

DECLARATIONS OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL, 2000 AND 2001

GLOBALIZATION OF THE ECONOMY AND THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL, 2000

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) proposed an in-depth dialogue on the Christian faith and the process of economic globalization. Representatives from Presbyterian churches in South Korea, Brazil, and the United States came together for seminars in the cities of Seoul (Korea), Seattle (U.S.A.) and São Paulo (Brazil) February 26 to March 15, 2000. From Brazil the participants were the Independent Presbyterian Church (IPIB) and the United Presbyterian Church (IPU). The delegates of the IPU were Elder Ulisses Montavani and Moderator Rev. Josué Mello.

The on-site seminars facilitated an evaluation of the process of economic globalization and its impact on dependent countries and on the lives of their inhabitants, using as a starting point a comparative confrontation of the realities of Korea, Brazil, and the United States.

The seminars refuted the common idea transmitted to us that globalization is an historical determinant, a consequence of progress, a given, finished, irresistible, irreversible, and irrefutable. Not at all! It is a threat and a challenge to the Presbyterian/Reformed church. It is a threat to emergent economies and it challenges the church and Christians to seek in the midst of process of globalization ethical alternatives which can place the market and capital at the service of the legitimate demands of society and of citizens.

In Korea, the United States, and Brazil, the participants visited large commercial corporations, confronting them with social issues and with statistics on the development of poor and dependent countries and on the quality of life of their populations. Churches also were visited in order to discover the answers and ethical alternatives which they have found in the quest to put a human face on the process of globalization.

Undeniably, the process of globalization is unjust, wealth-concentrating, and exclusive. The force which moves it is the insatiable drive for the maximization of profit, submitting everything and everyone to the savage law of the free market. What is the result in the economy of developing countries? It is not favorable. For it has contributed to strengthening the economy of the strong and to making dependent countries increasingly poorer. So, the rich become richer and the poor, poorer, solidifying the society of the 20 and the 80. Of the 20% rich and the 80% unemployed and excluded.

The dialogue will continue. And will broaden, including other churches and other countries. The conclusions of the seminars will be published in a book in four languages (see end note I sent earlier with the title of the book). The Moderator of the Coordinating do Council of the IPU, Rev. Josué Mello has contributed a chapter entitled "The Jubilee and the External Debt".

The extraordinary General Assembly of the IPU, which will meet July 18 to 22, 2000 will offer a statement on the issue of the globalization of the economy and will surely include in their strategic planning concrete actions which give their witness in favor of the Gospel, of Life, and of the construction of the Reign of God.

April, 2000.

LETTER TO THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE I. UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL, 2000

The United Presbyterian Church of Brazil – IPU, gathered for an Extraordinary General Assembly in the Municipality of Marechal Floriano, Espírito Santo, July 18-22, 2000, made the following declaration:

DECLARATION

1. We reaffirm our faithfulness to the Bible, to the Creeds of the Church of Christ, to the diverse Confessions of the Reformed tradition and to the principals engraved in the official documents of the IPU.

2. We reiterate our concern for the excluded in Brazilian society: the homeless, those without land, the unemployed, those without educational opportunities, without health care, without justice, and the majority of citizens who survive in sub-human conditions.

3. We confirm our solidarity and identification with the excluded: Afro-Brazilians, women, indigenous peoples, the elderly, children, street people, as well as those who suffer any type of discrimination--racial, sexual, economic or cultural.

4. We disagree totally with the unjust concentration and iniquitous distribution of wealth and denounce the inhuman consequences of the market economy which has produced the external and internal debts, which long have been impossible to pay, and which cause unemployment, violence, despair, and the existence of a true state of civil war in our country, condemning nations and peoples to misery.

5. We understand as the obligation – of government, of churches, of associations, of unions, of economic and political elites, and of civil society as a whole - to engage in the construction of a more just, human, pluralist society with equality for all which offers more adequate opportunities for this generation and for future generations, without exclusions and with the renewal of human dignity and the guarantee of peace.

6. We denounce and protest, together with other organized groups of our society and with all conscious citizens, against the disregard in the investigation of denouncements of corruption, which in turn promotes impunity and, consequently, lack of confidence in government authorities. Without justice there is no peace.

7. We appeal to other Christian churches to ecumenically and fraternally join hands in endeavors of witness to the Gospel of Christ for the transformation of the hearts and minds of men and women and for the establishment of structures of a new society in which the signs of the Reign of God are visible.

LETTER TO THE BRAZILIAN PEOPLE II. UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BRAZIL, 2001

The United Presbyterian Church of Brazil - IPU, gathered in an ordinary General Assembly in the Municipality of Salvador, at the Leadership Training Center in Itapoã, made the following declaration:

DECLARATION

1. We reaffirm our faithfulness to the Bible, to the Creeds of the Church of Christ, to the diverse Reformed Confessions, and to the principals assumed and approved by the IPU, as stated in our official documents since the foundation and organization of our confessing community.

2. We reaffirm our nature as a pluralist and ecumenical community, and claim our unbreakable adhesion to Paragraph 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which speaks to the right of every human being to religious freedom.

3. We denounce the disregard of the well-being of the people on the part of Brazilian government authorities, who are more eager to serve foreign interests represented by multilateral credit institutions (IMF, WTO, WB, etc.) than promoting the sustainability of the social and economic development of the country, exemplified in the recent energy crisis and its consequences: increase of unemployment and the reduction of the quality of life of Brazilians.

4. We denounce and lament the continuing state of absolute misery in which 50 million Brazilians find themselves, according to research recently published by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation and confirmed by those who work directly with those excluded from the official market.

5. We repudiate the situation of social chaos to which the current economic model is taking us, which is reflected in the situation of penury in which public workers generally live, exemplified in the current strike of the public security forces of the state of Bahia, experienced by the Assembly of this Church.

6. We affirm our concern with the disrespect for nature and for all of creation, sacrificed to the ambitions of the powerful, whose greatest concern is the exploration of natural resources, especially the insatiable rage for the domination of Amazonia, with no consideration for the historical presence of the peoples who live in the region.

7. We affirm our lack of conformity with the unjust concentration and iniquitous distribution of wealth, fruit of the inhuman consequences of the globalization of the market economy, which has produced, over a long period, external and internal debts impossible to pay.

8. We express our protest, together with other organized groups of social movements and with all conscious citizens, against the disregard in the investigation of denouncements of corruption, which in turn promotes impunity and, consequently, lack of confidence in government authorities. “The effect of justice will be peace” (Is. 32.17).

Translated by Sherron George, Brazil