

Newsletter 2011

A word from the chairman

Dear Colleagues,

One of the concerns that the new Executive Committee discussed during its recent meetings has been the promotion of the Fellowship. As the last Newsletter was published in 2005, it was decided that sharing some news and thoughts with the members and friends of FEET would be a good place to start. Among the items discussed and decided, I would like to mention four points:

- Fellowship is an important part of our biennial meetings. We want to encourage European evangelical theologians and delegates to further pursue contacts in between the conferences. The most obvious means are the newsletter, the website (www.feet-europe.net) and especially individual interaction. The committee also decided to suggest partnerships with both national and regional Fellowships in the organizing of joint conferences so as to further promote fellowship, contacts and theological exchanges.
- Academic excellence. The interdisciplinary character of the FEET conferences is an asset in emphasizing the coherence of Evangelical Theology, but leaves little time for in depth studies and reflection on specific subjects of common interest. It was therefore decided to introduce discipline groups at the 2012 Conference that will each meet three times. A call for papers will be included so as to give substance to the seminars.
- Networking. This involves the promoting of the vision and activities of FEET in different parts of Europe. In order to do so, some actions have been decided: the renewal of the website, preparation of a brochure posted as a PDF file on the website; extra copies of the European

Journal of Theology made available for

In this issue:

1. **A word from the chairman - Page 1**
2. **A report on the conference in Berlin (2010) – Page 2**
3. **The new secretary of FEET – Page 4**
4. **The origins and early history of FEET – Page 5**
5. **The Advisory Board – Page 6**
6. **Theological education in Germany and the FTH in Giessen – Page 9**
7. **The European Journal of Theology – Page 10**
8. **The 2012 conference – Page 12**

distribution; contacting both individuals and theological institutions in order to enhance communication and the circulation of information.

- The finances of FEET, though limited, have been well used over the years. However, our reserves have slowly but surely diminished due to the fact that we have given scholarships to individuals who wouldn't have been able to attend our conferences if we hadn't supported them. This means that FEET needs to find new subsidies and members in order to give momentum to the work of the Fellowship in the coming years.

As you can see, we have before us some significant challenges. We would like to invite you to take them up with us. Your thoughts, your suggestions, your contacts and your continued support are most

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welcome as we seek together to fulfil this God-given and vital ministry within secular Europe.

One last word. The next FEET conference will take place in Woltersdorf/Berlin, Germany, from August 24th to 28th, 2012 and will concentrate on the theme 'Beyond the Bible: moving from Scripture to Theology and Practice'. This topic places us within the scope of the hermeneutical circle. The focus is thus on hermeneutics, the method of interpretation and the application of God's Wisdom as it is revealed in the Scriptures. As evangelical theologians, how do we understand the reciprocal

interplay between hermeneutics, theology and exegesis and the practical consequences that follow in the application of the Word of the Lord? I venture to suggest that such a topic will encourage some strong, stimulating and fruitful discussions. We look forward to seeing you next year in Berlin.

With my warm greetings in Christ Jesus, our wisdom and lasting hope,

Pierre Berthoud
Professor emeritus
Chairman of FEET

Report on the 2010 Berlin conference: relevant theology in post-Christian Europe



The title of FEET's 18th conference was 'Evangelical theological interpretation within contemporary European culture'. Over fifty theologians, church leaders, pastors and theology students from fifteen countries all over Europe gathered in Woltersdorf, near Berlin, to discuss this issue. This year's conference saw participants gather from as far apart as Portugal in the west to Estonia in the east, from Scandinavia in the north to Portugal and the south of France. The aim of FEET, to encourage high quality scholarship from an evangelical theological perspective, was surely

realised at this conference. The various sessions of the conference reflected on the changing realities of contemporary Europe and the way in which these changes impact the study of theology in the modern context. For centuries European culture was determined by a Christian view of the world and humanity; these influences are on the way out and a new atheism and a new relativism struggle to take over.

The plenary sessions, with speakers from across the continent, applied the central theme to the various subject areas of the theological spectrum. **Dr Stefan Gustavsson**, director of the Credo Academy in Stockholm, contextualised the broad sweep of changing trends within today's European setting. He outlined the decline of church membership in the mainstream churches of Europe against the backdrop of the pervasive influence of secularism and agnosticism. Gustavsson made clear that the challenge faced by theologians today is to be able to speak effectively to a

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generation of Europeans who have little or no understanding of the biblical story.

The second plenary session was lead by **Dr Krish Kandiah**, the Executive Director of Churches in Mission which is a ministry of the Evangelical Alliance in the United Kingdom. Entitled 'Words and Worship: Revelation, Truth, Authority and Worship in Postmodern and Pluralistic Europe' this session further unpacked the changing values and perspective of today's Europeans. Kandiah's paper was published in the European Journal of Theology 20.1 (2011).

