

PART FOUR

THE OSIJEK DECLARATION OF 1991 – FREEDOM AND JUSTICE IN CHURCH–STATE RELATIONS: INFEMIT FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Preamble

We, 85 participants representing the continental bodies in Africa, Asia and Latin America which form the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians – with associates from North America and Europe – met in Osijek, Yugoslavia from, 10–16 April in the 4th Conference of this Fellowship (following Bangkok, Thailand, 1982; Tlayacapan, Mexico, 1984; and Kabare, Kenya, 1987).

Among our number were professional theologians, missiologists, pastors, including two bishops representing large dioceses of Africa, sociologists, politicians, lawyers and social activists. We came together as persons with an evangelical commitment from our contexts of mission. We learned together, shared insights and encouraged one another in our common witness to the relevance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the struggles for freedom and justice in the world.

We had with us the Second Vice-President of Peru, an evangelical Christian who participated in all the sessions. His presence made us vividly aware that in several countries around the world, particularly in Africa and Latin America, Evangelical Christians are beginning to be actively involved in the political life of their nations. This underlined the significance of our theme.

We have reflected on the theme: ‘Freedom and Justice in Church-State Relations’, with special emphasis on the new found political freedom of the peoples of Eastern Europe, the rights of ethnic minorities to exist and express their own identities, and the problems facing religious minorities.

We visited Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist and Pentecostal Churches, met their leaders and experienced the complex relationship between religion, ethnic identity and state organization in a historical moment of great fluidity. In this context, we reflected on the following issues:

The Missiological Implications of the Collapse of Bureaucratic Socialism in Eastern Europe

The invitation to meet in Osijek, Yugoslavia was extended at our third consultation in Kabare, Kenya in August 1987. We could not have envisaged

* Source: <<https://20yearsoffreedom.wordpress.com/2009/05/12/osijek-declaration-1991/>>.

at that time that as part of this conference we would be welcomed to a civic reception by the first democratically elected mayor of Osijek in nearly 50 years, that public prayer would be said in the City Chambers at the conclusion of the reception, nor that our proceedings would attract the attention of the press, radio and television.

We rejoice at the increased freedom enjoyed by our sisters and brothers in Yugoslavia. We realize that there have been many sides to the witness of the church in Eastern Europe. Some churches of different traditions in Eastern Europe were at the forefront of the changes in 1989. Other churches were more hesitant to take part in the changes. We also wish to pay tribute to the churches which suffered in Eastern Europe and recognize this witness of the servant church to the cross of Christ as authentic discipleship.

It is also remarkable that the historic changes in the region took place for the most part relatively peacefully and in the eyes of many Christians this was directly related to sustained prayers. There is an urgent and continuing need for a revival of prayer and spirituality, not only among Christians in Eastern Europe, but wherever Christians have to cope with oppressive political or religious regimes.

In the new situation, the Eastern European churches are facing new challenges. They need not only to adapt their commitment to evangelism in creative ways that respond to the new conditions, but also to rediscover their responsibility for socio-economic realities. They need to place their 'theology of martyrdom' within the broader concept of uncompromising Christian discipleship in all the spheres of life.

The challenge to churches in the West is to collaborate as servant-partners with their Eastern sisters in a fashion that is supportive and not religiously imperialistic. Another concern for the Western Church is to be careful to refrain from introducing uncritically Western values and ways which may be culturally inappropriate for others. Nevertheless, material and personal resources and visions of faith may be shared in a way that glorifies God.

While recognizing the urgent opportunity for involvement in Eastern Europe, this must not be at the expense of the continued partnership with Two-Thirds World churches. We urge Western churches to protest against the tendency of their governments to divert aid from the third world to Eastern Europe rather than increase their overall aid budgets. We continue to affirm that aid alone should not be seen as a substitute for needed global structural economic changes.

Not only has the barrier fallen between the so-called first and second worlds, but also between second and third worlds, inasmuch as the countries of Eastern Europe are increasingly facing similar economic and social problems as are plaguing the third world. While we celebrate the breaking down of totalitarian regimes and the attempt at democratization in Eastern Europe, we are deeply concerned with the simplistic proclamation of the

victory of capitalism which, when coupled with unjust political systems, has had such a devastating effect in the Two-Thirds World. The collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe cannot be regarded by Christians as a simple legitimization of capitalism, but on the contrary has shattered dreams in parts of the world where communism provided an alternative idealistic vision. It has also led to a vacuum of economic alternatives to capitalism as a global project. It is all the more urgent for Christians to develop Christian and advocate economic principles and models such as are presented in the Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics of January 1990.

At the same time, these recent events in Eastern Europe have strengthened the movement for freedom and democracy in other parts of the world, especially in Africa. While the movement for more participatory forms of government in Africa predates *perestroika*, it has received significant encouragement for it, thus enabling a Christian view of persons in society to find a fuller expression in the political order.

The missiological implications also need careful discernment. The European collapse of bureaucratic socialism does not invalidate the concern for justice in a holistic understanding of the Christian mission. Liberation theology has often been castigated for dependence on Marxist analysis and social objectives. But its concern for the poor and for the earthing of theology in practical engagement on their behalf has biblical roots which do not depend on Marx.

There is a long tradition of Christian social criticism before Marx and Christian theologians need not be beholden to Marx for their social vision. Many questions about the negative social consequences of capitalism were raised by Christians before Marx proposed a systematic critique of it. Totalitarian state socialism's failed answers do not invalidate those questions or release us from the task of finding biblical responses.

Bureaucratic socialism sought at some point to enshrine values which have independent validity in biblical revelation, especially justice in the distribution of goods and services in society. It behoves those committed to such values as a dimension of biblical mission to find more appropriate ways of expressing them in the changed economic, social and political directions of increased freedom. Neither freedom nor justice should be at each other's expense.

