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Africa welcomes the universal Church. The Lausanne III Congress in Cape Town

Pierre Berthoud

SUMMARY

The 4200 people present at the Congress in Cape Town confirmed that the Lausanne movement represents one of the most dynamic currents of the Christian Church today. In Cape Town it was possible to appreciate the evolution of the Lausanne movement: the continuity and development of the vision, the areas of reflection and the actions which need to be implemented. The priorities of evangelising peoples who have not yet had the opportunity of hearing the gospel and of performing works of compassion were again emphasised. The desire to show the implications of the Christian faith in the public square

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RÉSUMÉ

Les 4200 participants au Congrès du Cap ont attesté par leur présence que le mouvement de Lausanne représente un des courants les plus dynamiques de l'Église chrétienne aujourd'hui. Lors de ce congrès il a été possible de mesurer l'évolution du mouvement : la continuité et le développement de la vision, les domaines de réflexion et d'action devant être mis en œuvre. L'urgence d'atteindre les populations n'ayant pas encore eu l'occasion d'entendre l'Évangile et l'implication résolue dans l'action sociale ont encore une fois été mis en avant. Par contre le désir de réfléchir systématiquement aux implications de la foi chrétienne dans la cité représente un

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die 4.200 Teilnehmer am Kongress in Kapstadt haben durch ihre Anwesenheit bezeugt, dass die Lausanner Bewegung eine der dynamischsten Strömungen der christlichen Kirche der Gegenwart darstellt. Bei dem Kongress war es möglich, einen Einblick in die Entwicklung der Bewegung zu gewinnen, wie in die kontinuierliche Entfaltung der Vision sowie theoretische Reflektion und deren praktische Umsetzung. Ins Zentrum des Augenmerks wurde das dringliche

is more innovative. This presentation of the global biblical perspective which enlightens all aspects of thought, life and human action is more than welcome.

The first part of this article deals with the highlights and some weaknesses of the Congress that can be considered as a major landmark in the history of missions at the beginning of the 21st century. The second part deals with different aspects of the Lausanne Commitment, a remarkable document comprising a Confession of Faith and a Call to action couched in the language of covenantal love. The significant aspects of this document are presented, analysed and evaluated.

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apport nouveau. Ce souci de développer une perspective globale biblique qui éclaire tous les aspects de la pensée, de la vie et de l'action humaines est des plus encourageant.

La première partie de cet article cherche à mettre en évidence les points forts et quelques faiblesses du Congrès du Cap qui peut être considéré comme un moment marquant de l'histoire de la missiologie en ce début du 21^{ème} siècle. La seconde partie de cette étude s'attarde plus longuement sur l'Engagement de Lausanne. C'est un document remarquable composé d'une Confession de Foi et d'un Appel à l'action, le tout formulé dans le langage de l'amour propre à l'alliance. Les lignes de force de ce document sont présentées, analysées et évaluées.

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Anliegen gerückt, unerreichte Bevölkerungsgruppen mit dem Evangelium zu erreichen, mit der sich im sozialen Wirkungsbereich daraus ergebenden Implikation. Ein Novum hingegen war der Wunsch, systematisch über die Auswirkungen des christlichen Glaubens auf das öffentliche Leben nachzudenken. Mehr als willkommen ist die Bemühung um eine globale biblische Perspektive, die Licht in alle Bereiche des Denkens, Lebens und menschlichen Handelns bringt.

Der erste Teil des vorliegenden Artikels befasst sich mit den Stärken und auch einigen Schwächen des Kongresses,

der als wichtiger Wegweiser in der Geschichte der Missiologie zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts betrachtet werden kann. Der zweite Teil dieser Studie befasst sich mit einzelnen Aspekten der Lausanner Verpflichtung. Dies ist ein beachtliches Dokument mit einem

Glaubensbekenntnis und einem Aufruf zum Handeln, abgefasst in der Sprache geschwisterlicher Liebe. Die bedeutenden Wesenszüge dieses Dokumentes werden dargelegt, analysiert und bewertet.

