



The Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative



Theological Formation for Mission

Consultation for Theological Educators

Selwyn College, Cambridge

5-8 September 2017



A report for supporters

Around 70 participants, most involved in theological education, met at Selwyn College, Cambridge between September 5th and 8th to take part in a Consultation on 'Theological Formation for Mission'. Those present included representatives of both the Oriental and the Eastern Orthodox, as well as Evangelicals from the Baptist, Pentecostal, Anglican and Reformed traditions. The gathering was truly international: people came from India, Ethiopia, Syria, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Brazil and the United States *inter alia*. As well as the time spent in the Consultation, there were also excursions to learn about the work of Tyndale House and to tour sites of Christian significance in the history of Cambridge. And despite the full programme those taking part also had the opportunity to spend social time together, learning from one another's stories.

Learning from Paul together: How new insights into Paul's teaching can help move us forward in mission

In his Keynote address to the first Plenary Session, Bishop Tom Wright led us through a new reading of the Pauline understanding of the mission of God to and for the world as the work of his renewed covenant community bringing about the transformation of the world and ultimately the renewal of the whole cosmos 'in Christ'. With this in mind, he suggested, it was imperative that Christians work together, and he commended in particular the possibilities presented by local groups of Christians reading the Bible together. By enabling them to discern the grand narrative of God's work in the world this could lead, and in his experience had led, to an awareness that in and through their joint activities the crucified and risen Lord was proclaimed, bringing healing and hope to God's world.



Responding from an Orthodox perspective the Very Rev. Dr John Jillions welcomed the holistic vision of the address, and drew parallels with the call by Mother Maria Skobtsova, a 20th-century Orthodox martyr, to shift the focus away from 'Christianizing' the world to 'Christifying' it (cf. Galatians 2:20). He underlined, as did some later speakers, that reading Scripture without an agreement on a common hermeneutic is problematic, but was sure that, at the very least, listening to each other was an important step forward, and potentially very fruitful.

Is there a Theological Rationale for Co-operation in Theological Education?

The initial Plenary Session of the first full day asked whether there is a theological rationale for our co-operation in theological education. Fr David Rucker argued that theological education grows from a vision of who God is, and who humans have been created to become, and should thus always be aimed not at communicating a set of biblical propositions, with success measured by 'numbers reached', but rather at making disciples, who are called in turn to guard and hand on the treasure that is Life itself. Although he warned of the danger in both Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism from an internal 'drift' away from this understanding he asked whether there could be any rationale for *not* co-operating if this basic understanding was present.

Responding, Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell agreed that, though difficult, co-operation was both necessary and possible. She drew from the Biblical example of the Church in Antioch, where Gentiles and Jewish believers came together in the name of Jesus the Messiah to form a new community – the people of the Way. Without wishing to brush away the hard questions of how this would work, she felt that both groups needed the other to clarify potential deficiencies in their understandings of

'mission'. The Evangelicals could learn from the Orthodox of the importance of the Liturgy as the vivifying power behind mission, while the Orthodox could learn from the Evangelicals that Liturgy is for the sake of God's mission in the world. She, too, found the example of Mother Maria Skobtsova an important witness to the meaning of 'mission' in our time.

What is happening already?

The second Plenary Session of the day offered participants reports on some areas in which there was already co-operation between Evangelicals and Orthodox. The Rev. Dr Femi Adeleye, John Baxter-Brown and Dr Rosalee Velloso Ewell presented the draft text of a forthcoming statement on 'Mission and Proselytism in Multi-Christian Contexts' which is currently being developed under the auspices of the Global Christian Forum. Dr Mark Elliott reported on a recent visit made by graduates and faculty of Asbury Seminary to the Kostroma



Orthodox Theological Seminary in Russia as part of a Biblical Studies Conference, where discussion included the biblical bases for social ministry, such as the care of orphans and the counselling of alcoholics. A third report came from Mrs Leslie Doll, who spoke of the work of the American Bible Society's Trauma Healing Initiative among the Christians of Egypt, where especially in recent years the Coptic Orthodox in particular have been called to the witness of martyrdom for the faith.

Teaching the Bible: How can we do this better together?

The final Plenary Session returned to the question of teaching the Bible, and asked how we could do this better together. The Rev. Dr Chris Wright argued that Bible teaching is intrinsic to all mission, and a primary calling of those who exercise leadership in the churches. Such teaching should lead to an awareness of the call to mission, to a sense of the uniqueness of God, and to a growing maturity in the faith – goals which will only be achievable if theological education re-centres itself on the study of the Bible, and its grand narrative of the dealings of God with humans.

On the Orthodox side the Very Rev. Dr Eric Tosi agreed that the teaching of the Bible had as its aim the growth of each Christian in communion with God and with the community of faith from which the Bible came and within which it receives its full and proper reading. Personal, faithful and prayerful reading of the Scriptures is essential to the formation of each individual Christian, and to the building up of the individual cells into the Body of Christ, the Church. So one of the first things we could do together, he suggested was to get Bibles into the hands of people and to teach them how to read the Scriptures as the book of the Church.

Challenges and Promises for Seminaries and Colleges working together

The first three Plenary Sessions of the second full day all dealt with ways in which co-operation in theological education was already occurring, and with the challenges and opportunities presented by the various initiatives. Fr Dragos Herescu, the Rev. Neil Thorogood (Westminster College) and the Rev. Dr Paul Weston (Ridley Hall) spoke about the history and work of the Cambridge Theological Federation (<http://www.theofed.cam.ac.uk/>) and this was followed by a more detailed account of two of the Member Institutions of the Federation: the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies (Fr Dragos) and the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide (Dr Emma Wild-Wood).