Religious Freedom in the Context of a Dominant Religion

In creation God has granted to man and woman the freedom to respond to his love in obedience or not. Coercion has no place in the opening story of the world until humanity has made his own response to the Creator/s world. Following from this aspect of the biblical doctrine of humanity, Christians must be prepared to allow the genuine religious pluralism in society. It is unacceptable for state systems to espouse any one religious expression in such a way that other religious groups find that their God-given rights to

life, participation in society, and to believe and propagate their faith, are politically or socially denied.

In whatever way the relation of church and state be understood, whether as complete separation, or where religion has a formal place in the life of the civil society, what is required of the state is religious neutrality. This means that if religious conflict arises, the state must ensure that the dominant religion is not allowed to oppress minority religions. The state must not favour one religion or allow its own apparatus to be co-opted by dominant religious control, or interfere by the religious freedoms of any group. In short, the state must provide the social and political framework which guarantees the unhindered exercise of religious freedom. Countries which are signatories of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights should enforce it in order to make this a reality.

Religions also have self-limiting responsibilities in relation to the state. The conference received papers from different contexts where religious domination of the state leads to oppression. In several Latin American countries, Roman Catholicism, with state permission, has severely restricted the religious freedom of other minority religious communities. In some Islamic contexts, Islamic dominance has continued to be exercised over religious minority through the application of the historical *dhimma* system, in varying degrees in different Islamic states, from very severe restrictions on religious freedom and human rights to rather milder practices. We have also heard concern from several East European countries where the predominant 'national' Orthodox churches claim monopoly over religious lives of their nations and discriminate against Protestant minorities. And it must not be overlooked that Protestantism, sometime with clear evangelical orientation, has served in some contexts as legitimation for oppression.

Nevertheless, movements based on protestant theology and ethics have sometimes contributed to the break-up of the dominance of religiously totalitarian regimes and traditions. When this has occurred, the resulting situation imposes limits on government. It can no longer impose particular world-views or social projects against the will of the people. Yet clearly, evangelicals cannot agree with a relativisation of moral values which we believe to be grounded in biblical revelation. How are the values of Christian faith to be brought to bear on public policy? Another important area, which illustrates the clash between desire for social pluralism and the rejection of ethical or religious relativism, is the matter of religious education in public (state) schools.

In the interests of freedom and justice, Christians must apply the Golden Rule to do to others what they would like others to do to them and ensure religious freedom to others. As Christians we confess that we have not always granted religious freedom to other religious groups living among us. We resolve to change and to defend religious freedom for all in the spirit

of the Lord's injunction to servanthood.

Biblical Faith and the Desacralisation of Power

The recognition that all authority comes from God relativizes all human use of power. Political arrangements have a tendency to sacralise human power, that is, to claim a divine status or sanction, which is idolatrous but which achieves the self-legitimation of those who wield it.

However, the biblical tradition point to a quite different notion of power. In the Old Testament, the centrality of the teaching that Yahweh alone is king, landowner and commander, relativizes all human power, political, economic and military. In the social system that God established in Israel, power was diffused in a plurality of elders and the kinship network. Centralized kinship was at first resisted, and when it came, was clearly set under the authority of covenant law (Deut. 17:14-20). Kings were held accountable by the prophets to God's requirement that they should exercise justice and defend the powerless. It was the abuse of power, socially and economically, by the ruling elite in Israel which led to the sustained prophetic indictment and to God's wrath and judgment.

In the New Testament Jesus reaffirmed the Old Testament teaching in his own attitude and actions in relation to earthly power. He was not intimidated by earthly rulers (Luke 13:31-32). He held a notion of power which was in explicit contrast to what he saw in the world (Luke 22:24-27). He contrasted his own kingdom with that of Pilate's (John 18.16). His cross was the defeat of the demonic forces which masquerade behind the destructive exercise of power in the world (Col. 2:15). The followers of Jesus must take the cross seriously in their political involvement as they overcome the love of power by the power of love and are empowered by him in their powerlessness. Such a view of Christian political involvement cuts across all authoritarian personality cults of the strong.

For the industrial nations of the North, democratic forms of government appear at present to be the best way of preventing the sacralisation of power. Further investigation is needed into how existing "democracies" could become more truly democratic by allowing more effectively for the participation of the marginalized. At the same time, we need to examine what other forms of political arrangements would be appropriate instruments of preventing the sacralisation of power in other cultures and socio-economic contexts.

Ethnic Identities and Christian Peoplehood

Ethnic diversity is part of God's creativity and it is God's plan for all creation to glorify him. Therefore, the reaches of ethnic variety can be affirmed where it gives glory to God.

God's creative and redemptive intention is for all peoples to become

part of the people of God. This purpose, however, is hindered by human fallenness, as a result of which ethnicity tends to be absolutized and thereby is distorted into idolatrous ethno-centrism. God's redemptive work dethrones all idolatries and therefore when a person becomes a member of the people of God through Christ, a new identity is received. This new identity in Christ relativizes every ethnic identity, but does not efface it or invalidate its cultural expression. Citizenship in the Kingdom of God is the only absolute, non-negotiable identity for the Christian, besides which all other levels of identity are mobile and may be freely affirmed or freely laid aside for the sake of the Gospel. Paul could affirm or set aside his Jewish identity according to the missionary demands of his context (1Cor. 9:19-23) and in any case counted it as wholly secondary compared to his new identity in Christ (Phil. 3:4-9).

The Gospel affirms ethnic identity by enabling the Christian to rejoice in it for its intrinsic created goodness, to subordinate it to the Lordship of Christ, and to use it for the service of God and the neighbour. The church, therefore, which includes all ethnic groups, is a sign of God's multi-ethnic people and kingdom. It should affirm healthy ethnicity and the positive values of nationhood where these do not either become idolatrous towards God or oppressive towards fellow human beings. In the fallen world, however, the church has the duty to challenge states which manipulate ethnicity, by exalting it into a national idolatry, or by using it as a criterion for denial of human rights, and states which marginalize ethnic minorities by tolerating discriminatory and exploitative forces in society. Such action for freedom and justice in relation to ethnicity can only come from a church which is not itself captive to ethnic idolatry theologically, culturally or politically.