The Old Testament session was facilitated by **Dr Hetty Lalleman** of Spurgeon's College, London, and **Dr Jamie Grant** of Highland Theological College, Scotland. Their joint session discussed agendas for the interpretation of the Old Testament in a modern setting. Lalleman's presentation argued that the OT is more than just a story which readers can handle as they like. She discussed the importance of divine activity in historical reality; because of this the text has lasting and transformative meaning. Grant built on these reflections by seeking to advance a positive agenda for evangelical exegesis of the Old Testament text.



Dr I. Howard Marshall, Emeritus Professor of New Testament at the University of Aberdeen

and a former chairman of FEET, presented a stimulating paper regarding the interpretation of the New Testament text. He asked how one moves beyond the exegesis of the biblical text to its application in the contemporary setting. This paper sparked some fascinating discussion, so much so that the question and answer time was continued in the following session. Marshall mentioned hard issues such as slavery, the death penalty and eternal judgement. He argued that Jesus' harsh words about God's punishment of sinful humans should not be taken to mean that God is a torturer. An edited version of this paper has now also been published in the European Journal of Theology 20.1 (2011).

The final plenary paper was given by **Dr Johannes Reimer** from the Theological Seminary of the Free Evangelical Churches in Germany and UNISA (Pretoria). He addressed the challenges that are faced in bringing the Christian message to contemporary Europe. Mission cannot be individualistic or pietistic but needs to aim at the transformation of culture and society.

One of the highlights of the conference was the excursion to the city centre of Berlin. After a service in the main church, the participants were shown round in a coach by the Rev Axel Nielsen who pointed them to places with particular spiritual relevance. A visit to the Berlin City Mission was part of this.

Each morning Henri Blocher, emeritus professor of Systematic Theology and also a former chair of FFET, gave Bible readings encouraging the members of the Fellowship to hold fast to the purposes to which they have been called. Over and above these sessions, the participants had the opportunity to participate in seminars on Islam (Dr Ida Glaser, Oxford), family ethics

FEET *Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians*

(Pavel Raus, Prague) and missional hermeneutics (Dr Ove-Conrad Hannsen, Stavanger). A special meeting was held for doctoral students.

The bi-annual **business meeting** of FEET took place during the conference. Erling Lundeby (Norway), Dr Hetty Lalleman (Netherlands/UK) and Dr Pavel Černý (Czech Republic) were re-elected to the Fellowship's executive committee. At the same time, Dr Klaus Bensele (Germany) was newly elected to the executive as the Fellowship's secretary. The editor of the European Journal of Theology, Dr Pieter Lalleman, gave an account of its policies and asked for contributions from all over Europe in

the form of articles and book reviews. The chairman of FEET, Prof. Pierre Berthoud, Aix-en-Provence, opened and closed the conference with messages of encouragement and exhortation.

The conference was well-received by its participants who left with a fresh realisation of the importance of evangelical theology for the spiritual and social wholeness of the European continent.

(Based on the press release and on a report by Klaus Bensele in Evangelikale Theologie (Mitteilungen aus dem AfeT)

A new secretary!

At the FEET General meeting in 2010 Dr Klaus Bensele was elected as the new Secretary following Prof. Christoph Stenschke. In the following words he introduces himself:



'I was born in 1966 near Bremen in the north of Germany where I also grew up. After school I studied Theology at the Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel,

Switzerland. My doctoral studies in Geneva and at the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, Belgium, were completed with a dissertation in the area of New Testament studies on the topic "The Melchizedek typology in Hebrews 7:1-28. Its relationship to contemporary Melchizedek traditions and the principles of Jewish Scripture exegesis" in the year 2005.

I currently serve as pastor of the Baptist Church in Bergisch Gladbach (near Cologne) and as visiting teacher for New Testament at Forum Wiedenest, Biblisch-Theologische Akademie in Bergneustadt and at Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel, Switzerland. It is more than 10 years ago that I first attended a conference of the "Arbeitskreis für Evangelikale Theologie", the German branch of FEET, and I got much encouragement and challenging theological input by its seminars for doctoral students.

I appreciate FEET very much as an international theological network that gives the possibility of really necessary encounter and theological exchange in the area of evangelical scholarship.'

