

Newsletter 2016

From the Chairman

Dear colleagues,

The next FEET Conference, entitled ***The Reformation: its Theology and Legacy***, will take place in Wittenberg from the 26th to the 30th of August 2016, just a few months ahead of the 2017 festivities commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, symbolized by the ninety-five theses – *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*¹ – it is believed that Martin Luther posted on the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg on the 31st of October 1517. Having an early conference will enable us to publish a book (Wipf and Stock Publishers), including the five main papers and the eight articles corresponding to the different workshops. The book is scheduled to be distributed as early as possible in 2017.

It is our hope and prayer that the Conferences, Colloquiums, Symposiums, etc. organized on the occasion of this major event will contribute to a renewed appreciation of the roots, the theology, the spirituality and the legacy of the Reformation. Indeed it represents one of the major moments of the creative renaissance of the Christian faith in the history of the Church and western culture. As we witness, in the midst of the present crisis, the dramatic consequences of secularization, the religious and political challenges posed by Islam and the contribution of ultra-modernity to the rise and development of neo-paganism, we are convinced that the depth of the worldview and message of the Reformation, as it is rooted in Scripture and the Apostolic faith, are both pertinent and relevant within our global village and especially within the European cultural environments.

My wife and I were given the opportunity of spending almost the whole of the month of March in Asia. We were

¹ Written in Latin the original title is *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*.

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Prof. Pierre Berthoud

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

able to visit and minister in Indonesia, China and South Korea. Once again, what amazed us and challenged us were the doctrinal solidity, the vitality and the dynamic growth of the Churches which have benefited from the heritage of the Reformation. The contrast with the state of the Christian faith in our part of the world is striking. Of course, we do not deny the positive impact that Evangelism and Church planting projects have had on the growth of the Church in Europe, especially in Evangelical and Pentecostal circles, but what we have witnessed in these parts of Asia far exceeds what we can experience today on the Old Continent.

We were most impressed by what we saw in China. I had the privilege of giving an intensive course to 60 students who are ministering in both Registered and House Churches and often work together in different regions of China for the furthering of the Kingdom of Christ. The Director of the Seminary had asked me to address the following topic: *The Historical and Cultural European Contexts of the Christian Faith, Especially since the Reformation, with Reference to the Specific Case of France*. This shows a real desire to understand and to learn from the rise and the waning of the historical influence of the Christian faith on society and culture in Europe.

The majority of the students who followed the course had university degrees in other disciplines. They were alert and eager to learn; they welcomed an in depth study of Christian doctrine seeking to grasp its practical implications for both themselves and the life of the Churches; they showed genuine motivation and dedication as they minister to their congregations and are involved in planting new Churches. Some of them have left important professional positions in order to commit themselves to full-time ministry. They identified materialism, secularization of society and superstition as some of the major obstacles to faith and maturity. They were aware of the potential dangers the Churches face within a political and ideological environment that has little sympathy for the Christian faith.

Though there is a degree of religious freedom in China, the authorities remain well informed on the life of the Churches and Institutions.

Christians are tolerated as long as they create no public unrest. The rapid growth of the Churches over the last decades has created some concern among those who govern the country. It is estimated that there are between 100 and 120 million Christians in China, roughly 10% of the population. In the eyes of some this significant number represents a possible threat and citizen counter-power to the present government.

Above all, we were moved by the fervour and faith of the believers we met. They were dedicated to praise and prayer. Every morning of the week the community would assemble at 5:30am, except on Sunday (10:30am), to worship the triune God, to listen to the meditation of his Word and to call upon his Name. All were convinced that the growth and the edification of the Church in China and abroad was an answer to prayer. The Lords' loving and holy grace transformed the minds and hearts of many. The Chinese believers have made their own the pressing invitation of Paul when he says:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, my words may be given to me so that I will boldly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it convincingly, as I should. (Eph. 6:18-20).

As we strive for the renaissance of the Christian faith and theology in Europe, may we be encouraged by the example of the Chinese believers who, sensitive to the appeal of Paul, pray with perseverance and proclaim clearly, boldly and convincingly the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ to our contemporaries. We will not be disappointed!

