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Evangelicals and European Integration

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SUMMARY

This article surveys the way in which evangelicals, through bodies such as the Evangelical Alliance, engaged in pan-European co-operation in the nineteenth century. It explores the tensions that arose in the first half of the twentieth century, but shows that since the end of the Second World War important initiatives have been taken

to link evangelicals across Europe. The new situation that has been faced by evangelicals as a result of the end of communism and the enlargement of the EU is analysed. The article argues in favour of an important role for evangelicals in the new Europe since they are well equipped by virtue of their sense of common identity to reach out across traditional divides.

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ZUAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel untersucht die Wege, auf denen Evangelikale auf gesamteuropäischer Ebene im 19. Jahrhundert zusammenarbeiteten. Er beleuchtet die Spannungen, die in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts auftraten, aber zeigt dann, dass seit dem Ende des 2. Weltkriegs wichtige Initiativen ergriffen wurden, um Evangelikale in ganz

Europa zu verbinden. Die neue Situation, der sich die Evangelikalen in der Folge des Endes des Kommunismus und der EU-Erweiterung stellen mussten, wird analysiert. Der Artikel plädiert für eine wichtige Rolle der Evangelikalen im neuen Europa, da sie aufgrund ihres Sinnes für eine gemeinsame Identität gut ausgerüstet sind, jenseits traditioneller Trennungen zu wirken.

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RESUMÉ

Cet essai retrace de quelle manière les Évangéliques se sont engagés dans des coopération pan-européennes au XIXe siècle, notamment dans des organisations comme l'Alliance Évangélique. Il présente les tensions qui ont surgi dans la première moitié du XXe siècle, mais montre que, depuis la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale, des

initiatives importantes ont contribué à l'établissement de liens entre les Évangéliques à travers l'Europe. L'auteur offre une analyse de la situation nouvelle qui résulte de la fin du communisme et de l'élargissement de l'Union Européenne. Il considère que les Évangéliques ont un rôle important à jouer dans la nouvelle Europe dans la mesure où leur sens d'une identité commune peut leur permettre de surmonter des barrières traditionnelles.

* * * *

In this study I first of all give a brief historical overview, from the mid-nineteenth century, of evangelical Christian co-operation across Europe, especially as expressed in the Evangelical Alliance, which was formed in 1846. The Alliance brought together individuals and groups from different countries who were committed to the evangelical distinctives of personal conversion, the authority of the Bible, the message of the cross of Christ and a desire to be

active in spreading the Christian message in word and deed.¹ I then analyze the recent past in Europe – the post-Communist period. I give particular attention to the Baptist contribution to the idea of European integration, since the European Baptist Federation is a well-organised pan-European body within the wider evangelical community. Evangelicals are, however, to be found in all Protestant denominations. In Britain the denominational

affiliation of those evangelicals who worked most closely together in the nineteenth century was typically Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist. All had been affected by the evangelical revivals of the eighteenth century across Europe and North America and were part of a growing, influential movement.² Pentecostal and charismatic groups have typically affiliated to Evangelical Alliances in more recent years. The issue of European integration has been brought to the forefront of the thinking of many European evangelicals through the enlargement of the European Union and this is an issue which has received considerable attention from the European Evangelical Alliance.

Europe and Evangelical Alliance beginnings

There was a distinct European dimension present from the time of the formation of Evangelical Alliance in London in 1846. Of the 922 attendees at the inaugural conference, 84% came from Britain, 8% from the United States, 7% from Continental Europe and the rest from other areas of the world.³ Continental European leaders included Adolphe Monod, a university theological Professor in France, August Tholuck, Professor at Halle University, Germany, and Johann Oncken, the powerful leader of the German Baptists.⁴ Baptists were emerging and in some instances expanding rapidly in Europe, often drawing from existing renewal movements.⁵ The French representatives present in London committed themselves to forming a branch of the Alliance in France, Belgium and French-speaking Switzerland. Branches of the Alliance were also formed in North and South Germany. In Spain, many of the leading evangelicals within the Protestant community united in forming an Alliance. An Alliance was formed in Constantinople, Turkey, in 1855. In Bulgaria, Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists came together to found an Alliance in 1867. These are examples of the evangelical expansion that was taking place.

