



A GLOBAL CIVIL WAR?

UNDER A BARREL CEILING DATING BACK TO BEFORE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, AND FACING A STAINED-GLASS WINDOW DEPICTING THE PILGRIM FATHERS PRAYING AS THEY LEFT HOLLAND FOR AMERICA VIA PLYMOUTH ON THE MAYFLOWER, SOME 200 FRIENDS AND STAFF OF YWAM GATHERED IN ONE OF AMSTERDAM'S OLDEST CHURCHES ON FRIDAY TO ASK WHAT THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS MIGHT BRING.

The English Reformed Church was formerly the chapel for a sisterhood of the Beguines, a 14th-century order of deaconesses residing in an enclosed courtyard called The Begijnhof. The courtyard is entered through an inconspicuous archway making it a restful haven in the centre of the city. After the city sided with the Reformation, the church was presented to English-speaking Protestant dissidents living in the city, among them the Pilgrim Fathers. Since then, services in English have continued to the present day.

The occasion was the transfer of the leadership of YWAM in Europe, an opportunity to reflect both on past and future. A symposium in the afternoon was followed by an evening reception, when we prayed for the team of regional leaders now carrying the European oversight together, under the chairmanship of Stephe Mayers.

VALUES

Dutch philosopher Evert-Jan Ouweneel began the symposium by reflecting on the nature of four values essential for Europe's future: *equality, solidarity, freedom and peace*. These were the 'Christian values' in which Europe had to be deeply rooted, according to the father of the European Union, Robert Schuman.

Evert-Jan demonstrated how that, in each case, our autonomous human efforts to build a society on such values had failed. This presented us, he said, with the opportunity to demonstrate that true equality came from recognising we were all created in the image of God; that true solidarity sprang from the notion of brotherhood, being sisters and brothers in God's family; that real freedom was found in the context of love and accountability, not in individualistic self-seeking license; and that true peace involved discovering God's shalom, well-being in every aspect of human existence. For the sake of the future, he concluded, we needed to go back to our biblical roots.

Prabhu Guptara, originally from India, and heading up a UBS think tank in Zurich, asked where globalisation was leading us. Until a few months ago, he said, that was easy

to answer. One view of the future was, until recently, clearly winning; the view that said that greed was good. While Reformational values had shaped so much of the west, a great change took place around the 1908's. Ayn Rand's philosophy, that greed was good, was endorsed by conservatives on both sides of the Atlantic. The exponential growth in recent decades stemmed from this view. A new practical godlessness created the boom of recent years, claimed Prabhu, until the last few months.

While World War 2 had produced a balance of power between the USSR and the USA, communism's collapse twenty years ago had left one superpower. But then 9/11 had introduced a multipolar world, accentuated by the latest crisis.

FEUDALISM?

What then lay ahead? Greater peace or increased regional conflicts? A new world war even? Competitive devaluation and increasing protectionism would lead to the second option, he believed. These were factors to watch closely.

Global society was being confronted with limited choices. A new feudalism could

return, in which a few super-rich would keep the rest of population under control. Alternatively, biblical values could produce a world genuinely humane, just and environmentally responsible. We had for the first time the possibility and means of clothing and feeding everybody.

Yet global society was facing a global civil war, between two sets of ideas: one stemming from the Reformation and even much earlier, going back to Israel; and the other rooted in human rationality, capacity and greed.

The future would lead to a more explicit clash between these two values, predicted Prabhu, as he stepped from the podium.

Next week, we'll share more insights from other speakers.

Till then,

Jeff Fountain

(We apologise for the poor sound quality of the livestream. Videos of the talks will be accessible on www.ywam.eu/symposium by the week's end.)