Klaus Bensele

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John Stott on the origins of FEET



The Rev Dr John R.W. Stott (1921-2011) was a leading theologian in the United Kingdom who in 2005 was ranked among the 100 most influential people in the world by Time Magazine. As we

begin to consider John Stott's legacy perhaps one of his major contributions has been to restore, in the world wide Church, confidence in the authority of God's Word and biblical preaching and teaching. As he emphasized the centrality of Evangelical truth he continually pleaded for unity and a godly Christian life both in the private sphere and the public square. He will be remembered for his outstanding undertakings in the following areas: biblical and theological scholarship, the training of a new generation of leaders, the growth of the local church, the building up of evangelicals in the historical Churches, missions by reconciling the preaching of the Gospel with social action and the creation of a strong and dynamic international movement of evangelicals as illustrated by the Lausanne III Congress which took place in Cape Town last year. The following lines show how much FEET owes to John Stott as it was during the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 that the idea of a European Fellowship began to form. We thank God for the extraordinary worldwide influence of John Stott's ministry, for his love of both truth and peace, for both the strength of his convictions and his graciousness and humility, and for his undivided commitment to the person and work of Jesus-Christ. "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the

outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hb.13.7-8).

The following article is based on notes which he prepared for his biographer Timothy Dudley-Smith, in 1998.

Pierre Berthoud

During the European Congress on Evangelism, held in Amsterdam in September 1971, some informal and unofficial meetings took place between evangelical Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed church leaders. 'It seems that,' I wrote on 9 September 1971 to a group of such leaders, 'with the growing unity of Europe, there is both a need and a desire to strengthen the ties between evangelicals in the European confessional churches which owe their origin to the Reformation. So we have decided to issue a Bulletin three or four times a year, in English and German. It is to be entitled Evangelical Confession, and its German title will be Bekenntnis Heute.' The letter went on to say that Prof. Peter Beyerhaus and I had been named joint editors, and that a team of editorial consultants was to be recruited. The first approached were Carl F. Wislöf (Norway), Pierre Courthial (France), Klaas Runia (Holland) and J. I. Packer (Britain). They all agreed to serve.

This seemed a promising beginning. Prof. Peter Beyerhaus and I kept in touch by correspondence between 1971 and 1974 but various obstacles blocked the path towards our proposed bulletin. We even considered at one point asking Christianity Today to publish a European edition which might fulfil the

FEET *Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians*

purposes we had in mind for Evangelical Confession. Bill Persson was also active behind the scenes in correspondence. There was a CEEC Europe group at the time. At one point Churchman was proposed instead of the Bulletin.

The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism concluded on 25th July 1974, and a meeting of some leaders of Europe's confessional churches was convened for July 25-26. It met at Aiglon College in Switzerland. John Stott was in the chair and the agenda included:

1. Our responsibility to the nation (JRWS);
2. Our responsibility in the church (Peter Beyerhaus);
3. Evangelical literature (Pierre Courthial);
4. Open discussion.

During this meeting it was decided to arrange a European Evangelical Theological Conference. A planning group was appointed and (according to the minutes) it was said that out of the conference 'could come a European Fellowship

of Evangelical Theologians'. Twenty were present at Aiglon College from eight European countries.

The first conference was held in September 1976. The topic was 'Modern Man and the kingdom of God'. FEET was duly constituted. The Advisory Council included Bishop Erling Utne (Norway), Prof. Henri Blocher (France), Prof. Peter Beyerhaus (Germany), Dr Klaus Bockmühl (Switzerland and Canada), José Grau (Spain) and John Stott. Prof. Klaas Runia (Holland) was chairman of the executive committee and Helmut Burckhardt (German) its secretary.

FEET was founded 'to promote evangelical theology in Europe in a spirit of loyalty to the Bible. By this it seeks to serve the renewal of theological thinking in our churches'.

Information supplied by Howard Marshall

Members of the Advisory Board present their vision



Dr Howard Marshall

FEET was established to be a means of encouraging evangelical scholars to help one another in what are sometimes lonely positions, exposed to attack or derision from those who think of them as obscurantists and do not take them seriously. That the situation is now very much better than it was is due in part to FEET, but the need for such mutual encouragement and fellowship still exists. Through its conferences, publications (the *European Journal of Theology*), and networking FEET continues to play a vital role in the maintenance and defence of evangelical Christianity in Europe and more widely.

*I. Howard Marshall
(Professor Emeritus of New Testament, University of Aberdeen,
Scotland)*

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Dr Gerald Bray

FEET is the only theological organisation linking Evangelicals across Europe. In a time of growing integration it is essential for us to develop a common agenda and help one another deal with the challenges and opportunities that this situation offers us.

