

# WEA Theological News



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Dr Schirmmacher with Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi of Uganda

## ***Lausanne III Cape Town 2010 Special Reports***

TC Executive Chairman, Dr Thomas Schirmmacher reflects on the historic congress held in Cape Town, South Africa 16-25 October 2010 and introduces our special reports

### ***God is on the Move***

By Rolf Hille

It was a great joy to meet hundreds of members and friends of TC in Cape Town among the delegates. What great theologians we have in the Global South and what a gift it is to learn from them—some from countries with very few Evangelicals and under persecution, and others from countries with a very high percentage, like Uganda (37%).

I spoke at meetings of the Anglican Community (five archbishops from every continent!) and the World Reformed Fellowship. I also had a meeting with Pentecostal theologians and deep discussions with the observers from WCC and other international bodies, some of them having come out of TC, like ICETE.

The cooperation with Chris Wright and Rosalee Ewell of the Lausanne Theology Working Group working on the final statement was great, as was the cooperation with the Lausanne and WEA leadership, the other WEA commissions (Mission, Religious Liberty, IT) and our initiatives like Micah and IIRF. We distributed thousands of CDs and other material. At the Missions Commissions meeting, my first words were 'We love you!' I see the deep desire of Lausanne and WEA, that theology, mission theology, missions practitioners and initiatives like Micah go hand in hand, which is also a great challenge for theologians worldwide.

For this special issue of TN, I have asked three different people to present their evaluation of Cape Town from totally different perspectives—and asked them not only to sing praises but to be self critical as well: Rolf Hille, former chair of TC, who has been at all Lausanne conferences since 1974, Rosalee Ewell, who has been in the centre of drafting the final statement for the Lausanne Theology Working Group, and John Baxter-Brown, as an observer from WCC.

**Thomas Schirmmacher**

God is on the move. That means, God can really be experienced. This experience, this feeling, and this commitment characterized the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization at the southern tip of Africa in Cape Town. 'God is not dead. Jesus is alive!' was sung over and over again with great enthusiasm by more than 4,000 evangelical Christians from 197 countries at the Cape of Good Hope.

With this truly international and ecumenical conference, the Lausanne Movement succeeded in connecting a new generation to the new beginning they made 36 years ago in the Swiss city of Lausanne. The vitality of the global Evangelical movement was evident in Cape Town as a great source of strength throughout all Protestant and Anglican churches. The conscious connection to the historically significant first conference on world missions 100 years ago in Edinburgh, Scotland, was certainly a very powerful symbolic gesture. Holding this conference in the year 2010, the perspectives of the Lausanne delegates are connected to continue the legacy of Protestant missionary work on a broad ecumenical level.

The development following the Edinburgh conference of 1910 was dramatic. After a series of productive missionary conferences and the integration of the International Council on Missions in the World Council of Churches (WCC), a rising break with tradition came to a head in the year 1968. At the WCC, socio-political responsibility in the world appeared to replace evangelization. Finally, a moratorium was even placed on the com-

*(Continued on page 3)*

## God at work in the small, untold stories

By Rosalee Ewell, Brazil, Theologian and NT Editor, Latin American Bible Commentary



'People go to Christ to have a need met; they stay with Christ because they meet the Truth' (Ajith Fernando). So began the first of a series of six studies on the book of Ephesians. Over 4500 participants from all around the globe gathered to listen, learn, dialogue and disagree about world evangelization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The six full days of the Congress were organized according to six themes: Truth, Reconciliation, World Faiths, Priorities, Integrity, and Partnership, with each day beginning with a study of Ephesians.

In addition to the Bible expositions, there were morning and evening plenaries, multiplexes and dozens of dialogue sessions on issues as varied as Theological Education, indigenous visual media, and eco-systems in large cities. Participants were seated around table discussion groups, during which time all were encouraged to pray, share and make their own contributions to the Congress.

