**Draft**

**The Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . Gospel as good news**

**GOSPEL INCARNATE AND ITS MISSIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

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Valdir Steuernagel

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.*

*We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only*

*who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

**“*For the Lord we love*”**

**The old confession in a *new* language**

As the **Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization**(Cape Town, October 16-25, 2010) closed its doors, there was a Cape Town Commitment left on the table and, somehow, in people’s bags as they headed back home.

It has become much of a tradition that conferences and congresses conclude with a declaration, a statement or even a covenant. Some of them become quite significant, of which the well known Lausanne Covenant must be a master example, while others are solemnly ignored or quickly forgotten. In line with that tradition Lausanne III also worked hard to leave on the table and in people’s bags a “*kairos* piece”that, while not forgetting what had already been said, honoring its evangelical tradition, would still say a word that have a sense of vocational freshness in the attempt of relating and witnessing to its own days and time. Besides, they wanted to say a word that would be wholeheartedly embraced by the participants of the event, without going through the difficult and arduous process of asking for everyone’s opinion and contribution. Out of that effort emerged the **Cape Town Commitment**(CTC), which comes in two parts. The first one affirms the classic tenants of the evangelical faith and is therefore entitled **A Confession of Faith**. This piece was worked on beforehand and presented at the event, and people had it at hand when leaving the gathering.

While not saying something that new in terms of a confession of faith, as mentioned earlier, the way it was said and the frame within it speaks might be the real novelty of the entire **Commitment**. In other words, the novelty is not so much in *what* is said but in *how* it is said. The **Confession of Faith** is the old confession in a new style and language. It embraces a more narrative style and a language of love. It abandons the cold language of abstract statements and tries to convey an inviting tone. The language becomes more humble and avoids the arrogant tone of cold and distant affirmations of certainties. In fact, the novelty of the CTC is that it speaks the language of love, which is almost a surprise for a document like this and coming from where it comes. Let’s hear from the text:

*This Statement is framed in the language of love. Love is the language of covenant. The biblical covenants, old and new, are the expression of God’s redeeming love and grace reaching out to lost humanity and spoiled creation. They call for our love in return. Our love shows itself in trust, obedience and passionate commitment to our covenant Lord.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

The second part of the CTC was entitled **A Call to Action** and, based on the key emphasis of the conference, outlines challenges and action points in light of the task of world evangelization. In a typical evangelical fashion it looks at the challenges ahead, identifies opportunities and becomes operational and task-oriented. It calls for commitment, actions and prayer. It proceeds toward a reading of our global environment – the challenge of world evangelization – and tries to embrace the worldwide evangelical family by looking, prayerfully and obediently, at challenges and opportunities. The Call concludes by saying as follows:

*In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and on the sole foundation of faith in God’s infinite mercy and saving grace, we earnestly long and pray for a reformation of biblical discipleship and a revolution of Christlike love.*

*We make this our prayer and we undertake this our commitment for the sake of the Lord we love and for the sake of the world we serve in his name.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

**The CTC . . . a parable**

The lengthy introduction to the CTC wants, in fact, to be a parable. A parable that will help us journey into our subject, which will focus on the incarnation of Jesus Christ, stressing it as a foundational act of God’s mission and a model for the mission of the church in our days. This parable will help us, more specifically, to enter the reality, richness, complexity and even confusion of the evangelical world. And it is this evangelical tradition that informs the conversation around our subject.

The evangelical tradition is quite diverse but at the same time embraces some common tenants. Such tenants still drink from the confessional statements of the Reformation, are inspired by the tradition of revival, have a missionary outreach touch, and are committed to world evangelization as well expressed in the journey of the Lausanne Movement. But all of this is already known and will not be stressed here.

