online.com/content/journals/09602720/>. This means that you can already read issue 31.1 (2022) for free.

Executive Committee

For the period 2022–2024 the members of the Executive Committee of FEET are:

Gert Kwakkel, Netherlands / France, chair; email chairman@feet-europe.org.

David Kramer, Germany, secretary; email secretary@feet-europe.org.

Gert F. Hain, Germany, treasurer; email treasurer@feet-europe.org.

Jiří Bukovský, Czech Republic

Leonardo De Chirico, Italy

Stephen P. Dray, England

Knut K. Kirkholm, Norway

Tatiana Kopaleishvili, Georgia

Pieter J. Lalleman, as editor of EJT

Roman Soloviy, Ukraine

McTair Wall, France

Our website is <https://feet-europe.org/>

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