Probably the most creative thinker within the Evangelical Alliance movement of this early period was Philip Schaff. The roots of Schaff's spirituality were in German pietism. Schaff emphasised in 1872 that the kind of evangelical union he had in view was 'as far removed from indifference to denominational distinctives as from sectarian bigotry and exclusiveness'.⁶ In other words, he did not wish to play down the unique traditions of different

Christian bodies, but neither did he wish denominational features to be exalted above the beliefs that all Christians held in common. Two years later Schaff indicated more fully his real priorities. He urged the cultivation of 'a truly evangelical, catholic spirit' towards all Christians – 'all who love our Lord Jesus Christ' as he put it – of whatever creed. It was not that Schaff wanted to give up the creeds of the Church. Indeed he spoke of an 'ecumenical consensus' being expressed in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. Rather he wished for liberality of spirit. 'We must subordinate denominationalism', he argued, 'to catholicity, and catholicity to our general Christianity'.⁷ On several occasions, Schaff expounded his dream of a universal Church that brought together Protestantism, Orthodoxy and Catholicism.⁸

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century national Evangelical Alliances across Europe worked together on several issues, such as evangelism, education and religious freedom. Many evangelicals were not part of the State churches in their countries and so they felt deeply about the needs of religious minorities. Also, the fact of not belonging to state churches encouraged them to reach out in fellowship across national boundaries. A number of Evangelical Alliance conferences were held in different cities in Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, each attracting several thousand people. In Copenhagen, in 1884, the King and Queen of Denmark attended an Alliance conference and E. B. Underhill, secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, praised the protection given by a former king of Denmark to William Carey's Baptist mission in the Danish settlement of Serampore, India.⁹ The First World War hindered pan-European evangelical fellowship, since German-British evangelical co-operation, which had been close, was dealt a heavy blow. Although some evangelicals were pacifists, many supported their own country's troops.¹⁰ In late 1914 Henry Martyn Gooch, the General Secretary of the British Evangelical Alliance, noted that Evangelical Alliance leaders in Germany were writing and speaking in favour of the German military cause. He made it clear that he respected their devotion to Christ and their honest convictions, and his conclusion was that they did not know the full story of the events that led up to the war. Gooch warned against believing evil of German brothers in Christ.¹¹

Tensions in Europe

Following the end of the First World War, evangelicals tried to reach out in fellowship across Europe and to resolve the tensions created by war. Developments in Russia from the Revolution onwards heightened Evangelical Alliance socio-political concerns. In 1923 the British Alliance asked whether the time had come for a 'step towards closer Christian Unity which would save England and the world from the tragedy of Russia under a Bolshevik Government'.¹² It was not obvious how this closer unity would be achieved, but there was a clear desire to come together against the common foe of atheism. There was probably a wish, also, to achieve closer unity with evangelicals in the USA.¹³ It was the anti-Christian measures of the Soviet government rather than the system of socialism itself that were condemned. The Evangelical Alliance was heavily involved in campaigning for religious freedom – for Orthodox Church believers as well as evangelical Christians – in Russia. Adam Podin from Estonia, a significant Baptist leader and evangelist who was the British Evangelical Alliance's main link with Russia in the 1920s, met regularly with Orthodox Church leaders.¹⁴