Nevertheless, there is something that must be affirmed and stressed here, even if superficially. The fact is, this evangelical expression of the Christian faith has experienced enormous growth, entered in contact with a variety of cultural, socio-economic and religious environments, and has seen the emergence of a new, dynamic and even loose missionary movement. This movement of and within the evangelical world has witnessed the emergence of a so-called “Southern church”**,** meaning a church that has experienced growth away from the Western circle and moved into other places in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Besides having to deal with issues of religious diversity, economic underdevelopment, political upheaval and social injustice, this church experienced and nurtured the awakening of a leadership that faced the challenge of doing theology in light of such a changing and challenging environment. Expressions of that leadership felt the need to receive the evangelical tradition of their mostly Western fathers and mothers while affirming the need to listen to their own contexts and allowing for the Scriptures, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to shape a new evangelical obedience. An obedience that would be in line with the evangelical tradition which has, according to Stanley J. Grenz, three hallmarks: a) the *Kerygma*, meaning that the Scriptures are continuously speaking through the action of the Spirit; b) the theological heritage of the church; and, c) the cultural situation of the faith community.[[3]](#footnote-3)

To establish a hermeneutic conversation between those marks has been a significant contribution of that Southern leadership; and the Lausanne Movement has very probably been the most significant and global platform for such a conversation to take place. In fact, the CTC is a good expression of the product of that ongoing conversation.

I must say I am a child of Lausanne coming from the South, coming from Latin America. I am one of those who have seen the evangelical churches growing, becoming hectically active and even anarchic. I am one of those who have seen the power and the relevance of the Gospel in the lives of many people in many places. I am one of those who have discovered that the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to transform the whole of reality, and that there is no dimension whatsoever in life that cannot be reached and transformed by his message. But I am also one of those who have seen that church growth does not necessarily change society, and witnessed to the fact that the Gospel can be so watered down to the point of losing its call to repentance and to build a church that would be an alternative to society.

Therefore, when I speak of the Gospel incarnate I am certainly not neutral but biased. I am biased by the belief that the good news of the Gospel intends to affect and shape all dimensions of life, be it individually or collectively. I am a product of a theological school that believed in a hermeneutic circle at which the Gospel listens to and transforms people’s life and society. I am a product of a theology that affirms that context is important, thus the “gospel incarnate” is a central piece to every good theology. But let me say this in a different way.

I only know how to speak about incarnation by talking incarnationally. By talking about the way in which the Gospel touches and transforms my life and the lives of those around me, and the way I try to respond to it. In that response I carry along those who surround me, those who have contributed to shape my life and are part of my journey. And the Lausanne Movement is certainly part of that family who helped make me who I am.

**The Incarnation of Jesus Christ**

**A Christology “from above” and “from bellow”**

To affirm that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14) is part of our Christian heritage and a basic column of our faith. It is in fact the central theme of the grand prolog of the Gospel of John and points to this revelatory movement from eternity into history, from divinity into humanity, from a loving relationship with the Father into the experience of the Son being rejected. The Word became flesh and now, in the words of the predecessor John, we can know who God is, experience his grace and receive “one blessing after another” (John 1: 15-18). This is “Christology from above”, by using the expression of Juan Stam[[4]](#footnote-4), and a mission move from God himself. A missionary God.

There are certainly unique dimensions in this incarnational movement and we should never take them for granted. To start with, it is important never to take the mystery away from it. The mystery of a God who wants to become human and does this in such a radical way that only God can do it. As Leonardo Boff says, “he is so human that he must be God himself”[[5]](#footnote-5). It’s also a mystery embedded in grace. In grace we are gifted with his glory and through grace we are visited by the truth that is Christ himself. And it is a mystery through which we are gifted with the gift of becoming his children by believing “in his name” (John 1:12). It is a gift from heaven brought to us and given to us by the Word who became flesh.

Glory to the Father, the Son ad the Holy Spirit

**Looking at the “dwelling among us”**

While Juan Stam talks about a “Christology from above”, as seen at the prolog of John’s Gospel, he also talks about a “Christology from bellow” and refers to the synoptic Gospels. I suggest it is worth to look into this in order to get a better picture of what it meant for Jesus to “to dwell among us”, as a gesture of deep identification with humanity. In fact, more than a gesture, it was an act of identification in itself. Jesus became “one of us”.

The Gospels are not economic in making the humanity of Jesus evident, starting with the embarrassment of Mary, and Jesus’ birth until his death at the cross, where he felt thirsty and abandoned. He grow up as a child, lived with and was loved by his family, and moving into his ministry he felt tired, got mad, cried with sadness and experienced anguish and abandonment. (See Lk 2:41-51; Mk 6:31; Jo 2:14-16; Jo 11:33-35; Mt 26:36-38; Mt 27:46.)

In fact, the way he lived and everything he did was not accidental but an expression of some of the promises coming from the Old Testament and a way to shape his messianic call. Everything was an expression of his incarnation and pointed to a style at which that very incarnation was lived out. One most vivid expressions of this is found in the so-called “program of Nazareth” at the opening of Jesus’ public ministry as brought to us by the evangelist Luke.