With my warm greetings in Christ Jesus,

Pierre Berthoud
Professor Emeritus, FJC
Chairman of FEET

Pourquoi je prie pour Paris et pour la France²

Je commence par la raison la plus personnelle : je prie pour Paris et pour la France *parce-que je les aime et parce que je veux qu'ils continuent d'exister*. J'aime les parisiens, j'aime les français en général, j'aime la langue française. C'est un amour qui ne peut s'expliquer par les qualités ou les défauts de son objet, un amour qui – comme tout amour – veut le bien de l'être aimé. Cela ne veut pas dire que tout chez les parisiens ou les français me plaît (d'ailleurs Paris n'est pas la France, comme on le sait), car aimer et trouver à son goût, en partie ou totalement, sont deux choses différentes. Quiconque a vécu à Paris ou près de Paris sait que c'est une ville particulière, à l'atmosphère unique ; qu'il n'y en a pas d'autre comme elle et il n'y en aura jamais. Cette ville souvent donnée en exemple comme étalon de laïcité, de mode dernier cri et de corruption morale peut en même temps parler de la dimension éternelle, intemporelle, transcendante de la vie ; une ville dont la beauté, selon le père Alexandre Schmemmann, n'est pas « autosuffisante » et « triomphaliste » comme celle de Rome, mais telle « que seule peut être la beauté en ce monde où le Christ a vécu ».³ C'est pour cette ville que je prie et que je continuerai de prier, comme pour le pays dont elle est la capitale et qu'on a jadis appelé – à tort ou à raison – « la fille aînée de l'Eglise ».

Deuxièmement, je prie pour Paris et pour la France parce que *chaque ville et ses habitants, chaque pays et son peuple ont besoin de prière et de protection céleste*. En ce moment Paris et la France ont particulièrement grand besoin de prière non seulement pour recevoir de l'aide d'en haut dans la lutte contre le terrorisme, mais aussi pour entendre ce que l'événement du 13.11 leur « dit » ; pour que leurs oreilles s'ouvrent et qu'ils entendent. Et pour qu'au moins un petit nombre de personnes appelle du fond du cœur Celui qui parle par ces événements et

qui ne s'est d'ailleurs jamais tu. Ce qu'il leur dirait serait probablement proche du message entendu par d'autres qui, dans des circonstances similaires, ont eu des oreilles pour écouter : que ne peut s'attendre à une protection durable et forte de sa part un peuple qui ne le cherche pas et qui le nie. Que le mal commence à triompher dans une civilisation, un pays ou une ville quand *le bien* en est banni, quand nous lui avons tourné le dos et lui avons dit : « Nous ne voulons plus de toi, va-t'en de chez nous ! ».

Troisièmement, je prie pour Paris et pour la France, pour les parisiens et pour le reste des français *parce qu'il n'y a pas de force plus puissante sur terre que la force de la prière* et les exemples qui le confirment sont multiples – dans l'Écriture, dans la Tradition et dans le quotidien de chaque enfant de Dieu. Certains peuvent nous dire que la force ultime est dans les armées et dans les armes (ce n'est pas un argument pour ne pas en avoir), d'autres seront plus enclins à affirmer que nous sommes impuissants contre le mal lorsqu'il nous cerne de toutes parts (oui, nous sommes vulnérables, cela a toujours été, plus ou moins), mais l'expérience chrétienne nous montre que la prière va toujours au-delà des limites des moyens humains et des possibilités humaines ; que la chute des civilisations, des pays et des peuples se déclenche quand ils érigent en culte leur propres forces et capacités. Et oublient leur Créateur.

Ni Paris, ni la France ne seront jamais sauvés par *cette sorte de tolérance que prônent habituellement les politiciens et les médias*, arborée comme un contrepoint laïc à l'islam radical et à laquelle ils se vouent. C'est précisément cette « tolérance » nouvellement fabriquée qui a sapé les fondements chrétiens de notre civilisation – au point qu'elle ne sait plus ce qu'elle est. Paris et la France seront sauvés – si Dieu le veut – par la miséricorde divine et par les prières de l'Eglise céleste triomphante et de l'Eglise terrestre errante, à laquelle, j'espère, nous appartenons aussi, nous qui en ces jours prions pour Paris et pour la France.

