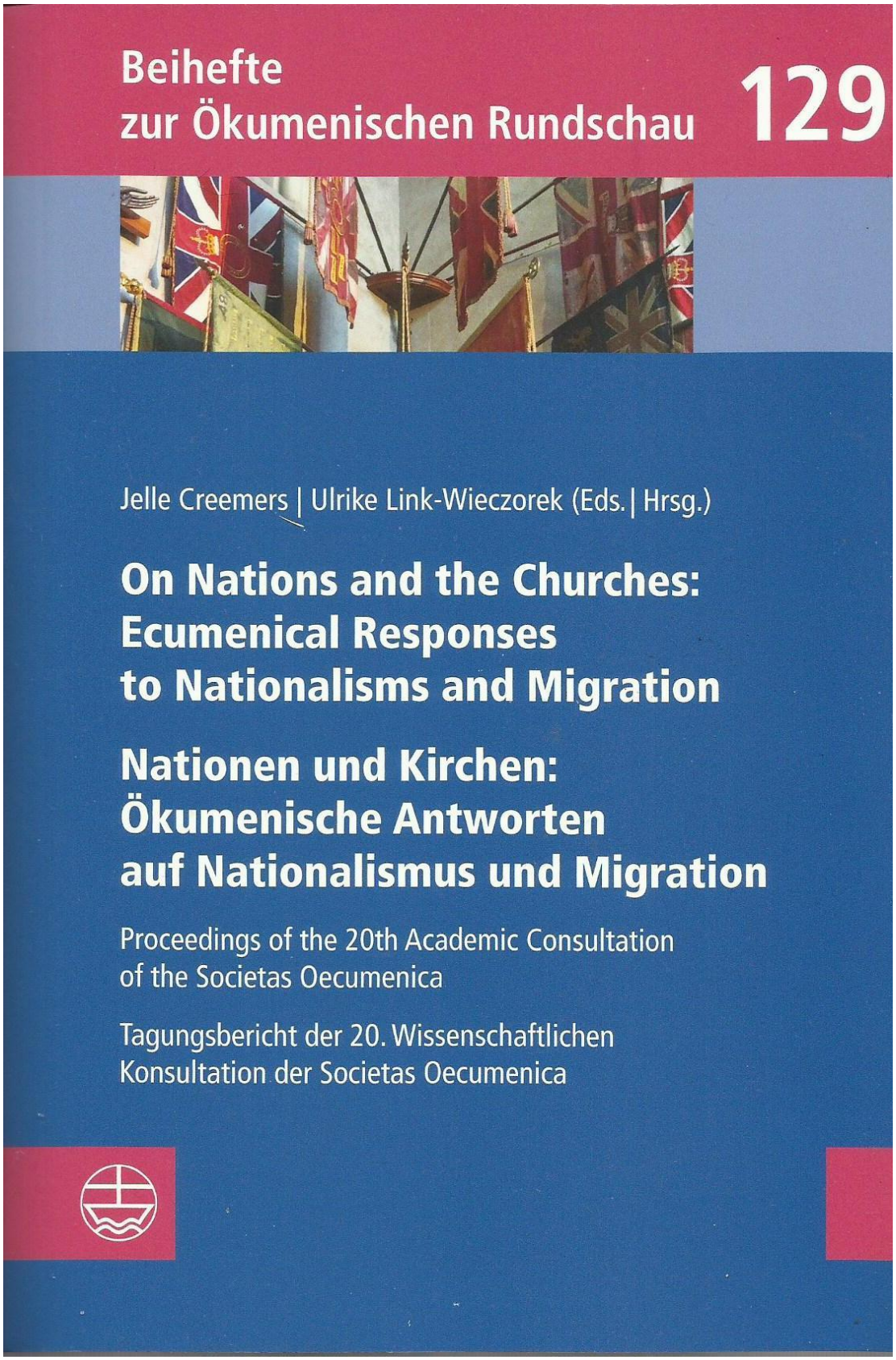
Ecumenical responses to Nationalisms and Migration



