"Reformation Traditions Engaging with Key Areas of Education and Societal Transformation"

Friday, 20 May, afternoon

2. Political Participation and Democratisation

2.1 The Role and Participation of Churches in (Post-)authoritarian societies – Past and Present

In some post-authoritarian contexts, churches seem to be gaining new importance. This is born out by the fact that for example in various Eastern European countries, Orthodox Churches are now growing after periods of oppression.

What are the implications of such changes and which are the opportunities also for minority churches in such contexts? How do churches now see the role they played during the authoritarian periods?

2.2 Church, Nation, Oikos: Cultural Heritage, Resurgent Nationalisms, Ecumenical Vocation and Identity of Churches

The various Reformation traditions produced different types of churches. Often, "Folk" or established churches came into being, these forging a close connection between faith, language, culture and nation. In Europe, this went hand in hand with a "nationalization" of these traditions (e.g. territorial churches) where other traditions seem to have "internationalized" – e.g. the Methodist Church or the Moravians. However, in time the territorial churches also formed ecumenical fellowships and organizations.

What are the pitfalls of the inculturation processes in national contexts? To what extent do churches need ecumenical fellowship in order to develop their identity?

4. Education, Liberation and Societal Transformation

4.1 Innovative Models – Traditional Structures: What space for Transformative Education Can the Churches Offer?

In São Leopoldo various recommendations were made in order to strengthen the churches in their resolve to act as a transforming force. The necessity for more educational programs and a just distribution of educational resources were highlighted. At the same time, it became evident that there was a plurality of opinions as to what makes education transformative: Which models and what content? What about the methods? And what about secular standards and theological education?

4.2 Transforming Education in the Contextof Migration and Multi-Cultural Diversity

One context which definitely affects and transforms the type of education needed is that of multi-cutural ministries through and with so-called migrant churches. In many countries a multitude of "faith dialects" and non-Western Christian identities are present, introduced by the many churches and faith communities immigrants and refugees bring with them when they come.

What type of education and what sort of information do churches need to act responsibly and sensitively in interacting with such migrant traditions? What should they be aiming for:

The formation of multi-cultural congregations or networks of congregations with diverse cultural backgrounds?

4.3 Transformative Education in the Context of Inter-Religious Diversity and Christian Minority Settings

One of the more recent and challenging developments with regard to the education of churches is that of interreligious diversity. In many such instances, churches find themselves to be representing a minority position.

What kind of theological education could empower both ecclesiastical institutions per se and their members to communicate the Gospel effectively in such situations? What is needed so that church becomes an effective force for peaceful cooperation and to transform society?

6. Public Witness Amidst Religious Pluralization and Secularization

6.1 Innocence Lost: The Religious Legitimation of Violence and the Role of the Churches

Looking back, it is evident that the Churches of the Reformation have had their hand in a long and sad history of intolerance, schism, the stereotyping of other religions and even in the use of violence. What have these churches learned from their involvement in this history for the current debate on the legitimization of violence and the instrumentalization of religion in the use of violence? What role can dialogue play in addressing such persuasions and those who employ them?

6.2 Public Theology: Making a Difference amidst the Plurality of Worldviews, Religious Indifference or Fundamentalism –

Plurality is a typical manifestation of the global world today, evident in many different contexts. How do churches deal with the fact that the Gospel makes a universal claim, yet the proclamation of the Gospel cannot be more than one voice among many? How do we as churches address the fact that our own composition is characteristically marked by a considerable inner diversity? How can the concept of public theology help the church to make a difference in the global context in spite of its own multivalent nature?

6.3 Communicating the Gospel in the Context of Secularization, De-Christianization and Post-Modernity

Postmodernity is often understood as being random or even haphazard and therefore as being in contradiction to shared Christian values. What is the relationship of postmodernity to secularism, understood here as the declining ability of such values to form and shape society? How do younger generations understand these processes, which have been a part of their upbringing? How can churches reach persons of postmodern and secular persuasion with their proclamation and their praxis? In Halle, particular attention will be given to the East German context and to the post-communist societies in Eastern Europe in general.