Educating Ecumenically

In the afternoon we heard from Dr Sergei Koryakin and Vladimir Strellov of the work being done in their respective institutions in Moscow to break down the prejudices of Evangelicals against Orthodox and vice versa. By teaching each group accurately about the beliefs of the other, by learning from each other in areas such as holiness of life/morality (in which the Protestants are strong) and Spirituality (where the Orthodox are strong), and by being willing to explore the Bible and its interpretation together these traditional prejudices are gradually being overcome, and with God's help both speakers could hope for ecumenical advances in mutual love and mutual respect for truth.

The evening Plenary Session asked how we could teach Mission better together. Dr Bill Black suggested in his paper that the teaching of 'missions' (the term he preferred) needed to be taken out of the seminary context and into the field. Perhaps the best way of learning missions would be to do missions together, he argued. His own experience was that he learned far more from serving with a local pastor than from the formal education that he received.

Teaching Mission: How can we do this better together?

Prof. Dr Anne-Marie Kool spoke from her experience of teaching mission studies in Hungary and in Croatia. She shared about the doctoral colloquium organized under the auspices of the Osijek Institute for Mission Studies, where every summer, for four to six weeks a number of Orthodox and Evangelical doctoral students share their research interests, learn about each other's traditions, study together and receive supervision from a number of tutors.

Developing Awareness

The Plenary Sessions of the final day were given over to reports. In the first session we heard of ways in which an awareness of Orthodox on the part of Evangelicals and vice versa has led to, or may in time lead to, co-operation in theological education in Ethiopia (Tekle Belachew Nigru), the United States (Rev. Dr James Stamoilis and John Maddex), Romania (Dr Danut Manastireanu and Fr Dr Dan Sandu) and India (Fr Dr Jossi Jacob Ponodath and Dr Susan Mathew). The second Plenary brought in



the results of discussions among geographically based small groups which had also formed part of each day's programme. Each group had been asked to consider the current state of affairs in their area, with strengths and weaknesses, and to suggest possibilities for further action. There were also reports from the thematic small groups on Biblical Studies, Missiology, Dogmatics, and Church History which had gathered for discussion on the second full day, and their thoughts and considerations were also presented to the full consultation.

Bible Study and Prayer

In addition to the meetings outlined above each day began with Bible Study and included evening prayer from one of the traditions represented at the Consultation. The first day was that of the Eastern Orthodox. In the morning Very Rev. Fr Evangelos Thiani led a study on 2 Kings 2:1-14 in which

he emphasised the importance of mentoring for mission, as exemplified by the example of Elijah and Elisha. The second day the study and prayers were led by the Oriental Orthodox. Bishop George Mathew (Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos) helped us study 2 Timothy 2 and stressed the importance of inclusivity in mission, speaking movingly of the work of the St Paul's Mission of India (<https://www.stpaulsmision.org>) among the Dalits and other marginalised groups. On the third day Dr Kameliya Slavcheva led us through Luke 10:1-12 with its account of the Lord's sending out of his apostles and stressed the importance of heeding the call of Christ to go out. The opportunity to frame the days with common Bible study and Prayer was an important reminder of the true context of the Consultation, and very widely appreciated by the participants.

Very Rev. Fr Ian Graham (Oxford)

Dr Danut Manastireanu (Iași)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative expresses its deep gratitude to all who have made this consultation possible. We are especially indebted to the American Bible Society, as well as private donors, for their financial support for this consultation. Thanks are also due to the chaplain of Selwyn College, Rev. Canon Hugh Shilson-Thomas, for readily granting us permission to use the chapel for prayer.

COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

I am glad that I attended the LOI Consultation. It was a very enriching time of fellowship, prayers and discussions. I am glad for the open discussions and the genuine attempt or move towards collaboration. ... The papers presented were rich and offered issues to think about seriously. From the Kenyan team, we discussed about beginning to visit each other and identify areas of collaboration. I am also preparing a comprehensive report to Bishop Joel. (*Rev. Simon Oriedo, Anglican Church of Kenya*)

During my time at LOI, I reflected on the centrality of Scriptures in the formation of church, individual, mission, and theological education in building bridges within the Orthodox and Evangelical communities. ...

We are stronger together in addressing the concerns of our world as Orthodox and Evangelicals than apart. Even though this message of unity will be met with hostility, we must be encouraged and reminded by the Scriptures. ... By crossing from our church to the church across from us, we welcome others to get to know us and us to get to know them. By opening ourselves to an individual rather than to labels, we will be challenged to live out the Scriptures. Scriptures are what will move us forward in the mission of God as we increase in the knowledge of God and expand our love for one another. (*Mariam Varghese, Lausanne Scripture Engagement Catalyst*)



LOI Cambridge consultation final accounts

Income	£	\$	Expenditure	£	\$
ABS grant		27500.00	Selwyn College – deposit	1629.00	
Remaining from 2016 ABS grant	2883.46		Selwyn College – balance	22675.84	
SRG donation		10000.00	ABS delegate expenses		2466.81
Consultation fees paid	3567.65	2625.00	Facilitator travel and accommodation	315.93	
Donations	330.00	415.00	Facilitator staffing costs (part)		4500.00
Selwyn College refund	560.00		Travel bursaries / tickets purchased by LOI, incl speaker expenses	6998.24	8618.23
			Stationery etc	30.83	
			Bank charges / wire transfer fees	34.59	214.00
			LOI contribution towards staff gratuity at Selwyn	35.03	
TOTAL	7241.11	40440.00	TOTAL	31719.46	15799.04
Expressed in \$ (£1: \$1.30)	7241.11	9413.44		31719.46	41360.30
		49853.44			57159.34
			NET LOSS		7305.90

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