Kalin Mikhaïlov, 20 novembre 2015

² Le texte original de l'article a paru dans la revue *Christianisme et culture* [Khristianstvo i kultura], Sofia, éd. Communitas, 9 (2015) pp.5–6. La version française du texte est faite par Daniel Ignatov et Svetlina Ignatova.

³ Voir Alexandre Schmemmann, *Journal (1973 - 1983), Paris: Éditions des Syrtes, 2009 (traduction du russe par Anne Davidenkoff) p.73.*

Why I pray for Paris and France

I begin with the more personal reason: I pray for France and Paris because I love them and because I want them to continue to exist. I love the Parisians, I love the French in general and I love the French language. It is a love that cannot be explained by the qualities or defects of its object, a love which – like all love – desires the good of the beloved. This does not mean that I like everything about the Parisians or the French. (Besides, Paris is not France, as we all know.) To love and to appreciate, partly or fully, are two different things.

Anyone who has lived in or near Paris knows that it is a unique city, with a unique atmosphere; there is no other like it and there never will be. This city is often presented as the archetype of secularism, trendy fashion and moral corruption. Yet it can simultaneously speak of the eternal dimension, timelessness, transcendence of life. The beauty of this town, according to Father Alexander Schmemmann, is not 'self-sufficient' and 'triumphalist' like that of Rome, but such 'as beauty can only be in this world where Christ lived'. It is for this city that I pray and that I will continue to pray, as for the country of which it is the capital city, which was once called – rightly or wrongly so – 'the eldest daughter of the Church'.

Secondly, I pray for France and Paris because each city and its inhabitants, each country and its people need prayer and heavenly protection. At this moment Paris and France have a particularly great need for prayer, not only to receive help from above in the fight against terrorism, but also to hear what the event of November 13 might have to say to them. We pray that their ears will open and that they will hear. And that at least a few people will call from the heart to the one who speaks through these events. What he might say could be close to the message heard by others who, in similar circumstances, had ears to hear: that a people who do not search him and deny him cannot expect

sustainable and strong protection from him; that evil begins to triumph in a civilization, country or city when goodness is banned, when we turn our backs and say to him, 'We do not want you any more, go away from us!'

Thirdly, I pray for Paris and for France for the Parisians and other French people because there is no more powerful force on earth than the power of prayer. Many examples confirm this: in the Scriptures, in tradition and in the everyday life of every child of God. Some may say that the ultimate strength is in armies and weapons (this is not an argument for not having them); others are more likely to say that we are powerless against evil as we are hedged in (yes, we are vulnerable, as always); but the Christian experience shows us that prayer always goes beyond the limits of human resources and human potential; that the fall of civilizations, countries and peoples occurs when they worship their own strengths and abilities – and forget their creator.

Neither Paris nor France will be saved by the kind of tolerance that is usually advocated by the politicians and the media, raised as a secular counterpoint to radical Islam and to which they are dedicated. It is precisely this modern 'tolerance' that has undermined the Christian foundations of our civilization – to the point that it no longer knows what it is. Paris and France will be saved – God willing – by the mercy of God and the prayers of the Church triumphant in heaven and the wandering Church on earth, to which, I hope, we also belong, we who are praying for Paris and France.

Kalin Mikhaïlov, 20 November 2015

Editor: We now also pray for the people of Bruxelles and of Belgium more generally.

The European Journal of Theology

Can I please encourage you to take a look at the website of our Journal,
www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology ?

You will see that the site contains some exciting new features: there is a monthly blog, an introduction to the current issue, and a featured author.

A recent featured author, Professor Roland Deines, wrote the following commendation:

The *EJT* is an undervalued treasure trove, offering fresh evangelical contributions to theological, biblical and pastoral issues. Authors from around the world, often from countries or ecclesial contexts under-represented in theological debates, reward the careful reader with challenging new insights, frequently from fresh perspectives. The journal offers perceptive comments on research and ecclesial developments beyond the academic and ecumenical mainstream without ignoring or side-lining it. The review section – which regularly includes profound engagement with recent work, additional resources and helpful guidance – is especially recommendable.

With articles written in English, German and French, with rather detailed summaries provided in each of the other languages, *EJT* is truly international, devoted to the needs of the worldwide mission of the church and unashamedly faithful to an orthodox understanding of the gospel.

I would certainly like to see this fine journal receive the attention it deserves.