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My wife and I had the privilege of attending the Congress on Evangelism, Lausanne III, held in October 2010 in Cape Town. Danièle joined the translators' team while as a member of the French delegation I was invited to be part of a Global Think Tank on Government – Business – Academia, which brought together some 80 businessmen, politicians and academics from all over the world, with the purpose of identifying and reflecting on the new trends within the contemporary world which Christians need to address during the coming decade.

Finding oneself in the midst of a meeting made up of 4200 people coming from 198 countries was a unique experience. (The Chinese delegation of 200 members was absent since hours before their scheduled departure the Chinese authorities refused to allow them to leave the country; they were greatly missed.)

We must congratulate the organisers who were remarkably efficient in enabling the Congress to take place in the best possible conditions (transportation, running of the programme, catering service, organisation of the various halls for extra meetings, information service, etc.). The organising team was made up of 1000 people! The quality of the service was a combination of practical skills and God-inspired hospitality and care. Quite refreshing!

The following study has been divided into two parts: the Congress itself and the Commitment produced by it.

The Cape Town Congress

1) Three poles

Having been present at the 1974 Congress in Lausanne, I was able to appreciate the evolution of the Lausanne movement: the continuity and development of the vision, the areas of reflection and the actions which need to be implemented. First, three remarks will be made:

In Cape Town the emphasis was once more placed on the necessity of pursuing the task of

evangelising peoples who have not yet had the opportunity of hearing the gospel. This task includes the availability of the Scriptures for these unreached populations either in written translation or in oral narration. It is also a call to the churches to continue and even intensify the proclamation of the good news and the planting of new communities (churches).

The works of compassion, social action and the pursuit of justice, as well as respect for the dignity of the human person, were also strongly emphasised. The right balance between evangelisation and social action is not always easy to find. In one of the morning Bible studies, John Piper emphasised the central place of the proclamation of the Word in articulating these two aspects of the Christian ministry. Several speakers addressed this topic, underlining the importance of discipleship and of adopting a lifestyle characterised by humility, integrity and simplicity in response to the 'gospel' of the prosperity movement as well as to the rampant materialism of the West.

Finally, a third topic was put forward, primarily in the Global Think Tank on Government–Business–Academia:¹ *the presentation of the Christian faith as a global perspective* which enlightens all aspects of thought, life and human action. For many believers, it is no longer possible to limit evangelical witness to their individual lives. The mission of God's word-wisdom is also to enlighten public life, its choices, goals and ethics. In the midst of increasing secularisation, the rise of Islam and the new forms of paganism, how are we to communicate the Christian perspective and the moral values it conveys so that it irrigates and influences the cultural, political and economic spheres? The fact that LausanneIII addressed the question of Christian presence and action in a broken world is both timely and a subject for rejoicing. But there is still a long way to go and a good many pitfalls to avoid, especially the desire to exert an influence on society that is pertinent and relevant without a sufficient biblical grounding for thought and action. It is important to remember that we are in the world, but not of the world. The hope that is within us

forbids us to confuse the kingdom of God with any human, earthly utopia however attractive it might seem! This third aspect is well stated in the second part of the Cape Town Commitment (cf. II §I dedicated to the truth of Christ in the midst of the present world). The theme of truth is dealt with in relation to pluralism, employment, the media, arts, technologies and the public forum. Along with this encouraging awareness, we need to identify more specifically the evils that must be addressed² as well as define more rigorously and study in depth the principles which guide the believers' reflection and action as they proclaim the Lordship of Christ over all things, his thoughts, his actions and his very existence.

2) Other themes

Besides the themes mentioned above, the following topics were treated with clarity, biblical groundings and expertise during the Multiplexes: pluralism and globalisation, new communication technology, the challenges of bioethics and of the environment, AIDS and human trafficking, the training of a new generation of leaders and partnerships in setting up missions in the church. A very large number of Dialogue Sessions were offered on topics such as discipleship, theological training, freedom from the bondage of homosexuality (a humane and balanced approach), the impact of faith in the history of architecture (excellent), colonialism and ethnicity (unilateral and ethno-centred) and many more. The highlights of the morning sessions were the Bible studies: thorough expositions of the Epistle to the Ephesians by leading expositors followed by stimulating and edifying times of sharing, discussion and prayer as the table groups further explored the daily chapters.

