

# Ecumenical centers of the Central and Eastern Europe gathered together in Belgrade

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Academic assistant of the Institute of the Ecumenical Studies Pavlo Smytsnyuk and Coordinator of the Distance Learning Master's Program in Ecumenical Studies Fr. Roman Fihos took part in the international theological ecumenical conference in Belgrade (Serbia).



Representatives of the different ecumenical centers of the Central and Eastern Europe together with some prominent contemporary theologians reflected on political theology, on the state of the Church-State relationships in different countries and the role of the religion in secular society. The conference was organized on November, 4-5, by St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute within the framework of DELM network with the support of ICCO-Kerk in Actie.



Fr. Emmanuel Clapsis, Professor of Theology at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Brookline, USA), spoke about justification of human rights in a pluralistic world from the part of the orthodox theologians. He states that we have to look for the common theological

foundations which could be understandable and accepted by the modern world. World Council of Churches and its commission 'Faith and Order', in which father worked for many years, has a huge experience in this issue.

David Hoekema, Professor of Philosophy of the Calvin College at Grand Rapids, USA, analyzed perspectives of the theological discourse from the Maritain and natural law tradition. Argued inadequacy of the Rawlsian and Kantian proposals, he suggested a Wolterstorff's Augustinian model where account of worth is bestowed by divine law.



Pavlo Smytsnyuk, the Academic Assistant of the Institute of Ecumenical Studies and doctoral student of Oxford, UK, raised a question about the ambiguity of incarnation, could Christianity be a civil religion without betraying itself. He stated that Christianity, mixed with the state political power, risks to lose its evangelical content and become an ideology.

Participants of the conference had also a chance to hear about the fundamentalism in Eastern Christianity, the fruits of the Reconciliation commission of the Churches in Canada, the risks of the politicization of the Churches in the Western Balkans, an example of the common Christian cooperation and positive role of the Churches during the civil European Maidan in Kyiv and many other discourses which touched the theme of the church-state relations in different regions of the Eastern and Central Europe. Members of the academic event arrived to the conclusion that current political situation, formed by the secular worldview, offers not only threats for the Churches but first of all provides many opportunities for the dialogue and witnessing the Gospel. Christians should not be afraid of new circumstances but search for the effective instruments of the fruitful communication with the state, develop their political theology, have one voice in promoting Christian values in social and political life of the modern society.



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