*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written (Luke 4:18-21):*

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
    because he has anointed me
    to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
    and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
   to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

*Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”.*

As we know well, Jesus is quoting and applying to himself the well-known passage of Isaiah 61:1-2. In fact, he is assuring those people that he came to fulfil that prophesy. And what he embraced here, by quoting this passage, he lived out throughout his ministry as can be lividly seen at an encounter between Jesus and the disciples of John the Baptist, who was experiencing a difficult time at prison. Let’s see the passage:

*When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’” At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.*

In other words, Jesus repeats what was promised, assumes it for himself and lives accordingly to it: he proclaims the good news to the poor, heals the sick, proclaims people free from oppression and announces the arrival of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, as he says*, if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you* (Luke 11:20); or when, as said in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus proclaims *the good news of God. “The time has come”* and *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (Mark 1:14-15), just to mention a few moments out of many registered in the Gospels. The dwelling of Jesus “among us” was not abstract but real and concrete. It meant not only being around but also going around and making contact with people and situations. Furthermore, the dwelling of Jesus among us was not neutral. He took sides. He took sides with the poor, the little ones, the vulnerable, the refugees, by using a language we understand. Or we could say that he took the side of *the* *alien, fatherless and widow* (Psalm 146:9), by using categories of the Old Testament. To refer to this way of living and act as a “Christology from bellow” is a way to refer to the intensity and radicalism of the incarnation as well as the modeling it provides for the mission of the church.

Moving into this reading of the incarnation of Jesus and its consequences for the mission of the church is certainly neither easy, nor comfortable or conflict free. But it is enormously rich and provides the church with a powerful and hopeful message.

As the reading of this Gospel became native in my Latin American context, three consequences emerged and we had to deal with them. Firstly, we had to discern much of the mission enterprise brought to us mainly by some of the evangelical churches of the United States of America. Those mission voices had told us, in many occasions and in many ways, that the Gospel was mainly about our souls and we should not be paying much attention to our surroundings. To have encountered the Gospel ourselves, however, led us to the discovery that the Gospel was concerned not only with the whole of our lives but also with the lives of the people around us as well as with the entirety of our environment, be it political, cultural, socio-economic, and religious. That Gospel encounter led us to the critical deconstruction of a strongly disincarnated gospel and to the affirmation of the context. Context was important indeed – just look at the incarnation of Jesus, so we discovered.

The second consequence was the discovery that the Gospel was not neutral to this context of ours. The Gospel did take sides, so to say; and, for us, it took the side of the poor, the oppressed and the victims of mostly unjust societies. And by taking those sides this Gospel embraced a note of denunciation to the context we lived in. To do this at a time and place where many countries in our continent were experiencing regimes of dictatorship was not without danger and a price was paid by many in different places, though this is still and much a no-written story in places like Brazil. How to uncover, just as one example, the stories of churches and/or church leaders who denounced other Christians as subversive[[6]](#footnote-6) is still a difficult chapter in front of us. The incarnation of Jesus had consequences because he took sides, as seen earlier, and this had and still has consequences today for the mission of the church.

The third consequence was discovering the real Gospel. It was the encounter with the good news that would find people in the most difficult and abandoned places, share with them a narrative of rescue and salvation and see them become a “new creature”. It was an experience of *shalom* coming to people living in environments of hopelessness and despair. The incarnation of Jesus made all the difference possible in people’s lives and the words of Jesus to the disciples of John could be seen becoming a reality again: *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor”* (Luke 7:22).

Such experiences with the Gospel in places like Latin America, as well as many others, were thought of, talked about and pronounced as theology, nurturing the faith of a young church with young leaders. They brought to the table a broader conversation and the evangelical table became bigger, larger, louder and even more confusing. The best place where this could be seen and met was at the Lausanne Movement, which had already produced and embraced a covenant as the result of the I Lausanne Congress of World Evangelization[[7]](#footnote-7). This covenant can be seen as the best example of he conversation around that table. The covenant affirmed the evangelical identity again while addressing issues like culture, injustice, poverty, and simple lifestyle, to mention a few examples. Furthermore, as those issues were to be looked at from the perspective of the biblical witness, the heritage of the fathers and mothers at the table alongside with the newcomers, mostly from the Southern world, the agenda for the conversation was established and several gatherings took place as an example that the narrative of the incarnation is not over for the church continues to hear the Spirit saying “go to the all the world and be like Jesus”.