One part of Europe in which the British and other national Evangelical Alliances took a particular interest was Czechoslovakia. In the 1920s, at a time of strong Czech nationalism, evangelicals in the Hussite tradition were welcoming many new people into their congregations. At the invitation of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren, Henry Martyn Gooch visited Czechoslovakia in 1922, travelling by the Orient Express from Paris. He had been to Prague twenty-five years before, and was delighted to see the evangelical progress that had taken place since then. He suggested that a new Reformation was in the making.¹⁵ Czech leaders were invited to Britain. These links continued during the later sufferings of the Czech people. Moving on from Czechoslovakia, Gooch visited Hungary and spoke at Evangelical Alliance meetings, along with other speakers from across Europe. In 1931 Gooch travelled to Albania and spoke to groups made up of people from Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant backgrounds. The hopes of evangelicals for reconciliation between peoples seemed to be in line with wider aspirations for peace. In 1931 one British Baptist minister, Henry Cook, who has a deep interest in European Baptist affairs, led his 1,000 strong congregation in an affirmation of the role of the League of Nations in the

search for peace.¹⁶ This period saw great interest in the possibility that countries in Europe would see spiritual renewal and greater unity between diverse nations. These hopes were difficult to fulfil.

The rise of Nazi power, the treatment of Baptists in Eastern Europe and then the Second World War constituted further massive set-backs to the instinctive pan-Europeanism of many evangelicals. Some evangelicals wanted to stress continuing solidarity with German evangelicals, who were mostly Lutherans and Baptists. This was the stance of committed Europeans such as Henry Martyn Gooch and the British Baptist leader, J. H. Rushbrooke, who was General Secretary and then President of the Baptist World Alliance. Both travelled extensively in Germany and met leaders of the Confessing Church.¹⁷ Rushbrooke also invested a great deal of time in seeking freedom for Baptists in Romania. When almost all the approximately 1,600 Baptists churches in Romania were closed through Government decree in 1938, Rushbrooke organised an international campaign.¹⁸ The British Alliance was actively involved in helping refugees from central and Eastern Europe – especially Poles, Czechs, Armenians and Greeks. It also assured the Chief Rabbi in Britain, J. H. Hertz, of the desire of the Alliance to relieve the plight of Jewish refugees and it called on the British government 'to offer the widest possible asylum'.¹⁹ The British Alliance had a deep interest in Karl Barth's stand against the Nazis and in the courageous leaders of the Confessing Church in Germany such as Martin Neimüller. It quoted Barth's statement that what was at stake in Germany was the call to practice 'the truth that God stands above all other gods'.²⁰

New initiatives

After the Second World War two important pan-European developments took place. The first was the founding of the European Baptist Federation. There had been many earlier contacts between the various Baptists in Europe, especially because of the German connections. For example, Karl Johann Scharschmidt was baptised by Johann Oncken in Hamburg in 1845, and came to Romania in 1856 with his wife, Augusta. Other German Baptists, and one English woman, Elizabeth Peacock Clarke, found themselves in Romania and began to meet together. Scharschmidt baptised enough converts to plant a church among the German-speaking population of Bucharest. This church became an important base for Baptists in Romania.²¹ Many

European Baptist groups belonged to the Baptist World Alliance, founded in 1905 and conferences were held which drew together European Baptists. Thoughts about a Baptist organisation with a specific European focus came into focus at a Baptist World Alliance European Conference held in London from 13-17 August 1948. Representatives from ten countries, all Western European, met in Paris in October 1950 to take part in the formation of the European Baptist Federation (EBF).²²

The second important development in the post-war period was the founding of the European Evangelical Alliance. As a result largely of American initiatives, a meeting was held in Holland in 1951 at which a World Evangelical Fellowship was formed. Although most delegates at that conference affirmed the need for a worldwide fellowship of evangelicals, there was not unanimity. When the vote was taken, representatives from Germany abstained, and France, Denmark, Norway and Sweden opposed the idea of a world body. There was some hesitation among representatives of the British Evangelical Alliance, but they decided to join nonetheless.²³ The background was that the World Council of Churches had been formed in 1948 and there was a fear among some Europeans that American evangelicals wanted to form a rival, anti-ecumenical body.²⁴ The European Baptist Federation leadership was wary of the World Evangelical Fellowship. An EBF minute from 1952 reads: 'Dr Petersen [F. Bredhal Petersen from Denmark, one of the founders of the EBF] spoke of a plan to form a World Evangelical Fellowship which would embrace Continental branches of the World's Evangelical Alliance and certain Evangelicals in America. He feared this might tend to introduce American controversies into Europe.'²⁵ Petersen seems to have led opposition to the American scheme. It was in part under his leadership that a European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) was set up in 1952, independent of any American organization.²⁶ The two bodies, WEF and the EEA, did not come together until 1968.

