

Editorial

20th Anniversary Edition

Why the Journal Exists

In the Autumn of 2000, the senior staff team of IBTS, then based in Prague, set out on an adventure to create a *Journal of European Baptist Studies* (*JEBS*) that would provide a platform for baptistic theology which would enhance the standing of European Baptists¹ as theological thinkers, missiologists, Biblical scholars, historians and ecclesialogists.

The original editorial board of Cheryl A. Brown, René Erwich, Parush R. Parushev, Petra Živnůsková,² and ourselves are now spread throughout the world — in the USA, Australia, Bulgaria, Germany and the United Kingdom. However, the vision we articulated then has been carried forward by our successors and we celebrate together twenty years during which *JEBS* has flourished and taken its place as a journal of note in the world of radical, gathering church theology,³ building on insights from notable theologians such as James Wm McClendon Jr and Glen Stassen. These founding influencers are referred to elsewhere in this edition and the review of the twenty volumes to date repeatedly show how IBTS, now in Amsterdam, and this journal, *JEBS*, has played a part in shaping and transforming baptistic communities, theological seminaries and missionary initiatives in so many different places in Europe and, indeed, throughout the world.

In the editorial of Volume 1 Number 1 it was made clear that the purpose of *JEBS* was not to duplicate what was already being done through various evangelical and scholarly publications, but to give Baptists the opportunity to explore issues of theology and practice relevant to the radical reformation tradition. We set out in that first edition to enable Baptist scholars, especially those at the beginning of their vocation, to be published in a reputable journal in the English language, one of the dominant languages for theological dialogue in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We made clear that *JEBS* would be open to publish articles in all the major, and indeed

¹ The definition of European Baptists follows that of our parent body, the European Baptist Federation, covering Baptists from Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean to the Azores in the Atlantic Ocean, and from Nord Kapp in Norway to the boundaries between Egypt and Sudan, and certainly including all of Middle Asia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iraq. Our Europe may not be that of the geographers, but is our Baptist vision.

² Petra's married name is Kopsich.

³ IBTS, through *JEBS*, has been at the forefront of developing a theological tradition rooted in the ecclesiology of radical, believing church, intentional, convictional, gathering communities of faith.

minor, areas of theological, historical, Biblical, ethical and missiological discourse.

We also asserted that those who wrote for *JEBS* would be free to express their own views, which may not always be the views of IBTS, nor of the European Baptist Federation. In setting this out we were mindful of the saying of W. M. S. West,⁴ who often remarked that ‘where there are two Baptists, there are three opinions’.

What we wanted above everything else was that we would ‘attract articles that will contribute to the growth and health of Baptist witness in Europe today’.⁵

Our Contributors to Volume 20 Number 2

Before turning to a review of the contents of *JEBS* over twenty years, we want to introduce to you those who have articles produced within this volume. *JEBS* policy has always been to invite submissions from anyone who has something important to say within the parameters rehearsed above. On this occasion, to celebrate twenty years of publication, we have looked within the IBTS community to our former students and staff. In so doing three things have become clear. IBTS alumni are spread throughout the world and are engaged in vital work as the people of God in a myriad of different contexts. The second is that many have found their homes within the world of theological education, church leadership, and missional development. Some do so in contexts which are not the places of their birth. The third is that though the constituting partners of IBTS, the Baptist Unions of the European Baptist Federation, were not universally accepting of the ministry of women when IBTS was re-focused in the mid-1990s, IBTS has paved the way for many women to be formed as ministers, scholars, leaders and teachers, and this volume presents several of those who have made a significant contribution to Baptist life in contexts which many would not have countenanced in the middle of the last century.

Manuel Martínez Ortega, from Spain, has engaged with issues of Reformation theology and spirituality in the Spanish context and gained a doctoral degree from his studies at IBTS, in cooperation with Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. He is currently President of Facultad Internacional de Teología IBSTE in Castelldefels, Barcelona, one of the five officially accredited Protestant Faculties in Spain.