3) Some minor critical remarks

The organisers sought to encourage personal contacts and relationships by gathering the participants around 700 tables (6 people per table) during the plenary sessions. This was an excellent initiative. During these public gatherings an attempt was made to articulate witnesses and performances (drama and music in particular), but as a consequence, speakers such as Os Guinness, Tim Keller and Benjamin Kwasi only had very little time (10 to 15 minutes) to deliver their papers. That was a weakness! Subjects like truth, urban missions or the witness to Muslims cannot be treated comprehensively in such a short time. Having said that, the testimonies were very moving, especially

those of churches living under the cross and given by Christians confronted with violence and persecution including martyrdom. Regarding the emphasis on the performing arts (theatre, music, cinema), we can only rejoice in the significant role they played at the Congress. At times though, especially during the times of celebration, the focus was more on the performance than on an invitation to worship and prayer. No doubt more reflection on creativity and its relationship to the Word is needed.

The final ceremony with Holy Communion was, however, a highlight of the Congress. Praise, the proclamation of the Word, prayer and communion in Christ were harmoniously balanced in the midst of a celebration which compared well with those of the temple in Jerusalem! Modern hymns composed by gifted composers such as Keith and Kristyn Getty or Frank Houghton were sung by the assembly. The quality and depth as well as the simplicity and the relevance of the closing ceremony were both remarkable and moving. Two of its high points were the singing of the Nicene Creed and the Prayers of Penitence and Commitment.³

4) A new centre of gravity

The centre of gravity of the Church having moved, the emphasis was rightly placed on the work of God in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Middle-East. Very little attention was given to the Western World and to Europe in particular. However, secularism, which finds its roots in European humanism, without doubt represents the main challenge for the Church of Jesus Christ – even more so than Islam or the new paganism – because it is present in one form or another in all parts of the world. This may explain why little emphasis was placed on the evangelisation of the academic world (high schools, colleges and universities) and on apologetics (except in some seminars) and its role in the communication of the Gospel within contemporary cultures.

These critical remarks in no way undermine the quality and the success of this great gathering which addressed a vibrant call to the global Christian community to renew their commitment to the mission that the Lord has entrusted to his body, the Church. Now is the time for evangelisation, for social action, for an efficient ethical witness in the public square, for reconciliation and for Christians becoming brokers of a real peace in the midst of the broken and wounded human commu-

nities to which we belong. It is urgent to proclaim with clarity and enthusiasm the Word of truth and life revealed in the Scriptures, and fully manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

The Cape Town Commitment

The Cape Town Commitment has two parts: a confession/declaration of faith and a commitment to action, both couched in the language of love; in other words, in the language of the covenant. Obviously, we are speaking of the covenant of grace initiated by the Lord himself and implying the basic biblical motif of creation-fall-redemption (one could add restoration and glorification). The document was written by Chris Wright and his team in a refreshing style which in no way hinders the richness and the quality of its content. By mapping out new horizons of thought and witness and opening renewed perspectives of action, the authors of the Cape Town Commitment have given the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ a wonderful tool. It is worth spending time presenting some of the major aspects of this unique document.

1) The Confession/Declaration of faith

The first part of The Cape Town commitment is entitled, '*For the Lord we love: our Commitment of Faith*'. This Commitment of Faith represents the response of the believer and the Church to the initial grace and love of God. This is not surprising considering the centrality of love in the New Testament and the emphasis placed on it, but at the same time this emphasis is somewhat bold and even provocative considering the use and abuse of the notion of love in the contemporary world including parts of the Christian Church. The concept is often watered down and used as a slogan or as a means to satisfy one's desires or to justify one's weakness, not to say one's sin! That is why in *the first section* the commitment is careful to specify that the grace and love of God are intrinsically linked to obedience and therefore to God's will. Then it goes on to add some significant qualifications: 'Such love means to be like Christ Himself: robust in endurance, yet gentle in humility; tough in resisting evil, yet tender in compassion for the suffering, courageous in suffering and faithful even unto death.'⁴ In fact, when one considers the overall picture of Part I of the Commitment, it is an exposition of the doctrine of love, both

divine and human, formulated in personal terms most appropriate to a covenant relationship that incorporates all of creation. Indeed the triune God has undertaken to redeem mankind in Jesus Christ so as to usher in the renewal of all things and the ultimate transfiguration of heaven and earth.

