

Receptive Ecumenism in the Context of the Yugosphere Today

Stefan Zeljkovic, PhD student Faculty of Orthodox Theology University of Belgrade Serbia

Abstract

In 2009, The Economist coined the term Yugosphere to describe the present-day physical areas that formed Yugoslavia, as well as its culture and influence. It is a good term to embrace all that connects and separates the present-day states of the former Yugoslavia. The similarity of the languages and the long history of common life have left many ties among the peoples of the new states, even though the individual state policies of the new states favour differentiation. The past century has been a century of wars between these nations and today they face many challenges. As a theologian born in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and someone who has actively participated as a young leader in peacebuilding in recent years, I seek to present examples of Receptive Ecumenism and obstacles to its implementation today in the territory of the former Yugoslavia. What is important to say here is that religion has played a major role in the lives of the people of these countries in the past. Today, religion still plays an important role in the lives of these people, but it is often linked inseparably to their political beliefs. In my paper I will also try to show the importance of distinctive gifts that each tradition and each religion has to offer the other and which each could receive from the other; given expression by Pope John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical on ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint*: „Dialogue is not simply an exchange of ideas. In some ways it is always an ‘exchange of gifts’” (§ 28).

Keywords: Yugosphere, Yugoslavia, conflict, peacebuilding, interreligious dialogue.