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Introduction



In the Consultation (23-29. August 2018) of the Societas Oecumenica in Ludwigshafen and Heidelberg on Nations and the Churches, various ecumenical responses were given to Nationalisms and Migration. There were many workshops. In the following, the reader will find the texts of one of the workshops with two Hungarian ecumenical speakers: the Lutheran Dr. Hab. Péter Szentpétery, Senior Lecturer at the Lutheran Theological University in Budapest and the Roman Catholic Dr. Hab. Mihály Kránitz, Dean of the Pázmány Péter University in Budapest. It was a rather tense workshop.

I am Dr. Margriet Gosker, a Dutch Ecumenical Theologian, and I am a member of the Societas Oecumenica. I also was the leader of this specific workshop. I responded to both Hungarian contributions. The contribution of Mihály Kránitz is surprisingly not included in Jelle Cremers and Ulrike Link-Wieczorek (eds.), *Proceedings of the 20th Academic Consultation of the Societas Oecumenica*, but it is published here. Both contributions (of Mihály Kránitz and that of Péter Szentpétery) and both responses of Margriet Gosker are included in the following document. The discussions within the group were rather tough.

I hope the reader will realise, that my questions in response to Dr. Péter Szentpétery were helpful and some of his answers are already included in his contribution. This is why ecumenical meetings are so important. We learn from each other and we inspire the thoughts of one another. And then we sometimes choose other formulations than before, or add some new thoughts.

That is what Péter did and therefore – as you can see – my questions do not always fit with the present text of Péter. According to my first question: Péter does not speak now of a ‘European Super State’ any more in his new text and he does not use the word ‘oppression’ any longer. His working title in Ludwigshafen was *Creation, Humankind and Nations. National States and Migration Crisis in Europe.* It explains why some of my questions look a bit curious now, but I am sure that our cooperation was fruitful.

Margriet Gosker

Péter Szentpétery

National States and Migration Crisis in Europe

A Hungarian (Lutheran) Point of View



Since 2015, the migration crisis and the reactions and proposals of the leaders of the EU and certain member states have made the problem of the relationship of nation, people and humankind a current issue. It cannot be separated from the question of a closer and closer integration leading some day eventually to a United States of Europe. Are nations and national states still important? Has nationalism brought so much trouble to Europe that all national claims and endeavours should be suppressed? Peoples and nations are historical entities, so they cannot be regarded as orders of creation. *Natio, nationes* have become a key concept in Europe in the 18th century with the rise of national movements. The same is even more emphatically true for the national states. Today's state and cultural environment cannot be understood without the concept of nation. This should be admitted also by those for whom the concept of nation with national consciousness seems overridden and rejectable.[1]

The New Testament regards states, social systems and peoples as realities and takes them seriously into consideration. The authors – like those of the Old Testament – see them as parts of the world created and sustained by the Lord (Acts 14:16). However, they do not lead back the diversity of peoples to the Creator's will. A possible misinterpretation of Acts 17:26-27 could or should be corrected: "He made from one every nation of men

1 Cf. Péter Szentpétery, „Teremtés, emberiség és nemzet. Szükségünk van-e még a nemzetre?" [Creation, Humankind and Nation. Is Nation Still Needed?] in Lajos Szabó (Szerk.) *Teológia és nemzetek. Az Evangélikus Hittudományi Egyetem oktatóinak tanulmánykötete* [Theology and Nations. Study Volume of the Professorate of the Lutheran Theological University edited by Lajos Szabó]. (Budapest: Luther Kiadó, 2016, 119-131), 119 f.) http://real.mtak.hu/54673/1/Szentpetery_Peter_u.pdf [accessed April 16,2020]. http://reformacio2017.hu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Szabo-Lajos-Teologia.pdf

