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DIPARTIMENTO DI FORMAZIONE,
LINGUE, INTERCULTURA,
LETTERATURE E PSICOLOGIA

Florence, 12 March 2022

Dear members of the Bible Commission,

as you can read from the attached letter from the French National Committee (in English and Russian), the chairs of the Commissions and representatives of the national delegations are invited to attend a joint session on April 2 to discuss issues related to the Paris Congress in connection with the war in Ukraine. The same Committee requested each of the participants to send their opinion in writing before March 30.

As I wrote in my previous letter, I would like to express at this session the opinion of the Commissions accompanying it with a letter clearly expressing our convinced NO to this war, with the commitment to act and work so that at every level we can achieve an honorable and lasting peace.

To be able to express ourselves, even with a vote, on the points proposed by the French National Committee and on the letter, I would like to propose to you, I believe it is necessary to convene an extraordinary session of our Commission which I propose to hold on March 25 at 5 pm (Rome time).

The numerous letters that various members of our Commission have exchanged and shared with everyone show different accents, but all members are oriented towards the repudiation of all forms of violence and prevarication. Beyond the legal, political, economic, and military aspects, we, men of science, who constantly apply ourselves to the study of the Bible, are particularly concerned about what is happening, especially regarding women and children, displaced persons who have fled the war front, and those who have been forced to emigrate. The families of several of us in the last century have experienced these tragedies, paying indelible consequences, and now to see them again grieves us deeply.

This must push us to act with determination and with all legitimate means at our disposal to oppose this barbarity. In the context of a radical process of isolation of the Russian Government and its institutions, I believe that the Biblical Commission must recognize the impossibility of the presence at the Paris Congress of an official delegation of the Russian Federation unless radical changes occur in the coming months.

We would like to express the hope that in any case the Congress can be held regularly, otherwise it would mean that we are in the same situation in which the Belgrade Congress of 1939 was canceled. We hope this will not happen! At the same time, it is necessary to express all our support and solidarity to all those in Russia, who are against this conflict, especially friends and colleagues, in the hope of seeing them in



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Paris, even if as individual scholars. We will all suffer serious consequences, especially in Europe, for what is happening, but the parties involved in the conflict will suffer much more seriously.

If Congress can be held regularly, even in terms of its scientific organization, a concrete and effective signal should be given regarding the dramatic situation that has arisen. During the Congress we should open a space for reflection on Ukraine and Russia, on their common roots, and on the processes of differentiation in the same European context.

Let me say, in the end, that our research and studies on the traces of those who translated, corrected, spread, and explained in the past centuries the Holy Scriptures to the Slavic world - if they do not remain only mental elucubrations on a dead letter - can give an extraordinary contribution just to reconciliation and to the construction of common memory, the only solid way out of conflicts. The welcome shown by many simple men of goodwill to the displaced people and to the Ukrainian refugees these days is the best testimony that this old Europe, even with all its mistakes, can still redeem itself.

Kindest regards,
Your Marcello Garzaniti