The 1950s saw a determined effort on the part of evangelicals in Europe to cross over the boundaries created by the cold war. In many Eastern European countries there was enormous pressure on evangelicals. Some freedom to engage with evangelicals in the West was, however, at times allowed. The Hungarian and Romanian Baptist Unions joined the EBF in 1956 and two years later the Russian Baptists were received into membership at a meeting in West Berlin.²⁷ An EBF report in 1963 encouraged

European Baptists to 'think continental'. More than 50% of European Baptists were by that time in Eastern Europe.²⁸ By then some Baptists were involved not only in the European Baptist Federation and the European Evangelical Alliance but also in the Conference of European Churches (CEC/KEK), a body bringing together Protestant (State Church and Free Church) and Orthodox Churches based in Europe.²⁹ For Lutheran and Reformed churches the idea of a European Ecumenical body to serve as a vehicle for pan-European fellowship was important and they were instrumental in the formation of CEC in 1959. Baptists were invited to participate but at first few did so. It was only after a Welsh Baptist, Glenn Garfield Williams, was appointed General Secretary of CEC in 1962, that Baptist involvement became more evident.³⁰ In the late 1960s the Roman Catholic Council of European Bishops' Conference became a partner in dialogue with CEC. Baptist minister, Keith Clements, present General Secretary of CEC, has asked: 'Is there really one Europe,... or would it be more honest to admit that in reality there are two: historically, the Latin (both Catholic and Protestant) West, and the Orthodox East, both now overlain with very different social, cultural and political values?'³¹ Evangelicals would answer 'no', since they are found equally in East and West.

Evangelical bridges from East to West

Fellowship across Europe continued and developed in the 1970s and 1980s despite the many continuing restrictions faced by evangelicals living in communist countries. In the West there were signs of evangelical growth after some set-backs in the 1960s over ecumenical issues.³² Internal disputes began to seem less important than the needs of the world. A terrible earthquake hit Romania in 1977 and the Baptist Seminary was badly damaged and in need of rebuilding. At the Vienna Council of the European Baptist Federation in 1978 it was decided to allocate substantial money towards the reconstruction of the Seminary.³³ Gerhard Claas, a German Baptist and visionary international Baptist leader (General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance), was active in the 1980s to bridge East and West within Europe. He worked with Alexei Bichkov, General Secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union, to bring about a situation in which Baptists were given permission to print or import to Russia thousands of Russian New Testaments plus

thousands of hymn books and concordances.³⁴ The Baptist World reported in 1985 that the government of the Soviet Union had also granted a permit to import New Testament Commentaries that were being translated into Russian. Baptists in Poland and Hungary had been given authorization to proceed with construction of facilities for seminaries.³⁵

At the eighth European Baptist Congress in Budapest in 1989, a year which represented an historic turning point for European Baptists and other evangelicals (not to say for the whole continent of Europe) as it coincided with the fall of the communist governments across Eastern Europe, Alexei Bichkov from Russia was also able to announce that he had been notified by the Council of Religious Affairs in Moscow that the Seminary which the Baptists had dreamed of could now go ahead and that other longed-for freedoms were coming. This 1989 EBF Congress was the first Congress to be held in Eastern Europe and had great symbolic significance, representing as it did the hopes for a new Europe. It was by far the biggest EBF Congress ever. The President of the Hungarian parliament gave the Baptists a welcome and said that the Baptist emphasis on individual faith and the responsibility of every member to share in government would be key to the building of a new Europe. The climax of the Congress was an ecumenical rally in Hungary's largest stadium at which Billy Graham preached. The stadium's official capacity was 73,000. An estimated 90,000 came. Newspapers, radio and TV gave the event maximum coverage for days. Many thousands responded to Graham's appeal for public witness to Christian commitment.³⁶