(εποιησεν τε εξ ενος πάν εθνος ανθρώπων) to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted period and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and fight him."[2] Paul had to know, of course that he did not simply speak about the peoples of his time but about the same forefather's descendants, who had been split up into nations of different languages after building the tower of Babel. As for the connection between creation and peoples, one could say that the Lord 'created' – probably not a great number of – languages which were diversified during centuries and millennia. According to the Scriptures marriage, family and the whole humankind belong to the original order of creation, not peoples and nations (by far not in today's sense). But let us make a remark that Ernest Gellner, whose work *Nations and Nationalism* has been essential in this field since its publication, regards ancient Israel as a nation before the modern age.[3] *Leuenberg Document 7*, Church – People – State – Nation – is a good short summary of the main problems and developments which have determined our present situation, even if the problem of migration had by far not yet been so serious at the time of its publication (2002):

> "3.2.1 With the French Revolution, the term 'nation' acquired a new meaning. Nation was defined as the new political subject. In contrast to other states, nationalism in France acquired its special characteristics. Hence the 'people' also became a subject which went to war in the revolutionary wars. The national army replaced the professional forces of earlier times.
>
> 3.2.2 During the wars of liberation, Germany demonstrated a strong national consciousness with anti-French and anti-Enlightenment characteristics. Based on it, romanticism set out to find the mythical roots of the peoples. There was growing interest in groups of people and in national culture. Under the Habsburg monarchy, a number of ethnic groups developed their own national consciousness and created their own literary languages. These developments influenced the church and theology."[4]

[2] Acts 17:26-27 quoted from Revised Standard Version [RSV].
[3] Ibid. Cf. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2006, first dition 1983, Introduction by John Breuilly), xiviii.
[4] Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft/Leuenberg Church Fellowship, *Kirche – Volk – Staat – Nation/Church – People – State – Nation*, Frankfurt am Main 2002, 121.

As for the Habsburg monarchy, it is of course more or less true for the Hungarian people, although literature and national consciousness looking back to the earlier great times of the country had been important before, too.

So, even if peoples and nations do not belong to God's original order of creation, on the other hand, according to Luther's doctrine on twofold governance, good governance belongs to God's order of providence. The order of providence cannot be changed from one day to another, even if it should be adjusted to the current circumstances.

So, this good governance cannot (fully) lack the frames of national states, being able to represent the interests of their population and protect them if necessary. From a (Hungarian) Lutheran point of view the question is how the twofold governance works – if at all – in treating the problems of migration.[5] The parliament and the government should or must act first of all on behalf and for the interest of their electors, or more exactly, for the whole people, including even those who did not vote for them.

On the other hand, migrants have their human rights, too, but it should be clearly and unambiguously defined what really belongs to these. The solution or even only the treatment of the problem cannot be achieved by welcoming and settling down millions and tens or hundreds of millions of people of very different social, cultural and religious background in Europe or any other part of the world. Solidarity cannot automatically mean the extension of any current crisis phenomena to all EU member states. Let me quote from the Seventh Amendment of the Basic Law of the country, accepted on 26th June 2018:

"We hold that it is a fundamental obligation of the state to protect

[5] Cf. Ádám Galambos,Evangéli kus m hely a migrációról [Lutheran Workshop on Migration], *evangelikus*, September 04/13, 2015. http://www.evangelikus.hu/evang%C3%A9likus-m%C5%B1hely-migr%C3%A1ci%C3%B3r%C3%B31. On the peak of the migration/refugee crisis 2015 presiding bishop at that time Peter Gáncs stresses the difference of responsibility of the government and the church. It is the task of the government to keep order, to establish refugee camps and take care of them; The responsibility of the church is to preach and to witness the gospel which is about the acceptance of the other and the help for the needy. Bishop Tamás Fabiny (since 2018 presiding bishop) underlined that the two fields of the twofold governance do not fully overlap and sometimes in the name of love certain decisions should be made even opposing those of the (state) power to help people in need. So the question is how the doctrine of the twofold governance in times of crisis works and to what extend, although no one – including myself – questions its principle. Since the 2015 crisis the aspects of security have been stressed more and more by church leaders including the Lutheran ones. In my opinion a Lutheran should also ask what *ordo caritatis* means (S Th II, II,26).