There exist in our world many submerged ethnic identities which have resulted from the artificial drawing of state boundaries after conquest, colonization and wars. Part of Christian mission must include working for the protection, recovery and re-emergence of such groups to the human rights and dignity, including the right to homeland and statehood, to which their ethnicity is as entitled as any others. However, we recognize painfully, that in some parts of the world, separate ethnicity has been spuriously promoted as a tool of oppression. In such contexts it is superficial to deal with ethnicity questions without regard to issues of social, economic and political freedom and justice.

The mixing of ethnic groups is not in itself wrong, theologically or culturally. In the course of history, however, many ethnically mixed populations have resulted from processes which were fundamentally unjust and oppressive. Many examples of these are found in American (North and South) and Caribbean nations through centuries of conquest, exploitation of native populations and plantation slavery. Missiologically, however, such population of mixed ethnicity often function positively as vehicles for

the trans-cultural spread of the Gospel. Biblical examples of this include the role of Galileans, Samaritans and Hellenistic Jews (all ethnic mixtures) in the missionary expansion of NT Christianity.

Furthermore, God's incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in Galilee indicates his opinion to identify with all minister among mixed and marginalized population.

We celebrate the fact that the Gospel and the Christian community has from the beginning proved able to cross ethnic boundaries to share the message of God's love. This points beyond merely peaceful toleration towards genuine ethnic reconciliation and shalom which Paul, in Ephesians 2, saw as the heart of the Gospel. Christians need to face up to the existence of real wounds to be healed between Christians of different ethnicity living in the same context, even when they share the same commitment to mission.

There is also a need to be willing to speak the truth about the past. Christian must encourage fellow Christians, and also wider ethnically divided communities, to re-examine their history, with the willingness to look at it from the point of view of the other group. There must be a healing of historical memories by a commitment to acknowledge the truth, to seek forgiveness for historical wrongs, to seek to correct those wrongs as far as possible, and to repent of the perpetuation of unbiblical attitudes based on ancient ethnic hostilities.

The Need for Evangelical Political Theology

We note with joy the increasing degree of more active political engagement on the part of evangelicals, in Latin America and elsewhere. For the first time in the history of several nations, evangelicals are being elected to high government office. The Second Vice-President of Peru was among our number at the conference. The President and Vice-President of Guatemala are also evangelical believers.

Recognizing, however, the need for Christians in politics to be guided by biblically based political theology and ethics, there is an urgent need to develop such resources. Evangelical political praxis must be based on and critiqued by deep reflection on the social dimensions of biblical revelation. This is a task not merely for theologians but for the whole people of God.

A political theology provides answers to questions such as: what is the purpose of government? What is the role of force in government and how should it be used? What moral values should be legislated and what should not, and what are the criteria for distinguishing? Is there a transcendent norm above the state? Without a political theology that answers such questions, political engagement is superficial, often misguided and counterproductive.

Many Christian traditions have an extensive history of systematic reflection on the relationship between Christian faith an public life and have

developed sophisticated political theologies. If the recent worldwide evangelical involvement in politics is to be biblical, substantial and of more than passing significance, we must interact with the political theologies from these other Christian traditions and ground our own political activity in a political theology that flows from evangelical faith. And we need to work at that task in ways that both emerge from our unique social contexts and are accountable to the worldwide body of Christ.

The following affirmations illustrate the kind of claims that such a political theology might make:

1. It is God's will that there should be governing authorities within nations. The purpose of government is to promote social wholeness and wellbeing for its citizens, and to prevent anarchy. To this end those in authority should be reminded that they are servants of God whose duty is to work for the good of the citizens and to promote good relations with other nations. It is their duty to restrain evil by punishing evildoers and by upholding justice.
2. Basic human rights (e.g. the right to life, religious and political freedom and the right to share fairly in society's material goods) come from God, not the state, which can only recognize and nurture them.
3. The church must be free of state interference, but the church as an institution must not dominate government. At the same time, the church must exercise its prophetic role and religious values should have free reign in evaluating and critiquing public life.
4. Since God measures every society by how it treats the poorest and weakest, the voiceless and marginalized (Prov. 31:1-9), it is an important responsibility for the government to create just conditions within which the welfare of such groups can be actively promoted.
5. 'As a model, modern political democracy is characterized by limited government of a temporary character, by the division of power within the government, the distinction between state and society, pluralism, the rule of law, institutionalization of freedom rights (including free and regular elections), and a significant amount of non-governmental control of property. We recognize that no political system is directly prescribed by scripture, but we believe that biblical values and historical experience call Christian to work for the adequate participation of all people in the decision making processes on questions that affect their lives'. (Oxford Declaration, paragraph 54).
6. 'We recognize that no particular economic system is directly prescribed by scripture. Recent history suggests that a dispersion of ownership of the means of production is a significant component of democracy. Monopolistic ownership, either by the state, large economic institutions, or oligarchies is dangerous. Widespread ownership, either in a market economy or a mixed system tends to decentralize power and prevent totalitarianism'. (Oxford Declaration, paragraph 56).

7. The results of political engagement are significant but limited. Political activity does not bring the kingdom of God, nor is it the only way to change society. Nevertheless, it is a vital activity by which Christians can bring the values of the kingdom of God in our nations.

Conclusion: A Call to Prayer

We recognize that in our engagement in struggles for freedom and justice in the world, we fight 'against not flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Eph. 6:12). Hence prayer becomes a necessary dimension of our engagement.

Freedom and justice are signs of the kingdom of God; through prayer, we receive strength and hope in believing that God's kingdom will come. Through fervent intercessory prayer, we are enabled to participate in the struggles of those for whom we thus seek divine help.