**From servanthood to glory! Or, the glory of servanthood**

The Gospels are not economic, either, when referring to the way in which the incarnated Jesus lived out his messianic call. His call to vest the mantle of servanthood was too loud and too often, as can clearly be seen at the disciples’ difficulties to deal with it. The scenario designed by Mark at one of those moments is just but one example:

*They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?”But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all* (Mark 9: 33-35).

Jesus insisted quite often that he came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45). This was well and profoundly elaborated at the Christological hymn introduced by Paul at this letter to the Philippians. This hymn describes well the Christology *from above* and *from bellow* and how these two realities came together at the cross – the cross as the place where the Servant Messiah became the Servant Sufferer at its climax. The cross as the place where the Incarnate Servant saw his options to serve the poor, announce the Gospel and bring the Kingdom to reality come to their political and even religious consequences. The cross was the place where the glory of God emerged and “every knee would know it”. Let’s share in the hymn itself:

*Who, being in very nature God,
    did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
    by taking the very nature of a servant,
    being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
    he humbled himself
    by becoming obedient to death—
        even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
    and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
    in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
    to the glory of God the Father.* (Philippians 2:6-11)

While Paul, by reproducing this hymn, invites the Philippians to have a similar servant attitude as Christ had, the Gospel of John would point to the fact that this servant attitude was one of love. It was, in fact, an act of salvific love that went as far as to the cross. The incarnation went as far as to the cross and became the model for the mission of the church, as Jesus himself said: *Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me* (Mark 8: 34).

Many years later, when Lausanne I was already coming to Lausanne III, the need was felt to highlight the servant mark of Christ and to call the church of Christ “back to humility, integrity and simplicity”. In fact, the CTC dedicates a whole section to this very emphasis, calling for the rejection of the idolatry of power, success and greed while suggesting a walk in humility, integrity and simplicity as a distinctive walk “as God’s new humanity”[[8]](#footnote-8). Besides registering this call in the CTC itself, a plenary session of the event transformed it into a liturgy and a commitment, signaling for the evangelical world represented at the Lausanne gathering the need to repent of their arrogance and reencounter the route of humility and servanthood as lived out by the incarnate Jesus.

Coming to this call from my Latin American context I could only affirm its need and timeliness. For in our context evangelical churches have not only experienced enormous growth but also became all-powerful and arrogant. Many leaders have moved into sophisticated places, never seen so much money, started to sit at the front table to receive and be received by state authorities while moving away from the call to humility, integrity and simplicity. The call to repentance echoed at Lausanne III is still of enormous need to a church that must reencounter and be reencountered by the Word who became flesh at the Bethlehem manger.

***“Teologia del Camino”* as an expression of the Gospel incarnate**

Many years ago a well-known Scottish missionary to Peru called Juan A. Mackay taught us that there is a “balcony theology” that should not be followed, since it can’t really be a theology worthy of its name. Instead, every good theology should be a *“teologia del Camino*” (theology of the way). This would be a worthwhile theology and worthy to be followed. The Lausanne Movement, it could be said, has tried to follow this trend with all it implies in terms of tensions, crises, discontinuity, and even financial difficulties. And the CTC is a good example of a journey possible and of a learning process at which it is possible to affirm identity, build community and manifest an explicit effort to hear the voices and read the signs of the times as an expression of followship to the incarnate Son of God.

One of the significant dimensions of this journey of Lausanne was the broadening of the understanding of mission. Having started its journey, even at the organizational stage, very much with the goal of world evangelization, mostly understood as the verbal proclamation of the Gospel, Lausanne went through a deep process of study, tension and conversation until coming to Lausanne III and especially to the CTC[[9]](#footnote-9). This document reflects very much an understanding of mission that moves beyond the mere verbal proclamation of the Gospel, without denying it, and wants to be integral, as that understanding of mission is understood today. In fact, the CTC uses the term **integral mission** in significant ways and calls for the commitment to it as follows:

*We commit ourselves to the integral and dynamic exercise of all dimensions of mission to which God calls his Church.*