In *the second section* the Commitment concentrates on the uniqueness of the living God who is worthy of praise and glory. In this section there is a remarkable quote by John Stott on the passion the Christian is to manifest for the glory of the living God, 'burning and passionate zeal... for the glory of Jesus Christ' (I.2b).⁵

The *following three sections* are dedicated to the love of the Trinity which offers a comprehensive and brilliant synthesis of the triune, infinite and personal God. Perhaps the section dealing with the first person of the Trinity, God the Father, the creator of all things, could have been made more explicit (I.3a).⁶

As to the third person of the Trinity, emphasis is rightly placed on the 'power of the Holy Spirit' (six references in I.5a, b, c), though without any mention of wisdom. One of the ways to avoid 'the abuses that masquerade under the name of the Holy Spirit' (I.5c) is to stress both the power and the wisdom of the Spirit.

Then, and only then, comes *the sixth section* on the love of God's Word. This is most appropriate as the emphasis is now on the triune, living God, who has revealed and communicated his wisdom in the categories of human language. In this passage, the Commitment strikes a very good balance between narrative and conceptual truth, showing that these two forms of conveying truth are not opposed but complementary (I.6b, c). The Scriptures attest abundantly to both ways of formulating truth.

The seventh section deals with an important issue, that of loving God's world. It discusses the love of creation, nations, the poor and suffering and of one's neighbours. The first two paragraphs are crucial and relevant within the worldwide communities as they deal with the stewardship of creation (I.7a) and ethnic diversity (I.7.b). Regarding 'God's redemptive purpose of creation itself', the question arises whether creation, including society, is the direct beneficiary of the Lord's redemption or an indirect beneficiary, as Paul seems to imply: 'the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed' (Rom 8.19, 18-25).⁷

The emphasis on ethnic diversity as 'a gift of God' and on the Lord extending his blessing in

Jesus Christ to all nations is most welcome in a world where divisions, rivalry, discrimination and racism are rampant. While indicating the importance of ‘preserving indigenous cultures and their languages’, the Commitment also calls for critical discernment: ‘... all cultures show not only positive evidence of the image of God in human lives, but also the negative fingerprints of Satan and sin’ (I.7b.). This, of course, is also true of western cultures! This emphasis on ‘critical discernment for all cultures’ is of utmost importance not only as we evangelise and plant new churches, but also as we seek to bring about significant change, to promote biblical ethical values and a renewed sense of human dignity in the public arena. This is where a more careful study of God’s Word and law can help us to develop a Christian mind and lifestyle that offers new and exciting perspectives to our contemporaries in all the spheres of society, academics, economics, politics and culture, including the arts. Under the lordship of Jesus Christ we need to offer a form of creative thinking and action that is deeply rooted in and draws abundantly from divine revelation and wisdom. We are called to adapt and to be prophetic. Only then will we be relevant and contribute, by the grace of the Lord, to significant and lasting change. But let us never forget, the triune God alone ushers in the Kingdom of God!

The last three sections concentrate on the love of the Gospel of God (I.8), on the love of the people of God (I.9) and on the love of the mission of God (I.10). These parts of the Commitment cover familiar ground. The calls to unity, honesty and solidarity (I.9a, b, c) when heeded, open the way to healthy, mature and holy Christian community life in marriage, the family and the Church. Regarding the call to unity, not all divisions are caused by ‘barriers of race, colour, social class, economic privilege or political alignment’ (I.9.b). Sometimes they can also be caused by one’s faithful commitment to truth. In one of his last books (often considered as his testament), *Evangelical Truth. A Personal Plea for Unity*,⁸ John Stott makes a clear distinction between the core doctrines of the evangelical faith, which are not negotiable, and the *adiaphora*, those points of doctrine that remain important but allow for differences of interpretation, understanding and practice. All the worldly barriers are major obstacles to unity but truth belongs to the heart of true unity.