In the light of our findings at our conference, therefore, we urge fervent prayer on behalf of the following:

1. Evangelical Christians and all those who suffer any form of persecution as a result of seeking to be bridge people and peacemakers in the ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia.
2. Evangelical Christians and all who suffer any form of depravation and oppression in contexts of dominating Islam in parts of Africa and Asia.
3. Evangelical Christians and all those who suffer under the conditions of repressive Roman Catholicism in several countries of Latin America.
4. Evangelical Christian leaders and all those who endure hardship and persecution as a consequence of seeking to promote those conditions in which freedom and justice will flourish in the lives of their nations.

In the expectant hope of the coming of God's kingdom of freedom and justice promised in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray, 'THY KINGDOM COME'.

APPENDIX ONE: Catholicism and Society in Latin America

The Roman Catholic Church was very influential in the formation of the Latin American nations because her missionary work was closely linked to the Spanish and Portuguese conquest in the 16th century. During three centuries of colonial domination, this church dominated society because she had control of culture through education, and was also powerful in economic and political life. The commitment of Spain and Portugal to build in the America a new Christendom free from the inroads of Protestantism led to the establishment of the Inquisition which controlled religious and social life.

In the process of Independence, between 1810 and 1850, the Church identified with the Spanish crown and became a conservative institution in society. All through the 19th century, though the new nations kept a place of privilege for the Catholic Church, a tension between the church and state developed, especially with the initiatives of liberal governments to curb the power of the church.

Protestantism came to Latin America taking advantage of the space created by liberal governments and established a *de facto* alliance with them. The growth of Protestantism was an evidence of the spiritual hunger of the Latin American masses that could not be satisfied by a declining church that suffered from a chronic shortage of clergy and falling popularity among the masses because of her alliance with the ruling classes.

During the 20th century, slowly but steadily, the church ceased to be the state church. This process was first successful Mexico, Uruguay, Chile and Brazil. The Protestant minorities, however, were discriminated against and persecuted bloodily in Peru, Bolivia and Colombia, but in the 1960s religious freedom was increasingly achieved due to the rapid growth of Protestantism, the liberalization of governments and the liberalizing trends after the Vatican II Council.

Contemporary studies have proved that the Catholic missionary work of the 16th century was not completed. In many places it was superficial. This explains the need of the Catholic church to depend on the protection of the state to her survival and maintenance of her privileges. The gigantic migration to the cities has been a significant factor, among others, of the modernization process. In face of it, Protestant churches have offered better pastoral alternatives to the masses, as they continue to grow. Protestants hope that the Catholic church will adapt to life in a pluralistic society, but restrictions on religious minorities continue in several countries. However, the doctrine of the church about her position in society as well as her relationship to the state is based upon her self-understanding as the only true church and the deep-rooted tradition of domination in Spain and Portugal, and these two elements continue to be determinative for her attitudes.

APPENDIX TWO: Freedom and Justice in Islamic States

Historically, Islam as a whole was never prepared, either in theory or practice, to accord full equality of those of another faith. The *dhimma* or *melet* system formulated in the 1st century of the Islamic era and defined in the so-called 'Pact of Uman', in its various versions places severe restrictions and handicaps on non-Muslim minorities. In the modern world, these are applied in varying degrees in different Islamic nations. Islamic fundamentalists, on the one hand, demand a total return in the Shari'ah and all other restrictions of the *dhimma*; while moderates, on the other, are willing to lessen these restrictions, if not do away with them together.

Thus, for example, in Saudi Arabia no non-Islamic worship services outside embassy grounds are allowed. In Iran, since the 1979 revolution, thousands of Bahias have been executed for religious apostasy from Islam, and both Jews and Christians have been harassed, jailed and in some cases, killed. In Sudan, the efforts of the Islamic majority to impose the Shari'ah on all have led to an on-going civil war which began decades ago. The Egyptian Church, which dates back to the 1st century A.D., continues to live today under a series of legal and social restrictions. Even in Turkey, there are continuing reports of discriminations against non-Muslims, a hangover from its Ottoman past, although these are prohibited by a fully secular constitution. Finally, in almost all Islamic states, non-Muslims are not given the freedom to change their faith. Many more examples could be given.

The world Islamic community is rightly concerned with the rights of Muslim minorities in non-Islamic lands. Again it must be noted that Islam is often concerned to instil the highest ideals of justice and tolerance. We would therefore like to ask the Muslim community to recognize more adequately the logic of their concerns. If they are concerned with the freedom to practice and propagate their faith and to ensure that Muslim minorities in non-Islamic lands are not treated as second-class citizens, they must be prepared to grant non-Muslims in Islamic states the same freedom and equality. No Muslim living in non-Islamic lands would happily live under the *dhimma* system applied in reverse. Therefore, Muslims must be helped to understand that they cannot ask for what they are not prepared to concede.

At the same time, it is recognized that Christians have often failed to provide adequately for the freedom and justice of the religious minorities, including Muslims, in our societies. In recognition to these concerns, we propose:

1. That Christians must make a diligent effort to understand the historical grievances and present-day concerns of Muslims and initiate a dialogic process aimed at seeking greater reconciliation between the two communities.
2. That all members of the world community be challenged to make a genuine attempt to implement fully the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (ratified by all Islamic states except for Saudi Arabia and Yemen) which provides fully for religious freedom and equality of all, irrespective of religious affiliation.
3. The non-Islamic nations (especially those in the West) should initiate an international consultation with the Organization of Islamic countries with the view of working toward an accord similar to Helsinki Accords, as the best means to safeguard the rights and freedoms of both Muslims and non-Muslims.

THE ORADEA DECLARATION OF 1994 – EQUIPPING FOR THE FUTURE: CONSULTATION ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE

Preamble

In October 1994 ninety-one evangelical Christian leaders and educators from across the world met for four days in Oradea, Romania, as a ‘Consultation on Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe’. Under the theme, ‘Equipping for the Future’, we came together to demonstrate and strengthen our common faith in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to foster collegial relationships between ourselves; to survey the critical issues which relate to enabling Christian leaders; to produce a declaration of vision, philosophy, and goals for theological education and leadership development in post-Communist Europe; and to establish a basis for common effort in response to our declaration.