*God commands us to make known to all nations the truth of God’s revelation and the gospel of God’s saving grace through Jesus Christ, calling all people to repentance, faith, baptism and obedient discipleship. God commands us to reflect his own character though compassionate care for the needy, and to demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God in striving for justice and peace and in caring for God’s creation.*

*In response to God’s boundless love for us in Christ, and out of our overflowing love for him, we rededicate ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, fully to obey all that God commands, with self-denying humility, joy and courage. We renew this covenant with the Lord - the Lord we love because he first loved us.[[10]](#footnote-10)*

One of the main contributors to this broader understanding of mission was John Stott, an almost legendary figure within the recent evangelical family. The key player behind the Lausanne Covenant, Stott got himself deeply involved into the journey of Lausanne and in the effort to develop an understanding of mission that would be rooted in Scripture while at the same time be able to talk to context and provide an experience with the good news of the Gospel in all areas of life. In order to walk in this direction, he stressed that the fundamental version of the Great Commission is found in the John’s version of it. At this version Jesus establishes his own sending by the Father as the model for the mission of the church. And he does it twice, one in the context of his Great Prayer registered in John 17 and then after his resurrection again. In both mandates the emphasis is the same: *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you* (John 20:21)[[11]](#footnote-11) As a consequence, Stott says, “our understanding of the mission of the church needs to be a reflection of our understanding of the mission of the Son”.[[12]](#footnote-12)

In a later statement Stott made the evidences of this association between the mission of Jesus and our mission even clearer when he said: “Now he sends us into the world, as the Father sent him into the world. In other words, our mission is to be modeled on his. Indeed, all authentic mission is incarnational mission. It demands identification without the loss of identity. It means entering other people’s worlds, as he entered ours through without compromising our Christian convictions, values and standards”.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The incarnation of Jesus is the model of mission

**The incarnation of Jesus and the Kingdom of God**

To speak about the incarnation of Jesus can never be a soliloquy. It must always be done within a frame. So, I conclude this conversation by pointing to some aspects of that frame, even if only pointing to it. It is a frame hosted, again, in the historical journey of the Lausanne Movement. In this way our conversation will keep the flavor of a journey, which is essential when looking at the dynamics of the incarnation of Jesus and its implication for our own missional journey.

**1. The incarnation of Jesus is an act of the Trinity**

As seen at the grand prolog of John, and developed throughout that Gospel, the incarnation of Jesus was certainly not a sole decision; it was, instead, nurtured in the heart of the Trinity. The Trinity was completely present at the incarnation of Jesus among us and stayed “incarnated”, so to say, through the sending presence of the Holy Spirit. In Boff’s words, “the God-Trinity who was present in human history, now through the Son and the Spirit, sent by the Father, assumed this history as theirs and lived in our midst as if in their own living place”.[[14]](#footnote-14)

To bring the Trinity into the reality and perception of the incarnation of Jesus is of enormous richness to the understanding of his life and ministry. It opens the scenario of the incarnation into a scope as large and deep as the Trinity itself. Not only the Trinity is present in the historic life of Jesus but his very life also brings and reflects the Trinity in all he does, and lives out the Trinity in fullness. The Trinity is right there where Jesus is; and wherever Jesus is, there is the Trinity. The Gospel of John is very intense and clear in bringing the close relationship between Father and Son into the picture, be it in terms of identity or of action. One of his disciples is taken by surprise when Jesus declares, “*Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’*?*”* (John 14:9). And to the Jews he pointed to the nature of his own action by saying, “*Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does”* (John 5:19).

The Trinity as such has never been absent to the confession of faith, as the early Lausanne Covenant also shows when it states, “*We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will*.[[15]](#footnote-15) But the implications of this in terms of the experience of a mission that will reflect Father, Son and Holy Spirit is a treasure still to be much uncovered. It’s a richness the recent evangelical world has not touched much yet, although there is an attempt to embrace it in a deeper way, as seen at the structure of the CTC itself. But there is more to move into as we look into the consequences of a Trinitarian approach to the created world, to fatherhood and motherhood, to the presence of the Spirit – who, as the wind, “blows wherever it pleases” (John 3:6), always pointing to Jesus in surprising ways, as well as to the experience of us being called to be a community of faith modeled by the experience of the Trinity itself. Here we are faced with a splendid, rich storage room to be visited with excitement, expectation and hope as we walk the path of followship to the incarnated Son.