Professor Roland Deines,
University of Nottingham



You can help to fulfil Deines' desire and give *EJT* the attention it deserves! As a member of FEET you can receive the *EJT* as part of your membership. Please also ask your institutional library and your colleagues to subscribe to the Journal. And we look forward to publishing *your* article or book review.

Pieter J. Lalleman, editor

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The 2016 FEET Conference

This year's FEET conference is fast approaching and if you have not yet registered, I would encourage you to do so without delay. Our theme this year is a bit of a coup because we will be reflecting on the 1517 Reformation a year before its 500th anniversary! This will enable us to turn the conference papers into a book which can be published early in 2017.

As always, we have speakers from various European countries: Germany, France/UK, Scotland and Switzerland. In addition to the plenary sessions, we will hear presentations on the effects of the Reformation in different parts of Europe such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scandinavia [sorry to lump them together], Spain and Ukraine.

There are no fewer than eight workshops, and the discipline groups (OT, NT, Doctrine etc.) will meet once. There is still an opportunity in some discipline groups for a paper by conference participants in the field of their own research; if you are interested, please contact our secretary Dr Klaus Bensel.

On the Sunday there is ample opportunity to see the city of Wittenberg where Martin Luther lived, worked and put his 95 theses up for discussion.



Market square and City Church, Lutherstadt Wittenberg

Above all, we will have Bible readings by Prof. Christoph Stenschke, common worship and fellowship across borders and denominations!



Castle Church (« Schlosskirche »)

The details:

Date: 26-30 August 2016

Place: LEUCOREA, Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Germany
www.leucorea.de

Further details and the registration form can be found on our website
www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/conference-2016-introduction

See you in Wittenberg! On behalf of the FEET committee,

Pieter J. Lalleman

Luther Tour plus

Immediately after the FEET conference we offer a Luther Tour to Erfurt and Eisenach for two days. These two Thuringian cities are next to Wittenberg the most prominent Lutheran sites. In 1501 Martin Luther came to Erfurt where he studied at the university and received a doctorate degree (1509), he became a priest at Erfurt Cathedral (1507), from 1505-1511 he lived in the Augustinian Monastery.

Eisenach played an important role twice in Luther's lifetime. From 1498 to 1501 he attended the St. George's Latin school in Eisenach. In 1521 and 1522 Luther was hidden by Frederick the Wise at Wartburg castle on the outskirts of Eisenach to protect him from the Imperial ban. During that time Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German, which was an important step for the enforcement and the spread of the German Reformation.

The Luther tour will visit on Tuesday afternoon and evening the city centre of Erfurt, the Evangelical Monastery of St Augustine's, the University and the Cathedrale. We will stay overnight in the guest house of the Monastery of St. Augustine's.

On Wednesday morning we will drive to Eisenach and visit the Wartburg Castle. We will have lunch in the Castle Kitchen, and afterwards we will visit the Luther House and the Bach House, where the great musician Johann Sebastian Bach was born in 1685 und grew up for the first 10 years of his life.

The Luther tour will end on August 31, at 6 p.m. in Eisenach, but we offer for those who need the return to Wittenberg a transport to that place.

Costs of this tour: app. 120 €

Those who are interested in the Luther tour, please contact Klaus Bensel (KLBensel@aol.com) before June 30, 2016.



Christoph Raedel speaker at the FEET conference

The first main paper at the FEET conference in Lutherstadt Wittenberg will be given by Prof. Christoph Raedel. He will speak on the topic "Guilt, Shame and Forgiveness: The Crucial Questions of Life in the Perspective of Reformation Theology".

Here is a brief introduction. The 44-year-old Methodist theologian has been Professor for Systematic Theology and History of Theology at the „Freie Theologische Hochschule Giessen“ (Germany) since 2014, after teaching at the YMCA University of Applied Sciences in Kassel (Germany) for several years with the main focus on Ecumenical Theology.

Prof. Raedel studied Theology in Rostock, Halle (Saale), Cambridge and Reutlingen. In 2002 he received his doctorate from the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg for his PhD thesis on „*Methodistische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert*“.