our self-identity rooted in our historical constitution." (National Avowal) and: "No alien population shall be settled in Hungary. Any foreign citizen, except "persons of having the right of free movement and residence, shall be allowed to live in the territory of Hungary on the basis of his or her application individually evaluated by the Hungarian authorities." (Article XIV, 1) Further:

> "Hungary shall, upon request, grant asylum to non-Hungarian citizens being persecuted or having a well-founded fear of persecution in their native country or in the country of their usual residence for reasons of race, nationality, membership of a particular social group, religious or political belief, if they do not receive protection from their country of origin or from any other country. Any non-Hungarian citizen arriving in the territory of Hungary, through a country where he or she was not exposed to persecution or a direct risk of persecution shall not be entitled asylum" (Article XIV, 4)".[6]

Those opposing Hungarian measurements for stopping illegal migration have repeatedly drawn a parallel between the present situation and that of Hungarian refugees after the suppression of the revolution in 1956. Hungarians in refugee camps in Austria and in other states took notice of not being allowed to leave the camp until their identity, personal data and motivations were fully cleared up and they were received by a country. No one could hear that many or even most of them had thrown away their papers, many of them had had several identities and an improbable proportion of them had been born on the 1st of January of any year or, declared themselves under age in spite of all appearances. Hungarian refugees were overwhelmingly integrated or even assimilated and many of them became honoured citizens of their new homes. In spite of all problems it was not hopelessly difficult because, even if there are differences we belong to the same culture and civilisation as the receiving countries.

We can help enormously more people in their original habitations than trying to ensure them European life standards (or often higher than that of many Europeans) from one day to another.

The 'Hungary Helps' program is aimed at giving assistance to people in their home countries, at present mostly in the Middle East by building

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The Government of Hungary, *Bill number T/332 Seventh Amendment of the Basic Law of Hungary. unofficial translation* https://www.helsinki.hu/wp-content/uploads/T332-Constitution-Amendment-29-May-2018-ENG.pdf

and renovating schools, hospitals and churches. Hungarian churches and church aid organisations take part in certain projects, too. Hungary has e. g. donated 5 million euros to build a hospital in Syria.[7] A school in Northern Iraq is under construction for 600 refugee children, Christians and Muslims alike.[8] Of course, those persecuted because of their (overwhelmingly Christian) religion etc. and can be regarded as refugees should be received as long as the reasons of fleeing exist. The fact is that 75-80 percent of those persecuted in the world because of their religions are Christians.

Let us mention the Stipendium Hungaricum awarded by the Initiative: to students from around 50 countries, nearly half of which are affected by the immigration crisis, e. g. Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Nigeria, Ethiopia. The number of SH scholarship-holders exceeded 6.400 in the academic year of 2017-2018, and they are of course not only Christians. The Scholarship for Young Christian People from persecuted and discriminated situation was given for 87 persons.[9]

As program coordinator Péter Heltai says

> "… the Hungarian government's position is to protect its sovereignty with necessary internal measures (e. g. protection of its borders), moreover, to provide efficient and 'smart' help by tackling the problem at the roots. This means that Hungary pursues a policy of humanitarian help and international development which, within the framework of the Hungary Helps initiative, provides help in the crisis areas themselves. (…). Hence, the focus is, rather than spending the same amount in Europe for immigration-related initiatives, to spend it on the crisis area where the value of the same sum of money is four to five times [or even much] higher. (…) an international development and human strategy was created by the government for the 2014-2020 period. (…) An important part of this strategy was the establishment – by the Ministry of Human Capacities at the end of 2016 – of the Deputy State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians."

