

Summary of *The Cape Town Commitment*¹

The Cape Town Commitment (CTC) is a masterful and comprehensive document, faithfully reflecting the proceedings of the Third International Congress on World Evangelization, which took place in Cape Town in October 2010. It is impossible to capture the spirit of Lausanne III in a three-page summary, so it is hoped that this synopsis will be read in conjunction with the CTC.

The CTC is rooted in the conviction that ‘we must respond in Christian mission to the realities of our own generation.’ The ongoing mission of the church must take seriously both the unchanging nature of God’s word and the changing realities of our world. The CTC remains within the Lausanne call of the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world and is framed in the language of love—love for the whole gospel, the whole church, and the whole world. The Commitment has two parts: a confession of faith and a call to action.

Part I: For the Lord We Love: The Cape Town Confession of Faith

The opening sentences set the framework, ‘The mission of God flows from the love of God. The mission of God’s people flows from our love for God and for all that God loves.’

The first five points deal with our love for God himself. We love the living God, above all rivals and with a passion for his glory. We love the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With respect to the Father, the CTC calls for a renewed appreciation of God’s fatherhood. Concerning the Son, it highlights our duty to trust, obey, and proclaim Christ. Of the Spirit, it says, ‘Our engagement in mission, then, is pointless and fruitless without the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. ... There is no true or whole gospel, and no authentic biblical mission, without the Person, work and power of the Holy Spirit.’

The last five points cover our love for God’s word, world, gospel, people, and missions. (a) We reaffirm our submission to the Bible as God’s final revelation, and affirm our love for the Person it reveals, the story it tells, the truth it teaches, and the life it requires (while admitting we often confess to love the Bible without loving the life it teaches, a life of costly practical discipleship). (b) We love God’s world, all that he has made and loves. This includes caring for creation, loving all peoples and valuing ethnic diversity, longing to see the gospel embedded in all cultures, loving the world’s poor and suffering people, and loving our neighbours as we love

¹ Prepared by Kevin Smith from the South African Theological Seminary (kevin@sats.edu.za). This summary document is saturated with the actual language of the CTC, for which reason the author has not used quotation marks every time he has lifted phraseology from the CTC. Only longer quotations and key phrases are marked by quotation marks, but in reality the entire document is a précis of the CTC.

ourselves. It does not mean loving or being like 'the world' (i.e. worldliness). (c) We love the gospel—the story it tells, the assurance it gives, and the transformation it produces. (d) We love all God's people, recognising that such love calls for unity, honesty, and solidarity. (e) We love the mission of God. 'We are committed to world mission, because it is central to our understanding of God, the Bible, the church, human history and the ultimate future. ... The church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and to participate in the transforming mission of God within history. Our mission is wholly derived from God's mission, addresses the whole of God's creation, and is grounded at its centre in the redeeming victory of the cross.' We are called to *integral mission*, which is the proclamation *and* demonstration of the gospel.

PART II: For the World We Serve: The Cape Town Call to Action

The call to action is organised around the six congress themes, which are linked to the six expositions of Ephesians.

1. *Bearing witness to the truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalized world.* The Congress affirmed belief in absolute truth, and particularly in Jesus Christ as *the Truth*. Christians, therefore, are called to be people of truth, to live and proclaim the truth. We must face the threat of postmodern relativistic pluralism with robust apologetics. We must promote truth in the workplace and the global media. We must harness the arts for mission, promote authentically Christian responses to emerging technologies, and actively engage the public arenas of government, business, and academia with biblical, Christian truth.

2. *Building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world.* Christ has reconciled believers to God and to one another; the unity of God's people is both a fact and a mandate. The church, therefore, has a responsibility to live out its reconciliation and to engage in biblical peace-making in the name of Christ. This includes bringing Christ's truth and peace to bear on racism and ethnic diversity, slavery and human trafficking, poverty, minority groups such as those with disabilities. It also means our missional calling includes responsible stewardship of God's creation and its resources.

3. *Living the love of Christ among people of other faiths.* Our 'neighbours' include people of other faiths. We must learn to (a) see them as neighbours and (b) be neighbours to them. We seek to share the good news in *ethical evangelism*, but we reject unworthy proselytizing. We accept that our commission includes a willingness to suffer and die for Christ in reaching out to people of other faiths. We affirm that love in action embodies and commends the gospel of grace, though some cultures find grace a difficult concept to accept. We need to respect 'diversity in discipleship', especially with respect to so-called 'insider movements'. We recognise the global diaspora as strategic for modern missions, as scattered peoples can be both

recipients and agents of Christ's mission. While being willing to sacrifice our own rights for the sake of Christ, we commit to uphold and defend the human rights of others, including the right to religious freedom.

4. *Discerning the will of Christ for world evangelization.* Five key groups were identified as strategically important for world evangelization in our day: (a) unreached and unengaged people groups; (b) oral cultures; (c) Christian leaders; (d) cities; and (e) children. The focus on Christian leaders is to prioritize discipleship and address the problems that arise from 'generations of reductionist evangelism'. Bible translation, the preparation of story Bibles and other oral methodologies, as well as eradicating biblical illiteracy in the church remain key priorities. Cities are home to four strategic groups: future leaders, migrant unreached peoples, culture shapers, and the poorest of the poor. All children are at risk; children represent both a mission field and a mission force.

5. *Calling the church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity.* The integrity of our mission in the world depends on our integrity. The Congress called Christ-followers back to humble, sacrificial discipleship, simple living, and moral integrity. We need to be separate and distinct from the world (morally). Four 'idolatries' were singled out—disordered sexuality, power, success, and greed. Disciples of Christ need to reject these. (The prosperity gospel is rejected under the banner of 'greed'.)

6. *Partnering in the body of Christ for unity in mission.* Paul teaches us that Christian unity is the creation of God, based on our reconciliation with God and with one another. We lament the dividedness and divisiveness of our churches and organizations, because a divided church has no message for a divided world. Our failure to live in reconciled unity is a major obstacle to authenticity and effectiveness in mission. We commit to *partnership* in global mission, while rejecting the notion that the primary responsibility for global mission rests with any single group (e.g. the West or the Rest). Two critical aspects of partnership include the contributions of women and the role of theological education.