Gerald Bray (Research professor for Samford University, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Alabama)



Dr Gerhard Maier

Die Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians dient seit vielen Jahren dem internationalen Austausch im Bereich des europäischen Protestantismus. Sie ist eines der wichtigsten Organe, die von biblisch orientierten Theologen geschaffen wurden. In meinen Augen hat sie darüber hinaus einen Vorzug, der nur selten zu finden ist: Sie gibt neben einem stimulierenden theologischen Austausch auch die Möglichkeit persönlicher Begegnung und glaubensstärkender Ermutigung.

Translation:

The Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians has served for many years the purpose of international encounter and exchange in the area of European Protestantism. It is one of the main institutions that were created by biblically-based theologians. In my eyes, it also has an advantage that is rarely found: In addition to a stimulating exchange it gives the possibility of personal contact and faith-strengthening encouragement.

Gerhard Maier (Retired Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg, Professor at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Leuven, Belgium, and at the Staatsunabhängige Theologische Hochschule Basel, Switzerland)



Dr Oskar Skarsaune

For me, the ideal I want to see realized in FEET is excellence in theological scholarship combined with wholehearted commitment to radical, life-changing discipleship in following Jesus our only Saviour.

Oskar Skarsaune (Professor at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Oslo, Norway)



Prof. Henri Blocher

FEET belongs to the legacy of John Stott - I remember the Lausanne Committee coffee break, with him (in Mexico City) when the decision was made to launch the enterprise - and, as this faithful servant has just left us, I add this motive of gratitude to him and to God: a crowning motive of thanks for his exceptional ministry. FEET has been a blessing in many ways. I highlight an aspect seldom mentioned: the education in discernment it fosters - steadfastness, even militancy, in the main tenets of the faith, under the authority of Scripture, and flexibility, mutual openness as we progress together towards the full stature of Christ.

Henri Blocher ("Doyen honoraire" of the Faculté Libre de Théologie Évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine, France)



Dr Pietro Bolognesi

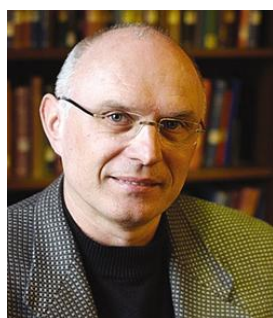
Because of FEET, evangelical theologians from South European countries can have a broader perspective in their work, a sense of fellowship and faithfulness in their concern, and a wiser approach in their contributions. They can also help European evangelical theology to understand better what it means to work as minority. It is a great privilege to be aware that evangelical theology has a strong tradition and living concern.

Pietro Bolognesi (Professor at Istituto di Formazione evangelica e documentazione, Padova)



Dr Peter Kuzmic

*Professor of World Missions, Gordon Conwell Seminary,
S. Hamilton, MA*



Dr Miroslav Volf

*Miroslav Volf, Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology, Yale University
Founding Director, Yale Center for Faith & Culture*

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Evangelical Theological Education in Germany, in particular at the Freie Theologische Hochschule in Giessen

In the last few years the county of Hessen in central Germany saw the recognition of several evangelical theological institutions by the government. In October 2008 the Hessen Department of Sciences and Arts recognised the Freie Theologische Hochschule (Free Theological Academy, FTH) as an institution offering BA and MA degrees. In February 2009 the Evangelische Hochschule (Evangelical Academy) Tabor in Marburg was recognised and in March of the same year the CMJV Academy in Kassel, which operates on a somewhat broader basis of faith, received government recognition. We see these successes as recognition of the contribution of evangelical Christians to the churches and to society at large.

The FTH clearly advertises itself as evangelical. The Hessen council for sciences (Wissenschaftsrat) acknowledged this, saying that 'in establishing the scholarly quality of research and teaching the specific character of Theology as a discipline should be considered. Other than the study of religion in general, the study of Theology has to consider the truth claims of religious statements. Faith is not merely an object but also a presupposition of research'.

The FTH aligns itself with the Apostles' Creed, the Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Alliance and the Lausanne Commitment. In addition it has a creed on the Scriptures which are regarded as trustworthy, infallible, life-giving and normative; the full text can be

found at www.fthgiessen.de. The accreditation of the FTH shows that evangelical theology does not need to compromise in order to be accepted at the level of higher education. In other countries this may not cause much surprise but in Germany it is a first, a major step forward.

To achieve this goal, evangelical theology built on the biblical insights of the Reformation, on the ethics and the defence of religious freedom of the Anabaptist movement, on the Puritan and pietistic heritage, and on the revival movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. All these roots were shown to be fruitful, provided they were based on the Scriptures. They constitute the missionary, ethical and church building energies of the world-wide evangelical movement.