His priorities in research are:

- Methodist theology within the horizon of ecumenism
- The importance of the Bible in ethical judgments
- Christian peace ethics
- Ethics of gender, gender theories, importance of family
- Free church denominations



Some of his book titles:

- *Methodistische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert. Der deutschsprachige Zweig der Bischöflichen Methodistenkirche* (2004)
- *Von der Weisheit des Glaubens. Jean Frédéric Bettex als christlicher Apologet* (2006)
- „*Mitarbeiter der Wahrheit*“ – Christuszeugnis und Relativismuskritik bei Joseph Ratzinger/Benedikt XVI. aus evangelischer Sicht (2013)
- *Gender Mainstreaming. Auflösung der Geschlechter?* (2014)

His essay "Christliche Identität und neue Schöpfung. Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum der kirchlichen Homosexualitätsdiskussion" appeared in the *European Journal of Theology* 24.2 (2015).

Since 2013 Raedel is also the chairman of the German Fellowship of Evangelical Theology (Arbeitskreis für evangelikale Theologie), which is in close partnership with FEET. Besides, he is chair of the "Free Church Study Society" (Verein für Freikirchenforschung). Christoph Raedel is married with four children.

Some developments in the Netherlands

1. God and the Church down

A major survey, published in March 2016, shows that faith in God is disappearing fast from society in the Netherlands. This scholarly survey is carried out roughly every ten years and this time it covered some 2100 persons.

The Dutch evidently no longer form a Christian nation: both church attendance and belief in a

personal God continue to decline. A vast majority (82 percent) of the population never or hardly ever attend church and only 14 percent of the Dutch believe in a personal God. The number of self-declared atheists has risen sharply over the last ten years.

Here are some of the figures:

Church membership %

	1966	1979	1996	2006	2016
Roman Catholic Church	35	29	21	16	11,7
PKN (main Protestant Church)*	25	22	19	14	8,6
Other Protestants	7	6	7	4	4,2
Other churches and religions				5	7,7
None	33	43	53	61	67,8

* Originated in 2004 when three Protestant churches merged

Church attendance %

	1966	1979	1996	2006	2016
regularly	50	31	21	16	12
occasionally	7	13	13	14	6
very rarely	8	16	26	23	23
never	35	40	40	47	59

Belief in God / a god

	1966	1979	1996	2006	2016
theists	47	33	24	24	14
'there must be something'	31	40	39	36	28
agnostics	16	18	27	26	34
atheists	6	9	10	14	24

2. Departments of theology

The main Protestant Church (PKN) has reviewed the training of its ministers. Whereas so far this training took place in Kampen, Leiden and Utrecht, it has now moved to Groningen and the Free University of Amsterdam. This sea change has meant the closure of one of the theological universities in Kampen, where another remains. As before, it is a require-

ment that candidates know the biblical languages Greek and Hebrew before they start their studies and that they achieve a master's degree before they can be ordained.

In recent years the historical departments of theology in the Universities of Leiden and Utrecht

have announced their closure. Earlier the Municipal University of Amsterdam had wound up its department of theology. On the other hand, the Free University of Amsterdam has attracted not only the ministerial training of the PKN but also that of some smaller churches such as the Baptists, and the training of imams. The Free University is also home to the Herman Bavinck Center for Reformed and Evangelical Theology (HBCRET), which originated in 2015 and incorporates the former Centre of Evangelical and Reformation Theology, on which see 'Dutch Evangelical Trends and their Significance: A critical review article' by Patrick Nullens and Ronald T. Michener in *EJT* 23.2 (2014), and of which the website is

www.godgeleerdheid.vu.nl/nl/onderzoek/instituten-en-centra/herman-bavinck-center-for-reformed-and-evangelical-theology/index.aspx.

Moreover, the International Baptist Theological Seminary has moved from Prague (Czech Republic) to the campus of the Free University.

In the meantime, the small theological universities in Kampen (the remaining one) and Apeldoorn are involved in discussions about a merger. Kampen trains ministers for the *Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt* whereas Apeldoorn has this role for the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*. A third party is also involved, the smaller *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, and the involvement of the most orthodox part of the PKN is being investigated. If the plans go ahead, Utrecht is in the picture to host the new institution.

As before, a good number of Dutch people also study at the Evangelische Theologisch Faculteit in Heverlee/Leuven, Belgium.