Lausanne III was, statistically, the most diverse congress that the evangelical world has seen, yet in many ways such diversity was not reflected in the selection of plenary speakers or themes discussed on the main stage. By diversity, I do not simply refer to matters of ethnicity, or gender or even age – though these, too, should have had wider representation among the main speakers. Rather, theologically, the Congress 'played it safe'. Thus, topics that divide the church today, such as sexuality or war and military intervention, were discussed offstage. Apartheid and the Evangelical complicity in it were also taboo.

In this sense Cape Town 2010 was a step backwards because the Lausanne Movement has, from its inception, been a space where evangelicals of so many different stripes have been able to gather to discuss and disagree, while also seeking to work together for the sake of God's kingdom. It was a place where Latin American theologians, who struggled under the pressures of military dictatorships, could meet North American Baptists, who did not support the ordination of women, and Anglican priests and scholars, who wrestled to make biblical literacy a reality in Africa. Yet that Lausanne, as that space, was not readily available in Cape Town – at least not from the centre stage.

However, positively, the Spirit was at work offstage, and, to be fair, even from centre stage there were some prophetic voices and strong words that called the church to integrity and humility and called on Christians to be a people of truth and unity in a world of lies and separations. These voices found their echoes in some of the dialogue sessions and regional gatherings. The Brazilian delegation offered a formal apology and asked for forgiveness of its African sisters and brothers for the hundreds of years of slavery; the Truth and Reconciliation dialogue session drafted a lament over Apartheid. There are numerous other examples of gatherings, prayers and friendships that sprung up around common struggles, sorrows and joys, that could only be possible because of the workings of the Spirit.

As a Congress on world evangelization, Lausanne III left many questions about evangelism unanswered. The old

familiar dichotomies between preaching and social justice were brought up once again, and by the end of the week, participants had the impression that evangelism strategies refer mainly to the work done with unreached people groups. Despite the table discussions and over-crowded (and overly scripted) program, the Congress did not offer a forum or venue where such debates could take place.

Thus evangelism, as the lifeblood of the church in all parts of the world, and the ministry of drawing people to join their lives to the life of Jesus, was rarely discussed at length in any explicit form. It would have been helpful to examine more closely issues of where the church is growing and to look at questions such as why, and with what sort of depth and breadth is such growth taking place.

The Congress ended with a colourful service of word and table, but without a clear sense of what the future of the Lausanne Movement might be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perhaps the shortcomings of Cape Town 2010 serve as a helpful reminder that most often we see God at work in the small, untold stories – in the witness of local communities seeking to live out their discipleship amidst various challenges, and, like the couple on its way to Emmaus, in the joys of sharing a meal with old and new friends who travel the journey with us... and learn to stay with the Truth.

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### TC Member Addresses Lausanne Congress on Truth

Dr Carver Yu, a long term member of the WEA Theological Commission who is President of the prestigious China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong, addressed the Cape Town Lausanne Congress on its first full day on the importance of presenting the truth of the Christian message in its evangelistic work.

In the advance version of his paper which was circulated early for feedback (go to <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/10457>) Dr Yu said, 'If moral values are severed from their transcendent source, then the highest virtue will be nothing but pragmatic function. . . . The value of the human person lies in her marketability or functionality in the market. The person is basically a tool or a commodity to others.'

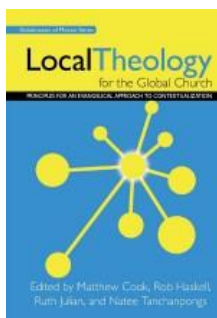
He went on to say, 'The exile of transcendent truth will exact a heavy price on us leading to socio-cultural chaos and therefore immense suffering. We cannot but stand up to turn back the tide. We have to preach the truth of the Christian gospel at all costs.'

Dr Yu explained, 'Those of us who live in Asia have for centuries lived with the reality of cultural plurality in general and religious plurality in particular. Yes, we have lived with plurality, but not pluralism. Pluralism has never been an option.'

One blogger commented, 'For me, Carver Yu was one of the most thought-provoking presentations of the day followed by Os Guinness who offered "Six Reasons Why Truth Matters to Us Supremely".'