A new evangelical impetus took place across Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the East, national Evangelical Alliances that had been outlawed were formed once more. In Albania, for example, an Alliance which had first been formed in 1892 was re-established in 1992. By 1998 it was playing an active part in the formation of a new constitution for the country. Similarly, Bulgarian evangelicals, who had suffered severe repression during the communist period, came together again and the Bulgarian Alliance became a member of the EEA in 1993.³⁷ A Bulgarian Baptist pastor, Nik Nedelchev, became the President of the EEA. It was clear that evangelicals from Central and Eastern Europe were going to play a crucial role in the new European home. At a European Church Growth conference held at London Bible College in March 1992, Paul Negru from Romania, who was then

pursuing PhD studies at London Bible College, spoke about two possibilities: either that spiritual advance in Eastern Europe would affect the rest of Europe, or that Western secularism would penetrate Eastern countries. He considered that Europe was at a cross roads and that the churches had a crucial part to play.³⁸ This view was shared by the leaders of the EBF, and after the Theology and Education Division of the EBF met in Moldova in 1993 a paper was issued which has continued to form an important document seeking to express a European Baptist identity.³⁹ This sense of pan-European identity has encouraged many Baptist churches in countries such as Britain to embrace partnership with churches in, for example, Romania, and this has assisted mission work.

In the early 1990s a great deal of energetic leadership was offered to the EBF. Karl-Heinz Walter, who was a pastor of the German Baptist Union, became EBF General Secretary at the EBF Congress in Budapest in 1989. The ten-year ministry of Karl Heinz Walter was marked by dramatic expansion in the number of member bodies of the EBF and by concerted attempts to build a new fellowship across Europe and in particular to provide support and relief for the newly-freed communities of central and eastern Europe. Karl-Heinz called together European Baptist in January 1992 at the German Free Church Conference Centre, Dorfweil, to share first hand information about the changing situation. Baptist Relief-Europe aid projects were set up. Countries that were given practical help by the wider Baptist family included Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine (Chernobyl children), Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Yugoslavia. In the various projects there was concern to see Europeans working in partnership with other Europeans. This was at a time of worry that evangelicals were part of the process of Americanization. Baptists wished to show that they were not beholden to America, although they appreciated American Baptist partnership, and also they could and did co-operate within Europe with other Christians. In 1991 the Pope invited fifteen leaders of other Churches to meet with the European Catholic Bishops at the Vatican to consider the theme 'The Re-evangelization of Europe'. Karl-Heinz Walter represented the European Baptists. He pointed to the strong Baptist concern for evangelism, for the Bible and *diakonia* and showed that Baptists were not an American church but had their roots in Europe.⁴⁰ Evangelical theologians such as James Packer, an Anglican, explored the common ground between

evangelicals and Catholics. An 8,000-word declaration was produced ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium’.⁴¹ New bridges were being built.

United witness

Since the early 1990s there has been an increasing awareness on the part of Baptists and other evangelicals that there is a remarkable opportunity to express again a united witness across Europe. This has largely been embodied in co-operative mission, in aid, in prayer and in education. The place of prayer is indicated by the fact that in 2001 400,000 German evangelicals met together during the Evangelical Alliance Week of Prayer.⁴² Evangelicals are not only seeking spiritual renewal; they are also looking outwards at the political situation in the new Europe.⁴³ The EBF has set up a network of lawyers across Europe to specialize in human rights issues and this group has been involved in strategic issues. Across Europe there is an emerging younger leadership among Baptists and other evangelicals which is prepared to engage socially and politically. The EEA set up an office in Brussels in 1994, with Julia Doxat Purser from Britain, who has a degree in European Studies, as the EEA representative. Before then, it often seemed that every other worldview except evangelical Christianity was seeking to influence the European political agenda. The EEA insists that it is neither ‘pro’ nor ‘anti’ the EU as such.⁴⁴ Rather the EEA encourages those with influence in Brussels to act in ways that promote justice, peace, generosity and righteousness. It works particularly on religious freedom issues. It is also concerned about questions like immigration and treatment of refugees.⁴⁵