Pieter J. Lalleman

Italian Evangelical theologian Pietro Bognesi honoured with a festschrift

Being an evangelical theologian in a minority context like Italy brings unique challenges and opportunities. It is therefore of particular significance to see a festschrift dedicated to Pietro Bognesi on the occasion of his 70th birthday. Since 1975 Bognesi has been a major reference point for evangelical theology in the country, being involved in teaching in various institutions, founding the journal *Studi di teologia* in 1978 and editing it up to 2002. He published important works on historical and systematic theology in the fields of Reformed orthodoxy, promoted evangelical thought at various academic levels, and resourced the church with more devotional books on Christian discipleship. Combining a theological mind and a pastoral heart, Bognesi has worked hard to encourage evangelicals to be a people of the Book as

well as a people rooted in history, a people with a firm identity and capable of dialoguing with the world.

The festschrift is entitled *The Courage of Truth* and contains numerous messages by academic authorities (including the Rector of the University of Padova and the President of the Catholic seminary) and ecclesiastical spokespersons from various evangelical churches and institutions. Four scholarly chapters offer insights on Bognesi's theology of discipleship, his ecclesiology and his contributions to consolidate evangelical theology in Italy. A bibliography of his writings gives an idea of the breadth and the quality of his work. *The Courage of Truth* is a small token of gratitude for a life-long commitment to evangelical theology in a country where evangelicals are still marginalized or considered as a cult.

In a message published in the volume, Pierre Berthoud, chairman of FEET, writes that Bolognesi has been attending FEET conferences since 1976, always in the accompany of younger Italian theologians, thereby encouraging them to be connected to the wider theological scene. He has published various papers given at FEET conferences on the journal *Studi di teologia* and always offered his contributions to the work of the Fellowship.

In memoriam

This brief report is also a welcome opportunity to honour the memory of other two Southern European theologians who recently passed away after serving the cause of evangelical theology in Spain and Italy respectively: José Grau (1931-2014) and Ronald Diprose (1944-2015), both long term friends of FEET. 'Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith' (Hebrews 13:7).

Leonardo De Chirico

New book offers fresh evangelical analysis of present-day Roman Catholicism

Since the time of Gerrit Berkouwer's *The Conflict with Rome* (1948) and Loraine Boettner's *Roman Catholicism* (1962), evangelical theology has been lacking a thorough assessment of Roman Catholicism that penetrates the real theological issues at stake. There has been little work on the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), and many evangelicals don't have the tools to grasp theologically what happened then and how it has been impacting the Roman Church since. Growing numbers of people are impressed by the 'aggiornamento' (update of language and expressions without substantial change) that is taking place in Rome and are asking whether or not the Reformation is definitely over. Most of these analyses are based on a pick-and-choose approach to Roman Catholicism. Bits of its theology, fragments of its practice, pieces of its history, and sectors of its universe are considered as representing the whole of Roman Catholicism. But when the big picture of the Roman Catholic theological cathedral is lost, interpretations become superficial and patchy.

Professor Allison's new book is good news to all those who have long desired a reliable theological

guide in dealing with Roman Catholicism.⁴ Based on a painstaking analysis of the 1992 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, it covers the all-embracing trajectory of Roman Catholic theology and practice. Instead of juxtaposing ephemeral impressions and disconnected data, Allison provides a theological framework that accounts for the complexity of the Roman Catholic system and its dynamic unity.

The picture that comes out is different from what Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom presented in their 2005 *Is The Reformation Over?*⁵. In that book, Noll and Nystrom argued that 'evangelicals can embrace at least two-thirds' of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Later they admit that when the *Catechism* speaks of Christ, it interweaves him to the Church to the point of making them one, which is unacceptable for evangelicals who consider the

⁴ Gregg R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 496 pages, ISBN 978-1-4335-0116-6.

⁵ Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, *Is The Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

exaltation of a created reality an instance of idolatry. So, on the one hand, there is an apparent 'common orthodoxy'; on the other, there is a profound difference on the meaning of its basic words such as 'Christ' and 'the church'.

Building on the 'nature-grace interdependence' and the 'Christ-Church interconnection', Allison helps the reader to make sense of areas of agreements and disagreements alike while always pointing to the hermeneutical grid that was set at the beginning. For example, the *Catechism* teaches a doctrine of 'justification by faith'. What the *Catechism* means, though, is a synergistic work that is not forensic in nature but transformative and that is administered via the sacramental system of the Church *and* by taking into account one's own merits. The word is the same but the theological meaning, which is confirmed by the devotional practices of Rome, is far removed from the biblical understanding of the doctrine of justification. The same is true as far as all key gospel terms are concerned.