⁴ W. M. S. West (1922–1999) was a British Baptist scholar. Principal of the oldest Baptist seminary in the world, Bristol Baptist College in England, a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and one-time resident of IBTS in Rüschnikon, whilst completing his doctoral degree at the University of Zürich.

⁵ ‘Editorial’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 1, no. 1 (September 2000): 3.

Constantine Prokhorov is a Baptist Church historian who lives in Omsk, Siberia, and has contributed much to researching the values and history of Russian Baptists. He studied at IBTS gaining a doctoral degree from the University of Wales, and in his article offered for this special edition of *JEBS* he has, yet again, brought to light another important aspect of baptistic life as it existed under communism.

Lina Toth, Assistant Principal of the Scottish Baptist College, hails from Lithuania, came to IBTS to undertake master's studies, and went on to complete a doctorate, and to be part of the Academic Team. She is now an accomplished author and has been involved in theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church as part of a commission of the Baptist World Alliance. In this edition of *JEBS* she interviews Parush R. Parushev, a former director, vice rector, then rector of IBTS, and together they reflect on the ideas and influences of McClendon and Stassen in shaping our theological emphases and distinctives. She also contributes a paper on Baptist-Roman Catholic relations in Lithuania, first given orally at a gathering of the bilateral conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance.

Julie Justus Williams is the Director of Global Partnerships and Unity for the Baptist World Alliance in Falls Church, Virginia. She journeyed from the USA to Prague to gain a European master's degree. Within our international community Julie gained a deep appreciation of the attitudes and insights of Baptists from many parts of the world, and this is reflected in Julie's contribution to this volume on how IBTS shaped her for her current ministry in our world Baptist body.

Alexandra Elish came to IBTS after completing first degree studies in Edinburgh. Most of our students come through the route of recommendation by their tutors or seminaries. Alex found the seminary from the IBTS website and with her husband, Phil, came to do a master's degree. On completing this, she returned to the United Kingdom and became part of a church planting team in the East End of London. She is now engaged in a wider ministry of support in pioneer ministry with an Anabaptist context.

Rosa Hunt, Co-Principal of the South Wales Baptist College, hails from Malta; her first language is Maltese and she is now developing her strengths in her third spoken language, Welsh. Rosa did her doctoral studies with IBTS, starting in Prague and completing the studies in Amsterdam. She serves as a pastor in South Wales and has an academic interest in the Church Fathers. In her article for this edition she focuses on a critical issue in many of our believing communities throughout Europe where we often have minority communities thinking and worshipping in another language to that

of the dominant culture. How do we demonstrate in a meaningful way being inclusive church?

Joshua Searle, Director of Postgraduate Studies at Spurgeon's College in London, came to IBTS from Oxford to do a master's in mission and was excited to be exposed to the theological thoughts of McClendon and others. After doctoral studies at Trinity College, Dublin, he now lectures in theology and public thought. In his article he engages with the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It reminds us that the IBTS residential community in Prague was based around Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*⁶ as a gathering and praying community.

Henrikas Žukauskas is another representative of the Baltic states, who came to IBTS to attend conferences and, eventually, to pursue doctoral studies. Henrikas has held various posts in Lithuania, including as a missionary, local church pastor in both Klaipeda (Memel, an important place in Baptist history) and Vilnius. He has also served on the board of the Union, and is currently its Chair. He and his wife have a special ministry in using the performative arts and he explores this issue in this volume of *JEBS*.

Helle Liht, Assistant General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation and living in Estonia, came to IBTS to study applied theology at master's level and her dissertation reflected her already existing interest in creation care. Helle has been at the heart of European Baptist life since the 1990s, firstly in EBF youth work, then with the General Secretary, Tony Peck, at the centre of the work of the EBF.