European Baptists also saw new possibilities in the 1990s for strengthening witness through pan-European theological education. In most former communist countries evangelical seminaries had not been permitted. Throughout the 1990s Baptists were often at the forefront among those who grasped hold of the new opportunity and established national seminaries and also many smaller Bible Schools. In the early 1990s, in the light of the number of new national Baptists seminaries being founded and the de-funding of the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Switzerland by the Trustees of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, there was a search for a new home and a new role for this seminary, which was owned by the EBF. A statement of

1993 clarified some of the prime objectives for a re-shaped IBTS. This included focusing on a two-year Master of Theology degree to be offered to those who had done initial ministerial formation in their home Baptist Union seminary; developing the profile of lay education; promoting IBTS as a place for Baptists and others to confer; developing the possibility of doctoral studies and engaging in specialised training in youth work, mission and evangelism and Baptist identity. The European Baptist Unions agreed that IBTS should be relocated to Prague, as a central city in the new Europe and a much cheaper place than Zürich, and this move happened in May 1994.⁴⁶

A site on the edge of the city of Prague, in the historic Šárka Valley, which was in need of a great deal of work, was developed for the seminary. The re-focused IBTS now offers a variety of courses, including Master’s degrees in the fields of Biblical Studies, Baptist and Anabaptist Studies, Mission and Evangelism, and Applied Theology – including human rights, Christian education and spiritual formation. Degrees offered are validated by the British University system and the Czech higher education authority. There are 140 students from over forty countries, eighty-six doing MTh study and thirty working towards Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy degrees.⁴⁷ The IBTS teaching team is drawn predominantly from the former communist countries, with teachers on the full-time staff coming from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia and Russia, as well as from the West. A conference held in the summer of 2002 at IBTS illustrates the way in which evangelicals from the East are having an impact across Europe. The conference was on the theme of Baptists and the Orthodox Church, and three of the main speakers – Dr Oti Bunaciu, Dr Emil Bartos and Dr Octavian Baban – were Romanian Baptist academics.⁴⁸ This is also an example of the way in which seminaries across Europe are working in a united way in partnership. There has been co-operation in evangelical theological education across denominations, for example in Bulgaria. IBTS works in particularly close co-operation with Spurgeon’s College, London – a mirror of the connection in the nineteenth century between C. H. Spurgeon, the foremost British Victorian preacher, and Johann Oncken, the ‘father’ of the continental European Baptist movement.⁴⁹

Evangelicals and European politicians

Politicians in Europe are in many cases willing to

listen to the EEA because they know that the EEA represents a large pan-European, pan-denominational alliance of Christian voices. It was in November 1990 that Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission at the time, made his famous call to church leaders to help Europe find its soul. Christians have continued to respond to that call.⁵⁰ The following examples illustrate that there has been evangelical influence within the European Union. First, there was the issue of ‘sects’. After the tragic deaths of sixteen members of the Order of the Solar Temple in the Alps at the end of 1995, the EEA worked on the ‘sect’ issue. Across Europe, media and politicians panicked about the threat posed by minority religious groups. They were determined to bring about control in order to ensure that no more crimes were committed. Unfortunately, the desire to protect society was at times stronger than the desire to maintain the principle of religious freedom. In 1996, the European Parliament determined to pass a resolution on the issue and the signs were that this would be a bad move for religious freedom. However, by working with Christian parliamentarians, the EEA succeeded in changing the text. The final resolution was amended to make specific reference to the importance of religious freedom and the European Convention of Human Rights. In 1997, the ‘sect’ issue returned to the European Parliament and an official report was commissioned. Again, the EEA helped influence this and the final report was moderate. In the end, in July 1998, the Parliament decided to drop the issue completely.⁵¹