Our Context in Post-Communist Europe

Ours is a context in the midst of profound transition. It is also a context in which many things remain unchanged, with a unique and diverse history prior to the rise of Communism, having both analogies to and significant differences from Western Europe. We are living through the demise of Communist ideology and hegemony. Yet, we live in a setting that continues to be plagued by immorality, social and political instability, religious fragmentation, economic paralysis, and bureaucratic tyranny. The remarkable cultural diversity of this region has been set free as many of our nations have rediscovered their unique self-identities. Yet, rising nationalism and agendas rooted in ethnic prejudice have brought war, tragedy, and death into our midst again. Failed command economies are in the process of being dismantled in favour of greater freedom for economic development. Yet, in too many places the introduction of economic reform has failed to alleviate widespread poverty and despair.

The problems of transition also extend to the church and the realm of faith. We believe that we are living in a spiritual *kairos*, a time of unprecedented opportunities in our region for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank God who is the sovereign Lord of history for the scent of spiritual harvest that is in the air, and by it we are reminded of our urgent responsibility for

* Source: <<https://20yearsoffreedom.wordpress.com/2009/05/12/oradea-declaration-october-1994/>>.

Christian witness in an otherwise perishing world. However, we recognize that opportunities for ministry in our region are tempered by the rapid secularization of our societies. Moreover, the tumult of social change in our midst has also reinforced some historic tensions between evangelicals and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. These tensions have the potential of diverting the energies of all Christians from the God-given possibilities of our time, and this would be a tragedy of profound consequences. The flood of well-meant, but sometimes misguided, wasteful, and inappropriate efforts from foreign agencies has further complicated the situation.

Our Identity

We confess our faith in the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We therefore declare that we are people of God, with a high view of Scripture, who see the church as the body of Christ called to live, worship, witness, and serve in a world that is alienated from God but which he has taken action in Christ to reconcile. We affirm that this Christ is the one and only God-man who died for our sins and was raised from the dead to be Lord.

Leadership Development That Is Christian

By Christian leadership development we mean the process of enabling men and women to lead the church of Jesus Christ forward, so that it discerns and does God's will in relation to worship, holiness, unity, and mission. Such leaders must themselves also be followers in the way of the cross. They lead from personal weakness, being made strong only by the grace and mercy of God.

Wherever the church is experiencing rapid growth the need for new Christian leaders increases. Indeed, without an adequate supply of such leaders, the fruit of Christian witness is put at risk. Sub-biblical and explicitly heretical movements often grow in situations where the number of converts exceeds the capacity of the church to nurture them. This is a time of ripe spiritual harvest in post-Communist Europe, the continuation of which will be determined largely by the church's ability to provide biblical leadership for the new generations of Christians.

Because the mission of the church is multi-dimensional and operating within a pluralistic and multi-ethnic situation, with spiritual, relational, social, and physical consequences, the development of leaders should also be multi-dimensional, sensitive, and cross-culturally appropriate. All Christian leaders are, like Jesus, called to humble ministry, but there is a wide diversity of ministries.

Some leaders are called to serve primarily in church-related roles such as evangelists, church planters, pastors, cross-cultural workers, or leaders

of church or ministry organizations. These roles may be carried out by those whose time is fully dedicated to Christian ministry, and also by those who support themselves by pursuing a second vocation.

Other Christian leaders will exercise their ministry in national or local government, in law, medicine, or education, in the media, in industry or business. Their high standards of professional competence, theological maturity, and personal integrity will confirm their spoken and unspoken testimony as authentic ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

A third group of leaders are Christian scholars of all disciplines who because of their learning, experience, and vision have the ability to articulate the Christian faith and demonstrate its significance for the larger issues of our societies and the world.

Individuals may find themselves called to Christian leadership in more than one of these dimensions. Further, these three groups of Christian leaders must recognize their mutual dependence. It makes little sense for Christian scholars to carry on their work without substantial reference to the views of ministry practitioners in church and society. To do so invites irrelevant thought and theory. Without the perspectives of marketplace Christians and the historian's critique, congregations and their pastors may not fully recognize when innovation is needed for effective witness in contemporary society. The pastor's concern for heart-level change and the theologian's tenacity for whole truth will challenge Christian leaders in government and business to bring more than superficial moral reforms to sectors in which they serve.

Education of Christian Leaders That Is Theological

A traditional view of theological education calls forth images of an academic process that imparts cognitive knowledge in such disciplines as biblical languages, textual and exegetical studies, dogmatics or systematic theology, church history, ethics, practical theology, and mission studies, etc. Such a definition is not wrong, but it is an incomplete picture. There is more to theological education than merely theological content.

Education cannot be theological without reference to a biblical worldview that proceeds from our worship and understanding of God. In addition, the outcomes of an educational process must be measured in terms of personal character formed, skills developed, as well as knowledge acquired. These three dimensions to education – knowing, being, and doing – must be applied to the education or enabling of Christian leaders. It is heartening to note that the historic limitations on Christian leadership development under the Communist regimes yielded in our churches an intuitive commitment to balancing the development of knowledge, character, and skills in emerging leaders. We must now strengthen that balance as informal leadership training is joined by more intentional formal and non-formal programs.

Some aspects of Christian leadership development are best centred in our congregations, such as foundational understanding of the Scriptures, growth of character and faith, and learning of basic ministry skills. The academy, however, provides faculty expertise, a concentration of educational resources, and a place for objectivity not usually available in a local church environment. Such resources and distance are essential if the theological education of Christian leaders is to be marked by serious reflection on relevant realities, history, and action. We should search for the right balance within and between the various components of theological education and Christian leadership development.