[7] Hungary donates 5 million euros towards building a hospital in Syria.
See http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/hungary-donates-5-million-euros-towards-building-a-hospital-in-syria/ (accessed 18 August 2018)
[8] Péter Heltai, *The Hungary Helps Initiative – A Hungarian Face of Solidarity* 21 March, 2018 http://hungarianreview.com/article/20180321_the_hungary_helps_initiative_a_hungarian_face_of_solidarity (accessed 18 August 2018)
[9] Ibid. 6.

to maintain relations and to coordinate material assistance to them. Hungary has spent at least 160 million euros annually for the management of the migration crisis since 2014.[10]
Reformed Bishop József Steinbach, president of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary said in an interview to Easter:

> "Following Jesus Christ means love and inclusion. Neither the Christian churches nor the present government parties say anything different. But I think it impossible to help others in a way which involves the risk of endangering our treasures. This danger is, however, tangible. Many deny that but only until their families, children are caught by something wrong. It causes a pain then, but then a great one. (…) … those who really suffer and are persecuted, not speaking about Christians, must be helped, but the solution can only be that the problem should be treated on the spot. What is important that all people should live a happy life, worthy of man in their homes and cultures."[11]

National states and governments – in spite of all kinds of social engineering projects – seem at present and still for a long time indispensable to really represent and protect the people who elected them. But what else would really be of vital importance that Europe should find back to her Christian roots? If that were the case the effects of migration would cause a much smaller problem. The future of Europe, our (Christian European) culture is at stake, even without migration, either.

[10] Ibid.
[11] Az Úr nem engedi elveszni Európát [The Lord Does Not Let Europe Perish] *Magyar Idők* [Hungarian Times] 31 March 2018, https://magyaridok.hu/belfold/az-ur-nem-engedi-elveszni-europat-2949859/ (accessed 18 August Translated from the Hungarian by P. Sz.).

What Are the Churches Doing?

Questions in Response to Péter Szentpétery

Margriet Gosker[12]



The following paper will formulate a Dutch Calvinistic Protestant response to a Hungarian Lutheran point of view, how it is presented by Péter Szentpétery.

The first question I want to ask you is about Nations. How do the different Nations of Europe relate to the whole of Europe as an entity, or as a community of values? I wonder why you are thinking Europe is on its way to become a United States of Europe? You even did use here the word 'oppression'. This seems to be a very strong expression. Why are you so worried about this? In my view it is a hypothetical scenario of the unification of Europe into a Super State. I know some Germans may think that way,[13] but that vision was firmly rejected by Angela Merkel's closest CDU allies.[14] I think also The Netherlands are not in favour of it.
Our Prime Minister Mark Rutte, for example, told the European Parliament recently (on 13 June 2018) that the European Union is like a 'giraffe'.[15]
He referred to the story of a giraffe that Julius Caesar took to Rome.
The animal was rather difficult to define, but easy to recognise.

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[12] Rev. Harvey Richardson, Methodist minister in Britain, improved my English. I thank him for his kind help.

[13] Martin Schulz gave a speech at the SPD's party conference in Berlin that called for the creation of a "United States of Europe" by 2025. Philip Oltermann: Martin Schulz wants United States of Europe within eight years. The guardian, December 07, 2017 [accessed 20-11-2018]. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/07/martin-schulz-united-states-of-europe-germany-sdp.

[14] Volker Kauder, the 'right hand of Merkel', called the proposal "*more of a threat to the EU and citizens' approval of Europe",* https://www.rt.com/news/412614-germany-cdu-rejects-united-states-of-europe/ [accessed 14-04-2020].

[15] https://www.government.nl/documents/speeches/2018/06/13/speech-by-mark-rutte-prime-minister-of-the-netherlands-european-parliament-strasbourg [accessed 14-04-2020].

Well, Europe is also difficult to define because of its diversity, but easy to recognise because of its values. Mister Rutte said:

> "*Europe's wealth lies in the diversity of its Member States, the regions, the histories, and all the different languages and cultures. That can't be summed up in a few words. At the same time, Europe is easy to recognise as a community of values and a united partnership. We don't have to agree on everything – and we probably won't today – in order to recognise the value of unity in a fast-changing world*."