A second issue has been employment law. The EEA’s campaigning work in 2000 was largely dominated by the EU’s proposed anti-discrimination directive.⁵² In general, this directive could be seen as helpful in promoting justice in areas of employment. However, it also contained some potential problems for religious organisations. Could a church insist that its pastor was a Christian or was this discriminatory? Could a Christian children’s home have only Christian caring staff? Originally, the European Commission had been against granting any flexibility towards religious groups within the legislation. However, the EEA and national Evangelical Alliances across Europe, working with other groups, were able to convince European politicians that the directive had to be amended. Now, if a national government wants to, it can make sure that religious groups are free to employ people of the faith where there is some justification to do so. Christian employers can also expect their staff to

behave in a way which upholds Christian values. The EEA has indicated that Christians in each European country will need to continue talking to their governments to persuade them to be aware of the situations of the faith communities.

One of the most important debates that has taken place in the context of the Convention on the Future of Europe focused on the mention of God and Christian or Judeo-Christian values in article 2 of the draft Constitutional treaty.⁵³ This article stated: ‘The Union is founded on respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, the rule of law & human rights, values which its Member States have in common. The Union aims to be a peaceful society, practising tolerance, justice & solidarity.’ Many Churches, religious communities and others considered this article to be too general. They argued that it should mention the Christian culture that has shaped Europe and which has been based on faith in God. The European Evangelical Alliance added its voice to those of other believers on this matter. Evangelicals want the European Union to be, above everything else, a community in which, in the name of justice and fairness, everyone is free to believe and practise their faith. Evangelicals do not demand a privileged place for believers but want their voices to be heard in the public arena along with every other member of civil society. The campaign resulted in a watering down of the humanist nature of the documentation. Christianity is not mentioned, but people of religious faith, not just humanists, are acknowledged as having contributed to European values. The text of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe was signed on 29 October 2004.

Romano Prodi, as European Commission President, said to the European Parliament in April 1999: ‘The search for a European “soul” is increasingly proving to be the major problem facing our continent as it looks to the future.’ He went on to explain what he meant by the term ‘soul’. His definition was the following: ‘How to gradually build up a shared feeling of belonging to Europe.’⁵⁴ Like Jacque Delors, Prodi was seeking to highlight the contribution of faith communities to this process. At a conference on inter-cultural dialogue in March 2002, he said: ‘Religions can – and must – make an essential contribution to goals we all share: a future free of fear; peaceful progress for the good of all; defence of human values against violence, hatred and discrimination.’ This was reinforced at a conference on 6-8 December 2002 on ‘Politics and Morality’ which took place in Vienna, Austria,

organized by the Institute for Human Sciences jointly with Project Syndicate, Prague/New York. Against the background of protests from religious leaders in Europe that they were not being heard, Prodi emphasised: 'At a time when we are reflecting on the future of Europe, we cannot overlook its spiritual, religious and ethical dimensions.'⁵⁵