Over and over again, the Cape Town Declaration invites Christians and churches to confess their

shortcomings and to (re)commit themselves to the Lord. It also warns against evils that so often undermine genuine Christian witness, and denounces injustice both in the Church and in society that mars the dignity of man and brings about violence, suffering, chaos and destruction, dishonouring the very name and glory of God.⁹ This is most appropriate in a document that is formulated in terms of the covenant involving personal beings and communities as they enter into a relationship with the living God. Accountability is an essential aspect of the covenant relationship (Rom 1). This approach is both sobering and encouraging, as it is essential to Christian sanctification, maturity and involvement in the Church and in society. With all that in mind let us now consider the second part of the Cape Town Commitment.

2) For the World we Serve: The Cape Town Call to Action

The call to action flows naturally from the fact that the declaration is couched in the terms of a covenant. The believer and the Church are invited to respond to God’s grace and love by loving and obeying him. The introduction to the second part sets the scene for this vibrant call addressed to the worldwide Christian Church and its institutions: ‘our six major congress themes provide a framework to discern the challenges facing the worldwide Church of Christ and our priorities for the future’.¹⁰

This second part is an excellent synthesis of some of the major challenges we face at the beginning of the 21st century; it doesn’t claim to be exhaustive, nor does it deny that priorities might differ in various parts of the world, but it is nevertheless comprehensive. The first part of the Commitment was formulated in more general terms; the second part is much more specific in spelling out the domains that need special attention and involvement. As these challenges call for a firm commitment, they should trigger creative thinking leading to personal, community, social and cultural involvement, pregnant with meaning and relevance. Much still needs to be done, but already international, regional and local consultations and conferences have taken place to further the cause of the Gospel and its practical implications both in the Church and in society. May these efforts enable the Church of Jesus Christ to be the light and the salt of the earth! In the following lines, I will briefly summarise the six major challenges that have been set before Christians and

their communities.

a) Bearing witness to the truth in a pluralistic globalised world.

In this first section, truth is spelled out in relation to the person of Christ, to the challenge of pluralism, to the workplace, to the globalised media and to the arts in missions. Emphasis is placed on living and proclaiming the truth of the Gospel ‘as God’s plan for the whole universe in Jesus Christ’. A welcome appeal to ‘robust apologetics’ is made in response to the challenges stemming from ultramodern relativist pluralism, secularism and aggressive atheism. Both the central aspects of apologetics are commended: ‘arguing for and defending biblical truth’ and appropriate, relevant and prophetic communication of God’s counsel. By challenging the secular – sacred divide, the Commitment encourages all believing professionals to be involved in workplace missions. Whole-life discipleship and ‘tentmaker’ ministries are also highlighted.

Critical discernment is called for in the media and in the arts as well as professional expertise and creativity. We appreciate and welcome the mission-oriented recommendations, but it is important to remember that the primary calling of the Christian is to glorify the triune God and to enjoy him forever. To be sure, this is clearly stated throughout the document, but at times, when dealing with practical issues, the impression is conveyed that mission is the primary finality, for example by engaging in the arts or in the public arena. While recognising that ‘in the world of mission the arts are an untapped resource’ the primary purpose of the arts is to honour and glorify the Lord (Ps 45). In other words, the arts need no other justification!

b) Building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world

This section begins with a very clear and beautiful summary of the biblical teaching on reconciliation and its practical implications. Thus the Commitment says: ‘True and lasting reconciliation requires acknowledgement of past and present sin, repentance before God, confession to the injured, and seeking and receiving of forgiveness. It also includes commitment by the Church to seeking justice or reparation.’²¹