Theological Education and Leadership Development for Our Context

It is not enough to recognize the scope of leadership development that is called for, to ensure that the education of Christian leaders is truly theological, or to evaluate thoughtfully the manner or type of education that will yield the needed mix of Christian leaders. The theological education of Christians leaders for a context like post-Communist Europe must equip emerging leaders to deal with the philosophical, economic, societal, cultural, ethnic, and physical realities of the region.

In considering the issues we are facing in our modern context, we thank God that Christian faith came to our lands many centuries ago, resulting in the establishment of historic churches. Through these churches many aspects of our national cultures and identities have been shaped and preserved. We pray for the renewal of these churches by the transforming power of the Gospel resulting in holy living and authentic witness to Christ.

We believe it our duty to equip servant leaders to respond to the issues presented by our context in ways that are both faithful to the Gospel and also culturally relevant. In particular, we must:

1. Strengthen the church's contribution to the general welfare of our societies and legitimate nation building.
2. Address the issue of conflicting nationalisms subsequent to the demise of Communism with the aim of peace-making and reconciliation.
3. Enhance a better understanding between evangelicals and Orthodox as well as Roman Catholic Christians.
4. Deepen the unity between all those who confess Christ as Lord and Saviour.
5. Encourage renewal in the mainstream Protestant churches which have centuries of history in our region.
6. Foster the alleviation of human suffering.
7. Evaluate the appropriateness of Western and other Christian activities in our countries.
8. Establish financially viable ministries in the midst of the emerging

economies of our region.

9. Take our place in partnership with others in the world-wide cross-cultural missionary task.

Toward a Council for Evangelical Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe

In light of our joint commitment to what our Lord is doing in our part of the world and giving full attention to the values and priorities set forth above, we as responsible stewards of our unique opportunities and available resources resolve to establish and strengthen a cooperative permanent capacity for Christian leadership development in our region. For these reasons, we propose:

1. To create a 'Council for Evangelical Theological Education and Leadership Development in Post-Communist Europe'. The Council will be a network of ministries and institutions that are committed to equipping Christian leaders in East Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union. It will link theological institutions and leadership training efforts in the region, and will endeavour also to facilitate and coordinate the involvement of international partners, supporters, and funders with the network.
2. To take steps under the auspices of the Council:
 - a) To establish a cooperative post-graduate program for faculty development and scholarly research in the region. This effort would need to include assistance in preparing the initial faculty/mentor complement for such program(s).
 - b) To encourage bi-lateral links between emerging Christian leadership development efforts in the region and existing counterparts elsewhere with a view toward faculty exchanges, degree validations, and/or joint programs.
 - c) To create collections of primary teaching resources in the relevant languages, encouraging and assisting their publication.
 - d) To promote international support for the development of promising theological institutions and ministry training centres in the region. Assistance could include financial support for staff development, facilities, library, etc., along with consultancy on strategic planning, curriculum design, and local financial resourcing.

By God's grace, and by God's grace only, we intend to move forward from this place with shared faith in the triune God, shared fellowship in Christian ministry and service, shared understanding of the task of true theological education, shared cognizance of what this means in post-Communist Europe, shared vision for cooperative and collaborative action in nurturing Christian leaders, and shared hope for the impact that our churches might

have in this needy and yet promising region of the world, and beyond it, because of godly, willing, and capable leaders.

We invite all who embrace the Christian faith to join us in asking Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to make it so.

OSIJEK DECLARATION OF 1998 – SECOND CONSULTATION ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN POST-COMMUNIST EUROPE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD

Introduction

We gathered as 170 educators, theologians and church leaders at the Evangeoski Teološki Fakultet, Osijek, Croatia, from thirty countries, from September 1–5 1998, to share in a cross cultural global reflection on theological education for Christian mission. We had a particular focus on the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world in the current situation in Central and Eastern Europe. We intentionally drew on the experience of participants from South Africa, Malaysia, Myanmar, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Chile, United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Germany.

We were generously received by the deputy governor of Eastern Slovenia and the Mayor of Osijek. The Croatian national press, radio and television were present throughout the conference.

We also visited the nearby city of Vukovar. This took the form of a pilgrimage to a place where massive evil had been done and suffering borne. It brought to mind other places of destruction around the world. We were greatly encouraged to hear from the District President of the area of their commitment to engage in a process of education that would combine religion and morality (separated in the communist era with such devastating consequences) and especially focus on the sanctity of human life. We were humbled to meet in his ruined church, which still stands after bombardment by more than 600 shells, the Abbott of the Franciscan Priory Church of St Philip and St James Church. His testimony was living proof that the gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ's church. We can only offer our sympathy and prayers for the Vukovar community in the death of 12,000 (20 per cent) of their population, and in their determined efforts to rebuild their community and city. Our visit vividly presented to us the challenge of ministry to people who have experienced such devastation.

* Source: *Transformation* 16.1 (1999), pp. 1-4.

An Analysis of the Context of Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe

Central and Eastern Europe is home for a rich and diverse family of nations who live in a variety of very differing contexts. We all share a recent past under communist rule, and a far longer history of Christianity, stretching in some cases right back to the earliest years of the church. We have growing reservations about describing our current context in the phrase 'post-communist' which is essentially a backward looking phrase. Some of its characteristics are characteristics of all totalitarian regimes, not just communist ones. The phrase can mask many of the current realities of our situation on the periphery of the dominant capitalist world economy and give a superficial air of 'sameness' to very differing economic, social, religious and political situations in our countries. We seek a more adequate phrase to describe our region in future.

The current uni-polar world of the global market economy is not always beneficial to the weak. We all now experience increasing globalization, understood as the homogenizing of society by market economics and technology. The consequences of globalization are both good and bad. It is reducing the time lag between the West and Eastern Europe. More and more people have access to increased information, the same questions, and the same needs, prompted by the same global media and global marketing processes. Consumer greed distorts individual choice and undermines all political restraints and moral norms. Lawlessness and a lack of a legal society hinders healthy economic development. Our family, community and church life is under increasing stress as life gets busier and busier. Those who feel the fullest effects of globalization and are most vulnerable to its onslaught on ethical values are our children and young people.