Roman Catholicism is an all-encompassing system and one needs to approach it as such, trying to make sense of its teachings not as isolated items as parts of a dynamic yet organic system. In dealing with Roman Catholicism, especially in times of mounting ecumenical pressure, evangelical theology should go beyond the surface of theological statements and attempt to grasp its internal framework of reference. From there, one may try to assess it from an evangelical perspective. This is exactly the point that is tackled by Allison's book and its main contribution. Professor Allison's masterly book is to be commended for its biblical depth, theological acuteness, historical alertness and systemic awareness. Evangelical theology has finally begun to do its homework in parsing the vision of present-day Roman Catholicism.

Leonardo De Chirico

News from Norway

Norwegian church life 2016 is good news – and bad news. A major newspaper (VG) has carried a video-series presenting the autobiography of a former young leader of 'Jesus Revolution Army' (JRA). She was really burning for Jesus, and she led her 'troops' to various cities in Europe. She was burned out, however, and in the series, she asks serious questions about the wisdom of setting young people up as it was done in JRA. It has become clear, however, that not all members in the JRA experienced the same.

Parallel to this, another series on national television featuring Bible school students, called 'Apprentices of God', is zooming in on the Christian sub-culture, especially among young people. The following debate has focused on important topics in leadership, training, proper follow-up, having a vision and sharing it responsibly, the role of enthusiastic young people etc. Mistakes that were made in the past, how can we repair these? How

can we keep on burning healthy – without burning out? The debate continues.

The other item is much more worrisome. The new ethics of sexuality has now gained significant acceptance in the Norwegian state Lutheran church. A majority of newly elected members in the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Kirkemøtet, has voted to accept same-sex marriage in church in April 2016. Elections previous years usually focused on electing persons of knowledge and church experience. This year, however, it was election political style, complete with programmes and fitting slogans. The turn-out was significantly higher than usual, and the same-sex lobby gained a comfortable majority of delegates. Pastors and other church staff who maintain that marriage is for one man and one woman only, will be allowed to continue to preach and teach accordingly and use the old liturgy. A new inclusive liturgy, however, will

be presented in 2017. It is still unclear to what extent this compromise will withstand the pressure to conform. Both sides are dissatisfied. Many Lutherans in Norway grieve for their church, which has so blatantly accepted what is expressly forbidden in Scripture. Others are disturbed that the church will still allow what is termed 'discrimination' against same-sex couples by having two separate liturgies. To them one gender-neutral liturgy is the aim, expressing the marriage of persons, irrespective of sex.

There are several alternatives for Lutheran Christians in Norway for those who decide to leave the state church. It remains to be seen whether if this AGM-decision triggers an immediate major walk-out, a slow bleeding process – or nothing at all. Many fear that this will open the door wide to the new ethic – an ethic not rooted in Scripture, but increasingly in philosophical reasoning and shifting human rights agendas.

Erling Lundeby

News from Switzerland

Emmaus Bible and Missions Institute, situated on the banks of Lake Geneva in Switzerland, will undergo a complete transformation of its academic programmes in September 2017. Emmaus will become **HET-PRO** (Haute École de Théologie), a School of Higher Theological Education, built on Switzerland's University of Applied Arts and Sciences model.

Rooted in the rich inheritance of the Reformation, **HET-PRO** aims to offer a Protestant, professing and professionalizing education to French-speaking students who come both from the Evangelical and the professing Reformed community.

The various programs of HET-PRO are designed to educate the whole person, by connecting the full range of theological and ministerial disciplines with what students encounter both in ministry and in the world at large.

While Emmaus is already EEAA certified, HET-PRO is working toward full accreditation from the Swiss Confederation by 2022. By then, Bachelors and Masters with specialisations in Biblical and Theological Studies, Christian Ministry and Leadership, Missions and Intercultural Studies will be offered. Certificate of Advanced Studies, Diploma of Advanced Studies and Masters of Advanced Studies

programmes are also being developed in specific areas of need, such as Ethics in Media Engagement, Missions and Intercultural Studies, Youth Ministry, Arts and Faith.