The section then proceeds to deal with the following aspects of Christ-centred reconciliation: Christ’s peace in ethnic conflict, for the poor and

oppressed, for people with disabilities and for the suffering creation. In the paragraphs dealing with ethnic conflicts, poverty and oppression, the Commitment is specific in identifying evils and thorough in its argumentation (II.2.A and B; 3 Intro.A). It denounces the silence and complicity of Christians ‘within contexts of ethnic violence and oppression’ and calls for repentance. Regarding the actions that need to be taken to resolve ethnic conflicts and to alleviate poverty, it would be helpful to specify the particular role of the Church in contrast to that of the state. The paragraph on the caring for people with disabilities and on the recognition of their place and ministries in the body of Christ is most welcome, as is the emphasis that their impairment is not due ‘to personal sin, lack of faith or unwillingness to be healed’.¹²

The call to ecological responsibility and environmental advocacy action naturally finds its place in this section. It is crucial that Christians be involved in this area so as to show how the Christian worldview sheds light on this whole field of concern and action, and to bring information that will contribute to preventing ideological manipulation. This paragraph would be more convincing in its challenges if it had more substance to it. The issue of climate change is more complex than we first imagined. It is therefore imperative to take into consideration all sides of the question, especially when we are in the presence of contradictory information so as to make a better appraisal of human industrial responsibility in the earth-warming process. In these matters, it is crucial to strike the right balance and to recognise that there are some phenomena that, as finite creatures, we cannot control. The lordship of Christ requires that we exercise dominion and stewardship with genuine care and respect for his handiwork. We can only agree with the Commitment when it invites us to ‘repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth’s resources and to imagine a life style that does away with the idolatry of consumerism’ (I.7), finding its inspiration in the Lord’s will and wisdom.

c) Living the love of Christ among people of other faiths

This section of the Commitment is of utmost importance as it touches on one of the most sensitive aspects of our worldwide cultures: religious pluralism and ultramodern relativism. It argues that the love for one’s neighbour includes

people of other faiths. The love of Christ calls for Christians to suffer and sometimes to endure martyrdom; love embodies and commends the gospel of grace, respects the diversity of discipleship, reaches out to scattered people and works for religious freedom for all. The declaration strikes a good balance between the imperative to evangelise and the rejection of forced conversions, the upholding of truth and the respect of the freedom of the unbeliever, assertion of the uniqueness of Christ and engaging in debate. The loving concern for displaced people is most appropriate considering the level of migration in the world today. Nevertheless some comments flow from the reading of this section:

While disapproving of unworthy and coercive proselytising, it is worthwhile to note that both Jesus and Paul urge the non-believer to respond positively to the Gospel. Thus, for example, in the parable of the great banquet, the master of the house tells his servant: 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and *make them come in*, so that my house will be full' (Lk 23:14 NIV). In fact, the expression '*make them come in*' means 'compel, insist'. It is a matter of urgency and a question of life and death! (III.1.A).

In the present cultural and religious climate the word 'dialogue' is somewhat ambiguous since it usually implies the equality of all religions so that the unique and exclusive character of the Gospel tends to be toned down. It is true, though, that the Commitment does qualify 'dialogue' as engaging in debate.

While it is imperative, by the grace of God, to persevere in faithful obedience and love in the midst of persecution and possible martyrdom, the believer is also invited to call upon God to manifest his justice in due time. Because of who God is, the believer is sure that he lives in a moral universe (III.2, 3). Furthermore, suffering has no virtue in itself. It bears fruit only when it leads to healthy reflection and a reconsideration of God's wisdom and action.

God is sovereign as he reaches out for lost human beings, created in his own image. He is totally free as he moves as he pleases in the cultures of this world. The call for respect for the diversity of discipleship is both thought-provoking and valuable, though it would be useful to articulate it carefully with unity grounded in truth. What is more surprising is the Commitment's apparent approval of the 'Insider's Movements' found in several religions. Further, the description given

of these movements in the declaration is strongly Christo-centric. This unfortunately is not always the case. No doubt, syncretism is a threat found among all Christians, including in the Western world, but within a worldwide culture where pluralism and relativism are rampant one would have liked to find a carefully worded warning regarding the genuine dangers of the Insider's Movement!