We are all shaped by the recent communist mind-set in the context of Central and Eastern European societies. This has often resulted in a lack of personal responsibility in favour of unquestioned authority of the state. This was and still is often accepted in our societies at large and in Christian circles. For example, in a church the pastor may assume the responsibility for the spiritual fulfilment of their members who in turn become passive. This reflects a fatalism that is also evident in political, economic and social terms.

This fatalism has been realized in relationships of failed trust, which has arisen from the long history of oppression, predating communism, and expressed in manipulation and conflict. In these situations reconciliation must become a high priority especially because such reconciliation yields qualitative and quantitative growth of the church.

The decline of communism as the ascendant political philosophy removed the basis from a strong sense of direction and purpose (albeit mistaken) in the history of our cultures. Some have interpreted the processes of history to their own advantage; and many have become cynical about history, impacted by the marginalization of history through globalization. In addition, many countries now struggle to recover a sense of continuity with their national past of the pre-communist era, albeit in a very changed world. The combination of lack of responsibility for public life, low levels of trust, and disillusion with history reinforces those tendencies in the churches to keep Christianity in the private sphere of life.

For these reasons we are convinced that we must witness that Jesus Christ is the Lord of history; that history is moving to its final fulfilment in the kingdom of God; that in the course of human history the other globalizing force has been the universal spread of the gospel and church of Jesus Christ to all peoples and to all areas of life. Acknowledging Christ's lordship is the same as submitting to his kingship and is thus the point of entrance into the kingdom of God. Our Christian mission is to witness to the work of the kingdom of God in history and take our part in it, all the while realizing that we are fallen human beings and that the work of the kingdom is ultimately the work of God.

The Calling of the Church to Witness to the Triune God

We witness to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the triune God. Our faith in the Trinity is very important for our being as churches and our relationships with other churches. The church is above all both a human and divine organization. God calls the church to be in relationship with the Trinity and with those who obey God's call. The structure of the church must reflect the freedom in relationship of each believer with the Trinity and with all other believers. Thus the church is more than a fellowship or a corporation run according to a managerial model. In Central and Eastern Europe, we are heirs to models of the church's order patterned either after the collectivism of the Roman empire, the European nation states, and the Bolshevik Revolution, or individualism patterned after the Enlightenment, and American Protestantism. All of these are inadequate. Further, the difficulties facing Christians who try to work together in our countries and the fragmentation of churches owe much to these competing non-trinitarian models of the church's life as institutions or fellowships. We cannot separate our relationship with the triune God from relationships with others who follow Christ.

The church is a sign of the kingdom, points to the kingdom, and is the community of the King. Its mission can be rightly understood, lived and practiced only in right relation to its founder and head, Jesus Christ, and in accordance with his central message about the kingdom of God. In different contexts there will be different priorities for its mission and its expression.

In all cases the understanding of our role as servants of the King is important, especially as an antidote to the temptation of secular models of leadership. The understanding that the church is the sign and community of the kingdom, but not the kingdom itself, is an important preventative of the renaissance of religious nationalism and neo-Constantinianism.

Christian Witness in the Public Sphere

We must therefore call for a public witness to the Christian faith in all areas of life. We must encourage our churches to see that their very lives as congregations are expressions of civil society, of those voluntary organizations committed to social good.

Our churches under communism were marginalized and persecuted. In this situation, the range of possibilities for action in society was extremely limited, and, consequently, the range of expertise needed by the church was relatively narrow. Our experience in some situations of being a minority fighting for survival and for our rights is, rightly, expressed in testimony which must continue to be a resource for our theology. However, in the 'post-communist' situation, we need to change our 'minority complex' in order to address concerns of the wider society. Our communities have the possibility of being present in a wider range of societal activities, and for this we need a wider range of expertise from amongst our members. We need to be able to ask questions we have never answered before and carry out tasks that are completely new. This should be reflected in a broader conception of the educational task of the church, as well as in the encouragement of some members to seek necessary training in both theological and non-theological disciplines.

We reject as inadequate for the public square the secularism which precludes any religious contribution, and the religious exclusivism which insists that social engagement must be based on terms defined only in terms of one religion alone. Nation-building and community consensus presupposes goodwill and the contribution of all citizens regardless of their own religious faith. Plurality is a reality in the religious field and the public sphere. We recognize that common morality is a reality, but also allows for different religious and ethical commitment.

In some Christian circles, it is customary to bring in outside experts to prime thinking regarding the context (social, political, etc.) in which the church is situated. This can give false leads, especially when the analysis is assumed to be 'neutral' and unaffected by the absence of Christian commitment and by knowledge of the church context. On the other hand, common practice in Christian circles is virtually to dispense with analysis of the situation and talk directly of theological perspectives and proposals for mission. Often, these proposals get bogged down because they are unrealistic with regard to the potentialities of the situation. One way to avoid both

of the above weaknesses is to train (and encourage the training of) members of the churches who can describe and analyse their context, all the while informed by an evangelical faith commitment and familiarity with theological discussions.

The 'context' which must be analysed refers not only to the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions, but also includes the church context. Many proposals for Christian action in the public realm are unrealistic because they do not take into account the reality of the church in a specific country or region. The church is embedded in society and is not separate from it; the sociological study of the Christian community is thus vital if we wish to have a broader presence in our societies.

