

Stanko Jambrek (editor)

## **The Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity**

Zagreb, Bogoslovni institut, Prometej, 2007, 444 pages

It was not easy to prepare the first Dictionary about Evangelical Christianity which is indeed Croatian, that is, one which is not a translation from a foreign language but which came into being through the collaboration with authors from Croatia and abroad. An additional difficulty was the fact that the Dictionary could not rely on a cognate source as that simply did not exist.

The Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity was published in Zagreb at the end of May 2007 as a joint publication of the Bogoslovni institut and Prometej, and with the financial support of the Croatian Ministry of Culture. The editor and compiler is Dr. Stanko Jambrek and reviewers Dr. Ankica Marinović Bobinac, Dr. Nataša Štefanec and Dr. Nikola Skledar. Considering that this is the first attempt of a systematic presentation of Evangelical Christianity in Croatia, this one-volume Dictionary deserves special attention. In terms of contents it includes definitions and clarifications of terms from Biblical, historical, pastoral and systematic theology, from ethics and as well as elaborations of key historical events relevant for Evangelical Christianity in Croatia and abroad.

The Dictionary includes entries covering the Bible, biographies, biomedicine, marriage, denominational topics, social issues, spiritual movements, ecology, economy, ethics, culture, family, Christian organizations, education, history and theology. In order to familiarize the reader with the Evangelical Christianity, the Dictionary presents biographies of people who contributed to the development of Evangelical Christianity in Croatia and its theology, as well as to the furthering of Christian theology as a whole in these geographical regions.

The publication contains also a historical overview and theological tenets of Evangelical denominations and spiritual movements in Croatia, which is a significant feature because in this way various topics related to the Evangelical Christianity are treated from the perspective of believers and theologians who are “on the inside” and not authors who are outside of its orbit. Evangelical Christians are thus not merely “Christians in another manner” but are simply an integral, indeed essential, part of Christianity.

Protestantism has left its mark on the Croatian soil at the very beginning of the Reformation. One of the prominent Reformers was Matthias Flacius Illyricus, originally from Labin in Istria. Evangelical Christianity, which was born during spiritual changes and awakenings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries wi-

thin almost all Christian churches, irrespective whether these were Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, was founded on the emphasis on the authority of the Bible, God's sovereignty, the need for everyday ongoing holy living and the imitation of Jesus Christ. The original cause of all these developments, as highlighted also in the Dictionary, was the movement of the Holy Spirit whose power initiated evangelizations which in turn gave rise to the emergence of numerous denominations and independent local churches. At the beginning of the twentieth century they include more than 170 million believers.

In a systematically organized manner the Dictionary provides basic information relative to Evangelical Christianity in Croatia and abroad. From the total of 381 articles Croatian writers have authored 257, and 107 articles are translated from non-Croatian Dictionaries: *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology* (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester/Downers Grove, UK/US), *The Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, USA) and *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Zondervan Publishing House, USA), while a certain smaller number of articles is written by contributors from other countries. An additional value of the Dictionary is found in the fact that authors represent various Christian denominations, and that articles have been included in the Dictionary which manifest the diversity of theological positions of their authors even when they do not fully agree with each other. Precisely this, as underlined by Dr. Stanko Jambrek in the Introduction, points to the richness in the diversity of theological thinking and practice of Evangelical Christians in Croatia and worldwide.

The Dictionary clarifies to the reader the notion of the "Evangelical Christian" which in Croatia carries a dual meaning: on the one hand it designates all Christians who found their personal faith on the Gospel irrespective of their various denominational affiliation – such as Pentecostal, Baptist, Lutheran, Evangelical, or another independent church – and on the other hand it is a designation for the believers affiliated with the Evangelical Pentecostal church in Croatia.

The manner in which the topic of Evangelical Christianity is presented in the Dictionary makes it accessible to scholars from disciplines such as religion, history and theology, to lecturers and students from different areas of the humanities but also to the lay people, believers and all others interested in the study of religion who are willing, in their own personal search, to delve deep into the unknown, or at least into a less familiar region, in order to avoid unnecessary wandering and examine their own potential for an ongoing quest. The Dictionary is directed at all who seek to learn more about inner differences of the Christian faith, particularly because the Evangelical Christianity in Croatia is a phenomenon which is rather unknown both to scholars and people at large.

The Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity is an important and worthy con-

tribution to developing a better insight into religious pluriformity in Croatia which is dominated by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches which are much more numerous than Protestants. The Dictionary gives a more detailed insight into the phenomenon of multistratification in the Croatian protestant inner dynamics, illuminating especially the phenomenon of religious communities which stand in the tradition of Reformation and seek their roots therein. It needn't be overlooked that these communities belong, in the worldwide perspective, to the religious movement with fastest growth rate.

The editorial board and contributors who participated in the production the Dictionary undertook a great and significant step the framework of which was, at least initially, difficult to fully determine. First the decision was to be made precisely what, from the bulk of available material, to include in the Dictionary. About a thousand entries were chosen to be covered by separate articles. We may also at this point announce the second revised and extended edition of the Dictionary which will incorporate a number of articles by indigenous authors which were not included in the first edition. In each article the authors make note of the sources and roots of respective terms, whether from Hebrew, Greek or Latin, and separately cite Biblical books, chapters and verses which further illuminate terms that are discussed. This additionally underlines confirms the relationship of the subject matter of the Dictionary with, and its rootedness in, the Bible, while the Dictionary simultaneously becomes a tool for the understanding of biblical texts. In addition to paying attention to the articles' theological significance and their interpretation in respective cultural and historical contexts, various authors have incorporated fruits of their extensive study of respective topics into their texts. The publisher particularly stressed that this Dictionary is imperfect as is "any human undertaking," and expressed special gratitude to all authors, translators and other collaborators who put in great effort over the period of several years in order that the Dictionary may be as representative and extensive as possible. The authorial credits below each article seek to highlight both individual efforts and collaborative perspective. When we browse the Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity, let us not forget hard work invested in it, and enormous patience which combined to produce this Dictionary. The story about the Dictionary of Evangelical Christianity does not end here, but really only starts – with the dissemination of foundational information and values of Evangelical Christianity in Croatia and worldwide.

Robert Bogešić

Translated by Davorin Peterlin