Evangelical theologians in Germany must remember which type of theology reduced the membership of the national (Protestant) churches from 50 million to 25 million in just fifty years. It must remember how they withdrew from the public arena to mere edification, evangelism and fellowship, leaving scholarly theology to the university departments of theology in which demythologisation and existentialism reigned supreme, eroding the historical basis of the Christian faith. For a long time it seemed impossible to have validated evangelical colleges in Germany and many Germans studied in other countries. This is what makes the present recognitions so special.

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The evangelical movement now has some 450 million members, 1.2 million of them in Germany. It is a broad stream which needs the support of good theology. Although the FTH has its roots in the free churches and the pietistic movement, it aims to serve the entire evangelical constituency. It is able to offer high quality training in a way that small, separate groups can not. Because of the evangelical emphasis on mission, the vast majority of German-speaking missionaries are now graduates of evangelical colleges. As more and more countries require missionaries to have an

academic qualification, the recognition of the FTH and the other institutions is very useful. Another positive effect of the recognition is that the course at the FTH could be extended from four to five years (three years to the BA which includes the biblical languages, two more to the MA) and made entirely modular. The FTH hopes to increase the number of students to 200 in the near future.

Prof. Helge Stadelmann (abbreviated and edited by Pieter J. Lalleman)

The European Journal of Theology (EJT)

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

The European Journal of Theology is edited by Dr Pieter J. Lalleman, Spurgeon's College, London, and published by [AlphaGraphics \(UK\)](#) twice annually. Among the theological journals it is one of the cheapest. A unique feature of the Journal are the summaries of all articles and reviews in French, German and English. This journal should be in every theological library in Europe! The editor and the review editors are open to suggestions from the FEET community.

Issue 19.2 (October 2010) contained 62 double column pages of articles and 36 pages of book reviews; the following articles were published:

Pavel Cerny, 'The relationship between Theology and Missiology: the missiological hermeneutics'

Stephen N. Williams, 'Behind Nietzsche's anti-Christianity: Wagner, tragedy and the Greeks'

P.H.R. van Houwelingen, 'The authenticity of 2 Peter: problems and possible solutions'

Jochen Eber, 'From Basle into the world: The significance of the German Christian Society in Basle and her daughter societies for the rise of interest in protestant missions between 1785 and 1835'

Jake H. O'Connell, 'The reliability of the resurrection narratives'

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Ronald T. Michener, 'Face-to-face with Levinas: (Ev)angelical hospitality and (de)constructive ethics?'

Issue 20.1 (2011) consists of 69 pages of articles and 36 pages of book reviews; the articles are:

I. Howard Marshall, 'Evangelical New Testament interpretation within the contemporary culture'

Christoph Stenschke, 'Judaea in the First Century AD: A review of recent scholarly contributions and their implications'

W. Creighton Marlowe, 'The sin of Shinar (Genesis 11:4)'

Ed Mackenzie, 'The quest for the political Paul: assessing the apostle's approach to Empire'

John E. Colwell, 'Theology, piety and prayer: on the study of theology'

Patrick Nullens, 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer: a third way of Christian social engagement'

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The 2012 FEET Conference

FEETs next conference is already in preparation, as Prof Berthoud wrote in his chair's article. So far the following has been established:

Date: 24-28 August 2012

Place: once again Woltersdorf / Berlin, Germany

Theme: 'Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology and Practice'

Main papers:

1. *"Beyond the Bible - Within the Canon: Scripture as Canon in Evangelical Hermeneutics Past and Present"*
Dr. Richard Briggs (England)
2. *Reading the Old Testament as Christian Scripture?*
Dr. Tchavdar Hadjiev (Associate Regional Secretary of IFES Europe, Sofia, Bulgaria)
3. *Writing Scripture in First Century Judaism:
A case study of contextual Interpretation*
Roland Deines (Germany / UK)
4. *Can we still draw ethical principles from the Bible?*
Patrick Nullens (Belgium)
5. *The Bible, mission and contextualization*
Hannes Wiher (Switzerland)

6. *The New Atheism and the Bible: the apologetic challenge*
Yannick Imbert (France)

We encourage the giving of short papers (20 minutes) for the discipline groups on Old Testament, New Testament, Systematic Theology and Church History, Missiology, Ethics and Apologetics, and Practical Theology on any aspect of theological research (even if at an early stage of development) or interest in one of these disciplines. If you would like to participate in this way, please contact Klaus Bense (KLBense@aol.com) before 31.05.2012 with the title of your proposed paper and a short abstract.

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In order to send the next newsletter electronically we would appreciate very much if you tell us your e-mail address.

Look for further information at the FEET website: www.feet-europe.net

There you find the FEET Constitution. On the website also the application form for membership is available. We ask our members to renew their membership every two years.