In considering context, we must beware of nostalgia for 'Christian Europe'. In some countries of Western Europe and North America, this nostalgia can have a strongly evangelical component, but in Central and Eastern Europe it is almost inevitably Orthodox or Roman Catholic. We from Central and Eastern Europe can warn our foreign brethren of the dangers of this nostalgia. But we ourselves must be sure that opposition to such Orthodox or Roman Catholic pretensions is a principled opposition, and not merely an opposition based on current powerlessness. In some contexts, such as Latin America, such merely 'contextual' opposition has been transformed into similar pretensions once the evangelical community has started to gain numerical and political power. In many parts of the world, the dominant model of how religion relates to power and the state (whether Islamic, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, etc.) has been unconsciously assimilated by Protestants, who have failed to provide their societies with an alternative model of the relationship between religion and the state.

Christian Witness of Reconciliation

The God whom we serve, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is the God who lives in the eternal communion of love and who created humanity to have fellowship in that love. In the cross of Christ, that same love of God has come to humanity that has through sin estranged itself from God – and thus fallen into injustice, deception and violence – to redeem it by grace and receive it back into the communion of divine love.

The triune God calls the church to participate in God's mission in the world to reconcile humanity with himself and with one another. The apostle Paul tells us to receive one another as we - sinful and godless human beings – have been received by God in Christ. Just as grace, which overcomes godlessness, stands at the heart of the gospel we proclaim, so grace, which overcomes injustice, deception and violence, stands at the heart of our social responsibility.

We must be concerned with justice within society and the freedom of persons, but our goal must be the creation of a community of love. In this community persons are respected, their cultural differences are affirmed,

the needs of the poor are satisfied, power is given to the weak, and enemies are made into friends.

We cannot always expect a mutual reciprocation of our reaching out in reconciliation. In this we must mirror the action of God, who is always reconciling the world to himself. We must develop attitudes of reconciliation and sow seeds of reconciliation which will bear fruit in due season.

Churches will be able to promote a community of love in society only if they model such communal life for the world. This is why the challenge of reconciliation extends to the relationships between Roman Catholic, Orthodox, mainstream Protestant and evangelical faith traditions. We have much to offer as well as receive in such a process. We can be a resource to them in our countries as we seek to meet the needs of young people and address the public sphere with the gospel. In dialogue with the Orthodox we may offer the recovery of personal faith and personhood in the context of the family. We may be intentional about seeking fellowship and common cause with them so that we may be seen as colleagues in Christian leadership. We must model reconciliation and go beyond our own self-interest and rights and seek the rights of all religious and minority groups. The social dimension of reconciliation should extend to areas of historic alienation in our region, including ethnic, political, economic, gender and religious divisions.

We recognise that the sudden openness between Eastern and Central Europe and the West has in some cases been traumatic for the churches in the East. The uncritical acceptance of Western methodologies has on the whole not been helpful to the maturation of the church. On the other hand, help and support arising out of a sensitive understanding of the needs of the suffering church is highly appreciated.

East and West, South and North have much to learn from one another. The grace of suffering that the Eastern and Central European churches have experienced is a gift that can enrich the world church when we learn to listen in mutuality. Genuine partnership is reciprocal and builds up the whole body of Christ. The basis of effective help lies in understanding each other's needs and generous sharing with one another. That is the atmosphere we have experienced during this conference.

Implications for the Church's Membership and Leadership

Given our new awareness and understanding of the social, political, and cultural changes in our context and in the world at large, we conclude that there are new challenges and problems that the church must face in order to be a relevant, credible and reconciling presence of Christ.

These new challenges and problems create a need for a new kind of church leader and marketplace witness. We must recognize we have been shaped by a totalitarian style of leadership. We can be tempted to repeat

this pattern in our churches and exercise a high degree of control. We must develop a pattern of team leadership and a style that creates space for all Christians to exercise their gifts. We need a wider range of specialists to address the expanding range of opportunities for ministry in the new context of freedom we enjoy. We need to encourage church members to play their role in civil society in local voluntary and civic organizations. Congregation leaders and pastors will especially need to understand and address the challenges faced by children and young people in order to pass on the gospel to the next generation.

We affirm the Protestant distinctive of the priesthood of all believers to ensure as wide as possible inclusion of all members in the ministry of the church and the exercise of their gifts as servants of one another. So we need a style of leadership that will create space for all people of God to exercise their gifts and enable them to use biblical resources to inform their ministries.

Implications for Theological Education

The character, content, curricula and goals of theological education must reflect and engage the new missiological realities and challenges described above. This means that each theological discipline must work out its own missiological dimension and how the missiological imperative of the church affects its academic content, instructional approach and educational goals.

We must encourage Protestants to engage with our national myths, which often exclude them, rework these myths and make creative use of Protestant history and sociological characteristics in our countries. We must encourage Christians to produce intellectually sound arguments for a pluralist model of national religious life. The battle for legitimacy is vital for defending and enlarging the space for everyday religious activities and for greater involvement in public life.

We must have a vision for equipping the whole people of God with theological education for ministry. Theological education can no longer afford to ignore its responsibilities for leadership development in every task of the church (theologians, denominational leaders, pastors, evangelists, youth workers, health workers, and teachers) and for those in the public arena (businesspeople, journalists, politicians, and intellectuals).

We must educate such people in ministry with the biblical resources for ministry. We must encourage seminaries and training institutes to focus on the new opportunities for ministry opening up in our cultures and provide all Christians in ministry with the biblical resources they need to address and fulfil these opportunities.

We commit ourselves to the vision that 'every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service' and that 'in every nation and culture there should be

an effective training programme for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship evangelism, nurture and service' (Lausanne Covenant para. 11).

The task we face in theological education and leadership development for the church's witness to the lordship of Christ in the whole of society is too big for one denomination and group. Therefore we all, with the Council for East European Theological Education, reaffirm the commitment made in the Oradea Declaration in 1994: 'By God's grace alone, we intend to move forward with shared faith in the triune God, shared fellowship in Christian ministry and service, shared understanding of the task of true theological education, shared cognizance of what this means in post-communist Europe, shared vision for co-operative and collaborative action in nurturing Christian leaders, and shared hope for the impact that our churches might have ... because of godly, willing and capable leaders' (Oradea 26).