**2. The incarnation of Jesus is a sign of the Kingdom**

The incarnation of Jesus brings along the reality of the Kingdom of God in a vivid, graceful and hopeful way. The Kingdom became as concrete as Jesus was real and his presence and actions intervened in people’s lives in such a way that they started to walk, see, serve each other, be free and hope again, just to mention a few of the Kingdom’s dimensions. The Kingdom is fully here as Jesus is fully here, even though the Kingdom is still hoped for as Jesus’ coming is hoped for. In this regard the incarnation is the announcement of a new possibility to be believed and experienced in our present time, even if the present cannot capture or embrace the fullness of that Kingdom yet. The Kingdom is still a reality to come. And when the Book of Revelation comes to a close the reality of that future is painted with vivid colors and the dwelling of God becomes all in all:

 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”* (Revelation 21:1-4).

This real banquet is but a foretaste of the future Kingdom to come, while what the future announces is already a reality around Jesus, his message and his people. As seen earlier, this message of the Kingdom of God is central to Jesus and is keen to be understood in its deep and wide significance and reach. Mortimer Arias says the following in his attempt to capture it: “The Kingdom of God announced by Jesus is multidimensional and all encompassing. It is both a present and a future reality. It has to do with each individual creature and with the whole of society. It embraces all dimensions of human life, physical, spiritual, personal; and interpersonal, communal and societal, historical and eternal. And it encompasses all human relationship the neighbor, with nature and with God. It implies a total offer and a total demand. Everything and everybody has to be in line with it.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

It took evangelicals quite some time to embrace the centrality of the Kingdom and its importance in the life of Jesus. They had been drinking for too long from a pre-millenial fountain in which the world was a sinking boat and the main task was to safe souls.[[17]](#footnote-17) The Lausanne Movement could be seen as one pioneer example where the Kingdom motif was introduced step by step and certainly faced some tension. Almost absent at the Lausanne Covenant, when it comes to the CTC, the theme is repeatedly there and even associated to the task of the church: *As the most vivid present expression of the Kingdom of God, the Church is the community of the reconciled who no longer live for themselves, but for the Saviour who loved them and gave himself for them.[[18]](#footnote-18)*

The reduction of the incarnation of Jesus to the goal of saving souls has been left in the past, while there is still a lot to look into and receive in order to embrace the richness and fullness of the reality of the Kingdom brought to us by the very incarnated Jesus. To bring this reality and hope of the Kingdom into the missional life of the church, be it at the local level, be it in its missionary outreach, is a chapter still to be worked at. And do this hopefully and expectantly is something the CTC intends to motivate us to do:

*The mission of God continues to the ends of the earth and to the end of the world. The day will come when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ and God will dwell with his redeemed humanity in the new creation. Until that day, the Church’s participation in God’s mission continues, in joyful urgency, and with fresh and exciting opportunities in every generation including our own*.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**3. The incarnation of Jesus is the model for our mission**

The movement from evangelization as very much taught and understood as being the verbal proclamation of the Gospel to *mission* is a long and difficult one within the circles of Lausanne itself. When reading the CTC it is even difficult to understand that there was a serious and intense conversation within the Movement, especially in regard to the relationship between evangelization and social responsibility, as to the main and central task of the church. This is now an old conversation; yet, it was within the frame of such discussion that Stott insisted on affirming that the mission of the church modeled on God’s own act of sending Jesus (John 20:21 cf 17:18) “consists of everything the church is sent into the world to do”.[[20]](#footnote-20) This understanding was, still according to Stott, most likely “the first major achievement of the Congress”, as a reference to Lausanne I. Stott would summarize it in this way: “But now there is a willingness among evangelicals to accept that if mission (which is God’s first and the Church’s second) is what God sends his people into the world to do, then it includes social as well as evangelistic activity”.[[21]](#footnote-21)

There is certainly no need to enter here into details of the mission of the church, besides affirming that mission is not what *we* want to do but it is to follow the steps of the incarnated Jesus. We are called to do mission in Jesus way, as it has often been said in other Christian circles. That’s the reason why the church needs to revisit again and again, as done earlier in this paper, the way Jesus himself did mission: the places he went, the people he met, the relations he established, the hopes he planted, and even the conflicts he nurtured. We need to listen over and over again not only that mission is a call to serve but also that mission is a call to die: *Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds* (John 12:24).