For the video go to <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/11377>

## Local Theology focus by TC Study Unit



In the summer of 2008 fifteen scholars from all around the world gathered at Oxford for the World Evangelical Alliance Theological Commission's consultation on contextualization. The concern of the gathering was to provide an evangelical evaluation of issues surrounding the task of local theologizing, and also to provide directions for a uniquely evangelical approach to that task.

The results of the summit have now been edited into the book, *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization* which is published by William Carey Library. The editors are Study Unit members Matt Cook, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian and Natee Tanchanpongs

The papers cover issues related to exegesis, cultural anthropology, epistemology, theological education and syncretism, and follow an approach of critical realism. While acknowledging some of the very real challenges of cross-cultural communication, it affirms nevertheless that real meaning can be transferred from culture to culture. Therefore, the unique content of the gospel really can enter into new situation as a new message.

The editors state, 'We must not confuse this gospel message with a particular theological exposition of that message, generated in a different context, and attempt to transfer that theological exposition to a new culture. Rather, each culture must work out its own theology for its own context, employing local categories and answering local questions. This local theology will use scripture as its basis and the global church a dialog partner.'

The book also adds a final chapter, not presented at the consultation, that provides strategies for helping theological students contextualize the material they are learning. The book ends with an extensive bibliography of works on contextualization.

In commending the book, Kevin J. Vanhoozer writes, 'This important book is not for missiologists only but for theologians, pastors, and everyday Christians trying to live out the one true faith in situations that bear no cultural resemblance to biblical times.'

Christopher Wright of the Langham movement says, 'It should be a highly commended textbook for a wide range of practitioners, from Bible translators to church planters and theological educators in all cultures.'

The book can be purchased through William Carey Library and good theological book stores.



TC Study Unit meeting at Oxford, 2008

(Continued from page 1) *God is on the Move*

missioning of white missionaries to the Third World and this practice was supposed to be halted entirely. Instead, the question arose: Should missions be replaced by dialogue with non-Christian world religions? Theologically-conservative churches and groups, that is, the evangelicals, wanted to stay firmly committed to the goal of world evangelization. They appealed to the new beginning made in Edinburgh in 1910. In this situation, Billy Graham, with his financially powerful organization, took the initiative by inviting 2,700 evangelists and missiologists to Lausanne. In doing so, the evangelical movement was established as a globally strong force next to the WCC. 'Lausanne' 1974 then launched a large number of missionary efforts and developed a deeply-founded theology of missions. The Second Lausanne Congress in Manila in 1989 was an important motivator for evangelization for many young Christians; yet, because of some internal conflicts, it could not really fulfil its expectations.

With Lausanne III in Cape Town, it is evident that a changing of the guard has taken place. With globalization, urbanization, communications technology, and the end of the East-West conflict, the world has fundamentally changed. Profound changes have also occurred in the churches: The majority of Christendom is now in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The young churches are blossoming in many different ways while the once Christian West is mostly secular. The WCC has clearly moved away from radical positions and is now in regular dialogue with evangelicals. For today's Facebook generation, the controversies of the 1970's are church history. Even within the evangelical movement, women have found a new self-confident role of responsible leadership.

Lausanne III has taken up all of these challenges and overcome them in a overall convincing way.

1. The long conflict with the WCC is being replaced by dialogue. In the meantime, it has become a self-understood fact throughout all Protestant churches that churches must work together ecumenically in world missions.

2. The representatives of the Two-Thirds World make up a large part of the face of the evangelical movement. Their way of expressing and living out faith, enduring persecution, and evangelizing with great joy is simply contagious. The manifold participation of women and young participants fits seamlessly into this context.

3. In the age of multimedia, the vast amount of program offerings are characterized by an abundance of audio-visual presentations, theatre productions, and skit dramas. Despite these, the theological depth of Lausanne 1974 was not reached again in Cape Town.

4. The important elements of 'Lausanne III' were personal piety and the encouraging testimonies of experiences with God. 'God is on the move!' - the Lausanne Movement has been impacted by this fact and set in motion.

