

KOCSEV Miklós¹:

Church and Society in the Past Century (1918–2018)²

Honourable Participants!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all, I would like to thank you for this wonderful opportunity to speak before you. I am grateful for this possibility, being fully aware that neither of the greeters knew what the others would say. And this is really not a problem as we are all different and we perceive the agenda of this two-day conference held in Kolozsvár/Cluj from different perspectives.

That is why I can speak only through my own spectacles and my own endowment in life.

Being aware that these presentations featuring rigorous and valuable content cannot replace or erase the past one hundred years, but they can surely influence the trend of the following century.

... 100 years, which was not a time of solitude but rather impregnated with life, feelings, and ideas and heated by them more than once.

Life and a turning point in the lives of peoples, nations, families, and individuals. In this situation, one thing is certain: *I can only be grateful that this event could take place.* It can happen to those who can look back and draw all the lessons with the right sense so that the next hundred years are as different as possible, and also more liveable.

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² Opening speech on 7/06/2018, held in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca.

This is our responsibility as well. As a matter of course, this common responsibility cannot be assigned to everyone. Thus, I can bear responsibility mainly for myself in evaluating the past 100 years behind us and in creating the expected conditions for the 100 years to come.

Of course, it would be a shame to sit here and listen to each other by turning off the reality of the *facts* affecting this very day that still exists during the time we are here. Not to mention what it has done to the *souls*, lives, and destinies of two or three generations. And keeping silent even more about what kind of communication they all led to, what ethical norms the past one hundred years were guided by and filled with. That is why I pay tribute to those who have somehow made it possible for us to be here now.

Church and society. The issue for me is the correlation of this relationship in the last 100 years. Has the church determined the life of society? I do not think so! Do I rather believe that the inner social changes have determined the life of the church? Facing a secularized world in which the individual is individualized, and the church is pluralized.

If I (could) look(ed) at this period from above, I would see a larger European correlation before me:

- The century with the most human sacrifices as a result of the two devastating World Wars as the effect of the great “isms” (I am thinking here about nationalism, fascism and communism);
- This period meant the shift and change of physical boundaries and human norms/values;
- At the same time, it is still the century when democracy grew stronger, which has led many to a safe(r) way of life.

Not denying that we (including myself) are touched by the idea put forward by E. Lange, according to which: is it not high time for us to step out of our little “provincial” world when we speak about these 100 years?

If we can, we shall see:

- our obligation, duties to others from the tiny life to the destiny of entire communities;
- at the same time, admitting that this has caused serious cracks in the reality of a dignified human existence;
- that we constantly spoil the other by not being “satisfied” enough, and we constantly want more (we do not know what the approach “enough – wealth” means);

Finally, taking the essence of this two-day event seriously: many things are political, but politics is not all (said Kuitert). By this, he meant that we must not politicize things that do not pertain to politics. Meanwhile, realizing that I dare to be an individualist – namely, to take individual responsibility for understanding what has happened and in order not only to bandage the wounds but also to ensure that the next generation leads a happier life.

*Wishing you a meaningful and constructive conference!
Thank you for your kind attention!*