And, finally, it is important to remark that mission is the task of the church. Although this has been repeatedly said, to say it again is necessary in light of the evangelical culture where mission is so often understood as being the task of a free-enterprise organization, Lausanne being an example. As an antidote to itself Lausanne has embraced a motto that says that to be engaged in mission means to understand that mission is *the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.* The very CTC embraces and shapes it in the following way*:*

*The Lausanne Covenant* defined evangelization as *‘the whole Church taking the whole Gospel to the whole world’.* That is still our passion. So we renew that covenant by affirming again:

*Our love for the whole Gospel,* as God’s glorious good news in Christ, for every dimension of his creation, for it has all been ravaged by sin and evil;

*Our love for the whole Church,* as God’s people, redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history, to share God’s mission in this age and glorify him forever in the age to come;

*Our love for the whole world,* so far from God but so close to his heart, the world that God so loved that he gave his only Son for its salvation.

In the grip of that three-fold love, we commit ourselves afresh to *be* the whole Church, to *believe, obey, and share* the whole Gospel, and to *go* to the whole world to make disciples of all nations.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**4. The incarnation of Jesus is an act of love**

At the beginning of this paper it was referred to the language of love, that shapes the CTC, as its main newness. In fact, it took us quite some time to get to that language and to the understanding that **God’s language of love is incarnation and God’s language of incarnation is love.** We were, and are, quite often involved in a conquering and even belligerent language and action. This attitude tends to take us away from the heart of God, who is loving, embracing and rescuing. It is our prayer that the love of God will inspire us in the effort to allow ourselves to be sent into the world as the Father has sent his Son. A pure act of love, very much captured by the CTC:

*We love God as the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son for our salvation. How great the Father’s love for us that we should be called the children of God! How immeasurable the love of the Father who did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all. This love of the Father in giving the Son was mirrored by the self-giving love of the Son. There was complete harmony of will in the work of atonement that the Father and the Son accomplished at the cross, through the eternal Spirit. The Father loved the world and gave his Son; ‘the Son of God loved me and gave himself for me.’ This unity of Father and Son, affirmed by Jesus himself, is echoed in Paul’s most repeated greeting of ‘grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins...according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.’[[23]](#footnote-23)*

*I pray for you that you let Jesus use you without consulting you.*

*Do the same for me.* (Mother Teresa)

1. The Cape Town Commitment. The Didasko Files (2011, The Lausanne Movement), 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. CTC, 71 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stanley J. Grenz. *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinous, USA, 1993), 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Arturo Piedra, editor. *Haciendo teologia en América Latina. Juan Stam. Um teólogo del Camino.* Vol 1(printed in Guatemala, 2004) 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quottet by Juan Stam, 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A typical term of the time that was applied to those who would not follow the regime and would express concern for the victims of that very regime or even of those who suffered injustices in society. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The I Lausanne Congress of Evangelization took place in Lausanne, Switzerland and produced the worldwide known Lausanne Covenant. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See CTC IIE *Calling the Church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity,* 59-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The whole issue around an integral understanding of mission is not completely resolved within evangelical circles as was seen at the platform of Lausanne III itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. CTC I10 *We love the Mission of God*, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In John 17: 18 he says: *As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. John R. W. Stott. *La Misión Cristiana Hoy* (Ed. Certeza, Buenos Aires, 1977), 28 (my translation). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. John Stott. *The Contemporary Christian*, in The essential John Stott (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1999), 628 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Leonardo Boff. *A Trindade, A Sociedade e a Libertação* (Vozes, Petrópolis, RJ, 1986), 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See the LC 1 – The Purpose of God, in *For the Lord we Love. Your study guide to the Lausanne Covenant. The Didasko Files* (2009, The Lausanne Movement), 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Mortimer Arias. *Announcing the Reign of God. Evangelization and the Subversive memory of Jesus.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), xv [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Valdir Steuernagel. *The Theology of Mission in its relation to social responsibility within the Lausanne Movement*. A Dissertation submitted to the LSTC, Chicago, 1988, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. CTC, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. CTC, 7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. J. Stott, *Biblical Basis of Evangelism*, in Let the Earth Hear his voice ed. J. D. Douglas. ICOWE (Mineapolis, World Wide Publication, 1975), quoted by Steuernagel, op cit, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Stott. *The Significance of Lausanne* IRM 64 (July 1975), 288-294. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. CTC, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. CTC, 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)