The 'shape' of this volume

Our colleague, Parush R. Parushev, often encouraged doctoral students to shape their work in the formula three by three. Whilst we do not necessarily believe this method to be always useful, you will note that in this issue we have three articles on history, three on the contemporary church, and three that might be classified as theological and ethical.

Themes through Twenty Years of *JEBS*

An analysis of the Volumes of *JEBS* over the past twenty years reveals some dominant themes, which is not surprising given the re-focused purpose of IBTS from 1998 onwards. One of the main aims the Editorial Board had from the beginning was to enable young scholars to publish, and principally, to support IBTS master's and doctoral students to venture academic articles in the English language. It is salutary to note that over forty IBTS students set out on their academic careers and publications through the pages of *JEBS*.

⁶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

One of the dominant topics was that of national or regional Baptist history in Europe with over twenty-five articles on that theme.

Again, given the IBTS programme emphasis on mission, there have been over twenty-six articles around the theme of mission in a post-modern, post-communist world. Related to this, IBTS was one of the first seminaries in Europe to place an emphasis on creation care and ecology with special eco seminary weeks, partnership with the Orthodox Academy at Vilémov, and engagement with the European Christian Environmental Network⁷ and the John Rae Initiative.⁸ At least ten articles set out an approach to these ongoing critical issues for our world.

In the first issue of Volume 1, *JEBS* began exploring what the ecclesiology of a gathering, intentional, convictional community of believers might look like and subsequently the journal has published twenty-five articles around this theme.

A seminary — or a research centre, as IBTS has defined its identity today — should also be reflecting on the purpose and methods of theological education and ministerial formation. In Volume 1 Number 2, then-IBTS Director David M. Brown, posed a challenge in his article ‘Theological Education: Filling a Bottle, Passing a Baton, Opening a Door’.⁹ This stimulating challenge aimed at the Baptist seminaries in Europe has seen *JEBS* publish sixteen articles on theological education over the past twenty years with at least six articles on related themes of adult education and special educational needs.

Alongside this and relating to the function of the institution there have been seven articles on the practice of ministry and nine articles on Christian ethics, with at least eight articles on the relationship of Christianity to society, the state and art.

Whilst IBTS is a Baptist institution integral to the Baptist Unions and Conventions of the EBF, the articles and vision in *JEBS* have always pointed to the wider community of Christians in the world. So, we have seen at least ten articles on ecumenism and four on the beliefs of the Baptist World Alliance, especially focused around the centenary of the BWA in 2005.

From 1998 onwards IBTS recognised that its primary direction was not as an institution focused on the area of Biblical studies and research. Nevertheless, the seminary has had a succession of Biblical scholars who have been IBTS directors, or adjunct faculty, including Professor Wiard Popkes, Professor I. Howard Marshall, Dr Cheryl A. Brown, Dr Peter F.

⁷ European Christian Environmental Network, <https://www.ecen.org/> [accessed 21 October 2020].

⁸ John Rae Initiative, <https://www.jri.org.uk/archived-briefings/> [accessed 21 October 2020].

⁹ David M Brown, ‘Theological Education: Filling a Bottle, Passing a Baton, Opening a Door’, *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 1, no. 2 (January 2001): 5–20.

Penner, Dr Rollin Grams, Dr Robin L. Routledge and the Revd Alec Gilmore. *JEBS* has, accordingly, had a steady input of articles on the Old and New Testaments, nineteen in total, with related articles on hermeneutics.

Again, from the very outset in the life of the re-focused IBTS the emphasis was on academic study in the context of a community of spirituality. Inevitably, practices led to reflection and *JEBS* has published at least thirteen articles reflecting on spirituality.

As commented earlier, the works of James Wm McClendon Jr¹⁰ have been an influence amongst the faculty and students, as has the work of Glen Stassen,¹¹ and at least seven articles directly reflected their influence on the IBTS community. One of McClendon's interests was biography as theology and *JEBS* has published thirteen articles which might be placed in that category.