d) Discerning the will of Christ for world evangelisation

This section's focus is on the major theme of all three Lausanne conferences. Evangelism is the centre of the fully integrated scope of our mission, inasmuch as the gospel itself is the source, content and authority of all biblically valid mission (IV.E). Emphasis is placed on meeting the challenge of sharing the gospel with unreached and unengaged peoples; on communicating it to oral cultures which form the majority of the world population; on discipleship training so as to raise a new generation of Christ-centred leaders within the Church; on the strategic importance of developing urban missions¹³ so as to reach the young, the migrant populations, the culture shapers and the 'poorest of the poor'; on child evangelism, encouraging children and young people to become agents of God's mission, providing resources that really meet their needs and protecting them from all forms of abuse. The precision of the Commitment on this question makes it even more powerful and relevant. It mentions 'violence, exploitation, slavery, trafficking, prostitution, gender and ethnic discrimination, commercial targeting and wilful neglect' (IV.5.C). One can also mention the new gender ideology that argues that sexual differences are essentially culturally conditioned. This theory has devastating consequences for the education of children.

A vibrant call to 'pray with unity, focus, persistence and biblically informed clarity' ends this section. It reminds us most appropriately that we are partakers of the Lord's integral mission. It is God himself who sends labourers, who transforms the heart of the lost with the truth of the Gospel, who manifests his glory in Jesus Christ by the power and wisdom of the Spirit, and who initiates the growth of his kingdom.

e) Calling the Church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity

This call 'back to humility, integrity and simplicity'¹⁴ had a significant impact on the congress

in Cape Town, no doubt because it touches on some of the causes of the worldwide crisis we are going through, but especially because it challenges the Christian to embody a lifestyle that is in line with his commitment to Jesus Christ. The section invites the Church to walk in distinctiveness, as God's new humanity. Love as opposed to the idolatry of disordered sexuality, humility as the giving up of the idolatry of power, integrity as the rejection of the idolatry of success and simplicity as the relinquishment of the idolatry of greed are characteristic of the new Christ-like humanity, its fundamental components. These paragraphs are sobering, but also an incentive and an encouragement to use one's creative and inspired imagination so that our lives might glorify God and be a surprising and challenging witness in the midst of the present generation. Two major issues are addressed comprehensively as well as with clarity, sensitivity and courage: the practice of disordered sexuality and the teaching of the 'prosperity gospel'.

f) Partnering in the body of Christ for unity in mission

This theme was already strongly emphasised in the Manila Manifesto.¹⁵ In fact, the second congress 'gave birth to more than 300 strategic partnerships in world evangelisation',¹⁶ so it is not surprising to find it again in the final section of the Commitment as it is strongly related to the credible and effective mission of the Church. It centres on the unity of the Church, the partnership in global mission, the partnership of men and women, and the need to give a missional orientation to theological education. In the paragraph dealing with the partnership of men and women, we appreciate the emphasis on the equality of all human creatures before God, on the priesthood of all believers and the distribution of the gifts of the Spirit to all. The Commitment recognises the different views on the ministries of women in the Church and recommends mutual respect, further in-depth study of Scripture on this important question, and repentance when the 'manifest work of the Holy Spirit in any sister or brother' has been quenched. The wording of this paragraph has been carefully chosen and aims at arguing in favour of both unity and diversity in the pattern of ministry that truly 'reflects the servanthood of Jesus Christ'. Within a cultural environment which systematically advocates uniformity and the interchangeability of roles, it is crucial to study the complementarity of

male and female ministries in the light of Scripture, not only in the family, but also in the Church. Such a renewed understanding and practice would contribute to enrich the life and the edification of the Church and enhance its witness as it seeks to speak prophetically to the contemporary generation. As to the missional emphasis of a thoroughly biblical, theological education, this is crucial to the growth, the perseverance, relevance and maturity of the Church.

In the conclusion of the second part, the Commitment re-emphasises two of the major themes: radical, obedient discipleship and radical, cross-centred reconciliation. Both discipleship and the love for one another belong to the heart of the life and ministry of the true Church of Christ.