In this time of change, the values that have driven **Emmaus Bible and Missions Institute** will remain. Faithfulness to the Word of God is central. Around this core value are hospitality and openness, excellence and humanity, unity in diversity, heritage and innovation. United by the Gospel, the school's vision is to educate the whole person, to build the Church and to benefit the society.

Jean Decorvet, PhD
Director



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New member of the Committee

Stanislav Alexiev was elected to the FEET Committee in 2014 and here he introduces himself.



I come from Bulgaria, a country situated in South Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula. From 1944 to 1989 my country was also called 'the sixteenth Republic of the Soviet Union'. The regime was so strong that the Communist Party did not allow anyone to visit the church, to pray, or to express their beliefs publicly. It was forbidden for the Evangelical Churches to work among the young people. Many ministers were put in prison or deported to different parts of my country. They could not even visit their families as they were not allowed to leave the villages to which they had been deported. Many of them were put in so-called 'labour camps' where some of them met their death.

In 1989 freedom came. It was something that I never thought would happen. I remember vividly coming home from school and listening to the radio. The news bulletins told us that the regime had collapsed and I could not believe that it was real! At last we could breathe and allow ourselves to dream about the future.

I was not a Christian at that time. I belong to a family closely connected with the Communist Party. My family name (Alexiev) is famous for that in my home town. In 1990 I had to join the army and to serve there for one and a half years. The time in the army was very, very difficult for me. The humiliation in the army is indescribable. As a result I ended up in hospital.

One day when I was expecting my parents to come and visit me, I saw a man who was looking for somebody and he asked me if I knew this person. I did not. I saw in his hands a small, but thick book with hard covers. I do not know how the question came to my mind, but I asked him: 'Is that the Bible, sir?' He replied: 'Yes, would you like to know more about the Lord and the Bible?' I got interested and we sat down on the nearest chairs and he shared the Gospel with me. On that very day in the summer of 1991 I came to Christ.

When I finished the army I returned to my home town, where my parents lived. I found a church and started attending it. It was very difficult to find work and to make ends meet at that time, but I managed to find small job for a short period of time.

More than anything I wanted to study the Bible and to know more about the Lord. Then I learned that in the capital of my country (Sofia) there was a school for divinity and I might study there for a Bachelor Degree. I went to Sofia and studied Divinity for four years at the Evangelical College there.

From 1997 to 2003 I was based in a town called Rousse, which is situated in the North of Bulgaria, where I served as a minister to the local Evangelical Church. There I met my wife, Margarita, and in 1999 we married. We have a daughter called Tsveta and a son called Julian.

In October 2003 we moved to the capital, Sofia, where I serve as missionary with Christian Witness to Israel in Bulgaria and also help the church in different roles, one of which is theological education. I have my MA Degree with Miami International Theological Seminary (USA) and now I am doing a DMin degree with the same school.

When I was a student I often read the *European Journal of Theology* and found there very good articles. When I was invited to become part of FEET, I was honoured that I will be part of a community dedicated to good theology. FEET for me is fresh air for theological minded people.

Rev. Stanislav Alexiev

New member of the Committee

The business meeting of FEET elected Gert Kwakkel from the Netherlands to the Executive Committee in 2014. Gert Kwakkel has been Professor of Old Testament at the Theologische Universiteit Kampen since 1993.

From 2003-2006 he was Rector of the TU Kampen. Since September 2012, Professor Gert Kwakkel teaches at the Faculté Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence (France), on a part-time basis (50%), next to his teaching engagement in Kampen.

Prof. Kwakkel's priorities in research:

- Prophets and prophecy in the Old Testament
- Hosea
- The image of God in the Old Testament
- Covenants in the Old Testament
- Genesis 1 and science
- Semantics of central theological term



Professor Gert Kwakkel

The Executive Committee of FEET

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Prof. Gert **Kwakkel** (Netherlands/France)

Dr Hetty **Lalleman** (Netherlands / England)

Dr Pieter J. **Lalleman** (Netherlands / England)

Mr Erling **Lundeby** (Norway)



Committee meeting in London, 2015

FEET Conference in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, August 26 - 30, 2016

'The Reformation: its Theology and its Legacy'

Further details: www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk/european-journal-of-theology/conference-2016-introduction