In the opinion of the many European evangelicals, there needs to be an increase in openness in dialogue about such issues. There are certainly Members of the European Parliament who believe that faith belongs only in the private sphere.⁵⁶ In 2002 a European Parliament resolution on 'Women and Fundamentalism' which argued that secularisation was a precious feature of Europe passed with a slim majority. The resolution deplored 'the interference of the Churches and religious communities in the public and political life of the state'. Partly in response, the Pope, in a speech to the Italian Parliament on 15 November 2002, expressed his hope that 'the new foundations of the European "common house" will not lack the "cement" of that extraordinary religious, cultural and civil patrimony that has given Europe its greatness down the centuries.' He pleaded: 'Europe, at the beginning of the new millennium, open once again your doors to Christ!'⁵⁷ In the same month, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad spoke in Oslo at the inaugural meeting of the European Council of Religious Leaders, of the necessity to respect religious ideals. Evangelicals, through the EEA and other bodies, also contributed to the debate.⁵⁸ In March 2003 the EEA published this statement: 'Motivated by a desire to preserve and protect this diversity, we reject the idea of a purely secular society where religious belief would be relegated to the strictly private sphere. Instead we favour the idea of a pluralist society where different faith and philosophical streams can exist and express their opinions, thus encouraging real democracy.' Freedom for faith was called into question in the minds of many by the rejection in 2004 of Rocco Buttiglione as the new Justice Commissioner. The Buttiglione affair, as Julia Doxat-Purser of the EEA commented, exposed a classic worldview clash: Enlightenment inspired Humanism versus Christianity. Rocco Buttiglione, a conservative Catholic, was at odds with MEPs who are secular humanists and for whom religiously inspired views are anathema.⁵⁹ It remains to be seen what implications this has for the future.

Conclusion

Given the long history of evangelical co-operation across Europe, what hopes do evangelicals have for the enlarged European Union? There are Christian groups that are strongly anti-EU. The Hungarian Reformed Church struggled to distance itself from the Justice and Life Party which has an extreme anti-EU and anti-Semitic stance and which has supporters in the Church. There are anti-EU evangelical voices in Britain.⁶⁰ The debate about Europe's Christian values is on-going. Some evangelicals are apathetic when it comes to these matters. But many evangelical communities across Europe approach this issue in the light of the instinctive pan-Europeanism that has been an important part of the evangelical story. They see the possibility of a stronger, more united European witness as integration proceeds in Europe. It can be argued that in a unique way evangelicals can act as a bridge across Europe, linking East and West. Over much of the twentieth century and over the past few years especially, there have been many examples of pan-European evangelical linking for the purposes of relationship, sharing of resources and working together in mission. The European Baptist Federation includes Baptist communities that are relatively strong – Ukraine, Britain, Romania, Russia and Germany – as well as small (but growing) Baptist Unions in countries such as Armenia or Bosnia.⁶¹ The same growth is seen in other evangelical groups, for example Pentecostals. Evangelical believers, who have this wider view of the European family, are nonetheless often worried about a 'Fortress Europe' created by the European Union. What many evangelicals want is not simply an enlarged European Union but the fulfilment of a bigger vision reaching across traditional divides. Michail Gorbachev spoke of a 'common European house'. The European Union cannot in itself bring about that aim. Indeed it could contribute to 'two Europes'.⁶² Long before the talk of European integration, evangelical Christian believers across Europe saw themselves not as having two foundations, East and West, but as built together on one foundation – Jesus Christ.

Notes

- 1 The best introductions to evangelical history are D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1995), and M.A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004).
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- 25 Minutes of the EBF Council Meeting, Copenhagen, 29-31 July 1952, p. 18. EBF archives, IBTS, Prague. I am grateful to Revd Keith Jones, the Rector of the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS), Prague, for this reference.
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- 27 Green, *Crossing the Boundaries*, pp. 36-7.
- 28 Green, *Crossing the Boundaries*, p. 48.
- 29 See Robin Gurney, ed., *CEC at 40: Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) 1959-1999* (Geneva: CEC, 1999).
- 30 Two of the four General Secretaries of the CEC have been Baptists - Dr Glen Garfield Williams and Dr Keith W. Clements.
- 31 K.W. Clements, 'Into the new Millennium - CEC and the Future', in Gurney, ed., *CEC at 40*, p. 88.
- 32 P. Lewis, 'Renewal, Recovery and Growth: 1966 Onwards', in S. Brady and H. Rowdon, eds., *For Such a Time as This* (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 1996).
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- 58 Jean-Pierre Herman, from Belgium, took on EEA work in Brussels and Julia Doxat-Purser has focussed on pan-European socio-political issues: *EEA News*, No. 5 (March 2002), pp. 1-2.
- 59 <http://www.europeanea.org/TheButtiglioneAffair.htm>.
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