The editorial board

As indicated earlier, the original editorial board of *JEBS* was formed from the Directorate of IBTS. The directorate model was established in the 1998 re-focusing of the seminary. Over the years seventeen people have served on the editorial board. The longest serving has been the Revd Docent Dr Parush R. Parushev (serving between 2000–2018) followed by the Revd Dr Lina Toth and Dr Tim Noble (15 years and still serving), then the Revd Dr Keith G. Jones (14 years from the inception of *JEBS* until his retirement) and the Revd Dr Ian M. Randall and Dr Toivo Pilli (12 years each). From 2000 until 2013 Mrs Denise Jones served as manager and sub-editor. From 2016–2020 Dr Dorothy McMillan served as managing editor of *JEBS*. Since the move to Amsterdam and with the re-shaping of the work so that there is no longer a wider community based at the IBTS Centre, scholars from various parts of Europe have been selected to serve on the editorial board. The current group consists of Dr Toivo Pilli (Chair, Tartu, Estonia), Dr Lina Toth (Glasgow, Scotland), Dr Tim Noble (Prague, Czech Republic), Revd Dr Mike Pears (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Dr Oleksandr Geychenko (Odessa, Ukraine), Dr Ksenija Magda (Zagreb, Croatia) and Dr Constantine Prokohrov (Omsk, Russia). They carry forward the values and vision of the founding editorial board with enthusiasm and commitment.

The contributors

The majority of articles for *JEBS* have come from twenty-eight countries in Europe, from the pens of IBTS faculty and adjunct faculty, from the students, and from colleagues at other European Baptist seminaries. However, *JEBS*

¹⁰ James Wm McClendon Jr, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols: *Ethics, Doctrine, Witness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986, 1994, 2000).

¹¹ See, for instance, Glen Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

has hosted articles of scholars from throughout the world, spanning all the continents except Antarctica. The editors have been delighted to publish articles by distinguished international scholars in the journal over the years. They have included Professor Miroslav Volf (Croatia and the USA), Professor Albert Wardin Jr (Poland and the USA), Dr Daniel Carro (Argentina), Dr Frank Rees (Australia), Professor David W. Bebbington (Stirling, Scotland) and Professor Nancey Murphy (Fuller Seminary, USA).

Of the 230 plus articles and notes *JEBS* has published, disappointingly, only 34 have been by women. This does not reflect the proportion of women students who have studied at IBTS, Prague, and at the IBTS Centre, Amsterdam, over the last twenty years. Improving the proportion of articles published by women is a task for the editorial board to address. In this volume five of the nine main contributors are women, demonstrating the commitment of *JEBS* to ensure excellent women alumni of IBTS have a proper profile.

What Difference Has *JEBS* Made?

We believe the work of *JEBS* has succeeded in several significant ways. It has given young scholars the opportunity to be published in a journal which is circulated throughout the world, and has helped several to establish themselves in the wider world of academic theology, mission, and historical studies.

It has placed before academia an understanding that there is a body of baptistic theology, mission, and historical studies which approaches matters from another base of reflection and reasoning outside of the approach of the classic world of Roman Catholic, Magisterial Reformation, and Anglican theological discourse.

It has addressed countless issues in our post-modern world from the background of convictional Christian theology which understands primary theology to belong to the local ecclesia of God, though valuing the place of secondary theology which goes on in academia.

Quo Vadis?

The work of *JEBS* is far from concluded. In guest editing this anniversary volume we have been struck, again, by the fact that the values and concerns that led us to founding the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* in 2000 are as vital today as they were then.

We commend this special edition to you as the articles within it deserve attention and response. The motivation of the community which

nurtures and produces the key group of scholars who contribute to *JEBS* continues to deserve encouragement and support in their mission.

Read on, then, and be enlightened.

Ian M. Randall and Keith G. Jones

Guest editors