(The author, Dr. Rolf Hille of Heilbronn, Germany, former Chair of the WEA TC, is the Chairman of the Fellowship of Evangelical Theologians in Germany and was a participant on all congresses held by the Lausanne movement since 1974. (The original German text was published in the Information Service of the German Evangelical Alliance-idea )





## ***The Juras and the Alps—and the Mission of the Church***

*by John Baxter-Brown\**

I live in Switzerland, half way between Lausanne and Geneva. On clear days I can lift my eyes up to the mountains, the Juras behind and the Alps in front, with Mont Blanc rising above all. It takes about one hour to get to my office at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The location of my home became a rather useful theological metaphor whilst at Cape Town for Lausanne III. As an evangelical and an ecumenical, I had great expectations for Cape Town 2010. The Lausanne Covenant helped shape my theology when I started out as an independent evangelist in my small corner of England, my 'Jerusalem', after my undergrad theological studies. The Covenant expressed and articulated so well many of the things I believed. It broke new ground for evangelicals. The '74 Congress encouraged a new wave of missionary activity among evangelicals and helped overcome unhelpful divisions between preaching the gospel and social action. Consequently it set the bar high for any following Congress.

The organisers of Lausanne III invited a number of observers to Cape Town. We were a diverse group which included Orthodox, Roman Catholic and conciliar representatives. I arrived hoping and praying that this Congress would also break new ground, help develop stronger relationships with other branches of the global Christian community and offer some fresh impetus to the great task of world evangelisation.

There were many good things about this Congress: most of the Bible readings were excellent, as were some of the other plenary inputs, especially the call to repentance, humility, integrity and simplicity. The use of table groups was a genuine attempt to allow a participatory approach. Hearing stories of God at work in people and places is always a good reflection of The Story, of the continuing action of Jesus in the world through the Spirit. The diversity of the participants was impressive, welcome and appreciated.

However, the conceptualisation of 'the global church' and the exclusivist claims of *some* evangelical leaders at Cape Town 2010 are reasons for deep concern. To accomplish the evangelisation of the world in this generation (to use John Mott's famous slogan) we must get beyond the mistrust that characterised the '70s and '80s and find ways of working together. In so doing we honour Jesus' prayer in John 17... 'that the world might believe'. Yet Lausanne III did not promote an official forum for such cooperation and a number of the plenary addresses reproduced old stereotypes and divisions.

There is indeed growing convergence about deep theological concepts upon which world evangelisation can be accomplished and I was grateful to find fellow Christians in Cape Town who shared my dream and desire to engage in such cooperative efforts. One such example of cooperation is a short document to be published next year, *Recommendations Towards a Code of Conduct on Conversion*. It is an initiative which involves the WCC, the WEA and the Vatican collaborating to (hopefully!) improve ethical practice in evangelisation.

Though there was official talk of unity and peace, sadly, at Cape Town 2010, participants were left wondering how the Lausanne Movement might actually contribute to these and, as observers to the Congress, we were not able fully to participate or offer input into the tightly run programme. Yet, despite these frustrations, there are fresh opportunities for evangelicals and ecumenicals to work together under Jesus for the benefit of his world. It remains a challenge for the Lausanne Movement to show the ways in which it sees its role in this process. I am a member of both tribes—evangelical and ecumenical. I hope one legacy of Lausanne III will be a maturing of relationships, a deepening of unity and a renewed energy within the whole church to reach the whole world with the whole Gospel for God's sake.

*\*John Baxter-Brown is consultant on evangelism for the World Council of Church based in Geneva, Switzerland.*

For more information about the Cape Town Congress, visit the official website <http://www.lausanne.org/cape-town-2010> where there are papers, videos, photographs, news reports, blogs and many other items of information. The official site for Part 1 the statement from Cape Town is <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/11544> The second part is under preparation and will be available in coming months. The Theology Work Group statement is at <http://www.lausanne.org/participant-information/twg-paper.html>

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