Conclusion

During the closing ceremony of Lausanne III in Cape Town, Lindsay Brown gave the final address in which he presented 'the fourfold vision and hope' of the Congress. His four points constitute an appropriate conclusion to the above presentation and comments:

'First, for a ringing re-affirmation of the uniqueness of Christ and the truth of the biblical gospel, and a crystal clear statement on the mission of the Church – all rooted in Scripture.

Secondly, to identify key issues which the Church needs to address in the coming decade.

Thirdly, to facilitate many fruitful friendships and partnerships.

Fourthly, for many new initiatives in missions and in the public domain.'¹⁷

Both the Congress and the Commitment bear eloquent witness to the initial realisation of this vision and hope, and to the fact that it is already bearing fruit. They have opened new venues of thought and ministry. Both are stimulating, engaging and promising! May the evangelical Church of Jesus Christ receive them with thankful hearts and welcome their challenges and thus contribute to the furthering of the triune God's glory and kingdom in the years to come.

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Notes

- 1 In the Think Tank the following topics were tackled and discussed: Secularism and the New Atheism; Policy and the new technologies: how the Christian faith should inform our response; Creation, Care and Health care; Light and Salt in the current world of business; Corruption on the public square; The spread of Islam: Christian leadership in a Muslim/Christian context, etc.
- 2 The paragraph entitled ‘The world which we do not like’ is very short (cf. The Cape Town Commitment I.7f)!
- 3 Cf. the brochure, *Closing Ceremony. A new musical setting of the Kenyan Service of Holy Communion*, for the words of the different parts of the liturgy. The whole service was a compelling invitation to prayer, to praise and to worship of the Triune God. It brought about, in the midst of this great gathering, a deep sense of the majesty of God and of communion, of belonging to the body of Christ.
- 4 The Cape Town Commitment, The Lausanne Movement, Part I.Id.
- 5 Apart from John Stott, the Commitment quotes from the Lausanne Covenant (twice), the Manila Manifesto (once) and the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission (once). This is evidence that this declaration is building on the two preceding Lausanne statements; a careful comparison of the three documents shows unity, diversity and development.
- 6 In the Old Testament God the Father speaks of the redemption of Israel as a nation, but in some passages the emphasis is on the creative activity of God (Deut 32:6, Isa 64:8 and Mal 2:10). God’s creative activity is not limited to creation; redemption is also conceived as a creative act.
- 7 Further clarification of this issue is needed, at least in the formulation of how creation and society are included in God’s redemptive purpose. This is also apparent in the last section where one reads: ‘God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into a new creation in which there is no more sin or curse’ (I.10 Intro). We basically agree but the expression ‘to transform... into a new creation’ is somewhat ambiguous. The Scriptures speak of the present creation (heaven and earth) passing away and of God creating new heavens and a new earth. It would seem more appropriate to speak of the transfiguration of creation (cf. 1 Cor 15); cf. second part of this article.
- 8 John R.W. Stott, *Evangelical truth: a personal plea for unity, integrity and faithfulness* (Leicester: IVP, 1999).
- 9 In all these ten sections calls to confession, repentance and (re)commitment as well as warnings and denunciations are present in one form or another. Most of the injustices that are denounced are formulated in general terms, appropriate for this type of document. A more specific description of the evils that are questioned would strengthen the argument. For example in section 7, the last paragraph, ‘The world we don’t love’, contains a brief description of ‘the world of human and satanic rebellion against God’. Only ‘sinful desire, greed and human pride’ are specified. One would have expected a more comprehensive description of the ‘world we don’t love’. On the other hand the Commitment on a number of occasions names specific evils and injustices, cf. our comments on the second part, a ‘Call to Action’.
- 10 Part I, Introduction.
- 11 II.1.A.
- 12 II.4.D.
- 13 Half of the world population now lives in cities.
- 14 Already mentioned in the first part of this article.
- 15 The Manila Manifesto, the Lausanne Movement B.9.
- 16 Cape Town Commitment, Preamble.
- 17 Lindsay Brown, ‘We have a Gospel to Proclaim’: Cape Town 2010, at www.Lausanne.org/conversation.