Well, I could speak about Brexit or other European problems, but I will not do that. We are still theologians, not politicians anyway. But you brought it up yourself, and that makes me wonder why you are doing this? If you have specific reasons to fear that Europe is on its way to a Super State, once again: what makes you so worried about the future of Europe?

According to 'Humankind' – the second word in the title of your presentation – you told us about several good Hungarian initiatives to help refugees in their own original habitations, like the *Hungary Helps Programm*,[16] the *Stipendium Hungaricum*[17] and the *Scholarship for young Christan people*.[18] I know for example the *Hungary Helps Programm* supports the Virgin Mary School in Erbil, in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, also with the help of the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church. Is the school already functioning? If this is a school for more than 600 Muslim and Christian refugee children, could you give us an idea of the balance? How many other faith (Muslim) children are welcomed in this school compared to Christian children? The *Stipendium Hungaricum* and the *Scholarship for young Christian people* are open to people from all over the word, are they not? So – in the frame of our conference – I would like to ask you: Are these Programmes also related to the help for migrants in difficult situations and refugees? To what extent? These programmes you mention are all organised by the Hungarian government, I presume? This raises another question. I wonder if you could tell us a little more about what the Churches are doing in this field, especially the Lutheran Church? I was told by a Lutheran Minister, that the Lutheran Church is doing a lot more than the Reformed Church. Is that a fair observation in your opinion? A

[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USzyhkdb_HQ [accessed 14-04-2020].
[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZUf4h3lJJE [accessed 14-04-2020].
[18] http://studyinhungary.hu/study-in-hungary/menu/stipendium-hungaricum-scholarship-programme [accessed 14-04-2020].

few years ago I was part of a delegation from the Dutch Protestant Church visiting the Hungarian Reformed Church and during that visit (in 2015) we gained the impression that the Reformed Church of Hungary is not doing much, and even sometimes refuses to help migrants in need of help. It would be good if you could respond to this also.

Your presentation is called 'Creation, Humankind and Nations'. My next question is about 'Creation'. You told us, that nations are historical entities, but they cannot be regarded as 'orders of creation'. Not only as an ecumenical theologian, but also as a female theologian I am very happy to hear this. I appreciate everyone who denies such so-called 'orders of creation', because I do not appreciate these so-called 'orders of creation' at all. They are misused many times by male theologians to keep women under the power of men. They are used as instruments to keep women out of the ministries of the church and they are preventing them to take their responsibilities in Church Leadership. May I ask why you are telling us this? Why it is so important? Could you respond to this too?

Finally, I wondered why you quote the Reformed bishop József Steinbach instead of the Lutheran bishop Fabini? Steinbach thinks it is impossible to help others in a way which involves the risk of endangering our own treasures. In my view this shows anxiety. In April this year the Lutheran bishop Tamás Fabiny was a bit more critical to the Orbán Government, which is keen to project itself as defending the Christian heritage in Hungary and in the whole of Europe. Fabiny knows – and also you and I know – that at the times of the Turkish invasion in the 16th century, Hungary was trying to defend freedom and Christianity. This attitude seems understandable, because Hungarians live a lot more with the past than we in the Netherlands do. But how can a government simply say that we have the same situation nowadays? Bishop Fabiny says: "This whole attitude that we are 'defending Christian values' is not really friendly – and perhaps not even true. And if somebody has to defend Christian values, it must be the Church, and not the government."[19] It is certainly true, the Netherlands and also Scandinavia has become very secular. The proper answer to secularism and anxiety, I think, is what our collegue professor Mihály Kránitz already said in his workshop: "Let us ask the Holy Spirit that when the bell rings, this may wake us up to stronger faith and genuine activity, building up the Church of Christ".

[19] https://budapestbeacon.com/if-somebody-has-to-defend-christian-values-it-must-be-the-church-and-not-the-government-an-interview-with-bishop-tamas-fabiny/ [accessed 14-04-2020].