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Religion's role in facing globalisation

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I WOULD like to pay tribute to the World Evangelical Fellowship and the sponsorship by the Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia for making the three-day international conference themed "International Consultation on Globalisation" a success.

The conference brings a significant message that it is not enough to concentrate our time and energy to free trade and global rights. Globalisation must be balanced with ethics, morality and spirituality for the well-being of all.

Thus, all religionists must take up the challenge to connect our faith with world issues to make sense of the process. It is a truism that "materialism may capture men's thoughts and feelings but it cannot hold them". It is the spiritual truth which eventually forms the essential part of the cure for the maladies that spring from globalisation.

Nonetheless, religionists must in the first place be open to the modern crisis, and make religion more relevant to their age. If this is done, it will fulfil what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had pointed out at the conference, that it is "at the service of mankind" and not at the expense of the welfare of other beings on the earth.

Religion must become a flexible institution and should progress with the life and mind of contemporary man. This does not mean creating a new brand of religion.

If one could get back to what the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus Christ, Gautama Buddha, Lao Tze, Kong Fu Tze and other great prophets really taught, one should realise that they were the most sensitive among their own people of their age.

They shaped their teachings to suit a particular place and time. Nevertheless the religious goal cannot be altered. But their ways varied from one group of people or civilisation to another, and cannot remain unaffected by changing circumstances.

Therefore religionists should emulate their virtues and understand the real underlying problems faced by the people.

Now what appears before us is globalisation, in terms of free trade and global rights. So the religionists' role is becoming more and more important, since globalisation also represents a moral crisis.

The human race needs spiritual education to redeem faith and restore hope. And this is where religion comes in.